

Written Answers.

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

Questions Nos. 1 to 18, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions Nos. 19 to 40, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 41 to 49, inclusive, answered orally.

Cultural Policy

50. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which she will develop Irish culture reflecting national and multicultural identity in a readily recognisable fashion, capable of being used as a major brand image at home and abroad, whether in the context of Culture 2025 or otherwise; the extent to which she will do this through the arts, education and the community; the extent to which she will contribute to the economy by expanding job opportunities created through this medium, given the extent of the contribution from the philanthropic and voluntary sectors; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43494/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The aim of the new national cultural policy, *Culture 2025*, is to set out the high-level aims and policies of the Government in this area for the period up until 2025. It will seek to reinforce the crucial role of culture in society by supporting the cultural sector and providing the conditions which will allow the sector to develop and flourish across all sectors of society. *Culture 2025* will also seek to reflect the modern multi-cultural Ireland and will be uplifting, accessible, relevant and easy to communicate.

To facilitate public consultation on the proposed policy, my Department published a discussion document on 8 August last. This was followed up by holding a series of local workshops to enable people across the country to have their views heard. Meetings took place in Cavan, Cork, Galway, Limerick, Kilkenny and Dublin.

The Dublin event, which I attended, followed the participative ‘world café’ model and was held under the Open Policy Debates programme, in line with the Civil Service Renewal Plan. I am pleased to inform the House that this event, which was held in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, was an excellent occasion, with a very high level of engagement by those attending. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who participated, as well as those who were involved in organising and running the event.

Over 600 people attended the consultation events and more than 200 written submissions were received before the closing date of 31 October last. The feedback from the regional meetings and the submissions are currently being examined in detail as part of the process of draft-

ing the cultural policy. An Experts Group and a Steering Group, established by my Department and made up of a range of cultural stakeholders, are also inputting into the consultation and drafting process.

I intend that *Culture 2015* will be a high-level and living document that will set out the framework of cultural policy for the next decade. I propose to submit it to Government shortly with intention of publishing it early in the New Year.

Easter Rising Commemorations

51. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will address concerns around the disparity in funding for 1916 Centenary events in rural and urban Ireland; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43485/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme is a national programme and funding is being provided to all counties to support a range of initiatives and events. I am very pleased to have secured funding of more than €48m for next year's centenary commemorations. Approximately €30m of this will be allocated to major capital projects. Some of this investment is being concentrated on works at sites which are closely associated with the Easter Rising, such as the major new visitor centre at the GPO and the proposed commemorative centre at the National Monument in Moore Street.

The Government has also provided significant capital investment for a new cultural and visitor centre at Pearse's Cottage in Ros Muc, Co. Galway, and for the refurbishment of the Atheneum in Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford. These locations also have strong resonances with the Rising.

My Department provided €1m this year to assist local authorities in preparing for their own local commemorative programmes and I recently announced a further funding package of €3m for all local authorities in 2016 in conjunction with the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and IPB Insurance. This will be distributed equally across each local authority and will allow communities to fully engage with next year's centenary.

My Department is also supporting a range of State Ceremonial events across Dublin and in a number of regions across the country, including significant ceremonial events in Enniscorthy, Ashbourne, Athenry, Cork and Kerry. The Defence Forces are also working closely with local authorities on other ceremonial events taking place next year.

With funding also being provided to support a range of events across the 7 strands of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme, I am satisfied that all citizens will be able to participate in this major commemoration next year.

Hare Coursing Regulation

52. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht during the 2015-2016 hare coursing season to date, how many meetings has she monitored through the National Parks and Wildlife Services, given her commitment to do so, and how many organisers have been found to be in breach of the conditions of their licences. [43459/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The control of live hare coursing, including the operation of individual coursing meetings and manag-

ing the use of hares for that activity, is carried out under the Greyhound Industry Act 1958 which is the responsibility of my colleague the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. My responsibility relates to the conservation status of the hare. While I understand that there are many individuals opposed to hare coursing there is no current evidence that coursing has a significant effect on hare populations and the decision to issue licences took into consideration the final report of the *Status of Hares in Ireland – Hare Survey of Ireland 2006/07*.

In August this year, my Department issued licences under the Wildlife Acts to the Irish Coursing Club, covering their affiliated coursing clubs, to capture and tag hares for use at regulated hare coursing meetings for the 2015/16 coursing season, which extends from the end of September 2015 to the end of February 2016. To date, officials of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department have monitored six meetings. My Department will be examining these reports and, should there be any alleged breaches of licence conditions, these will be followed with the Irish Coursing Club and individual clubs.

Regional staff of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department will continue to attend coursing meetings during the 2015/16 season, as resources allow, to monitor compliance with the conditions of the licences.

Artists' Remuneration

53. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the action she will take to address the issues of very low incomes among arts practitioners; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43504/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Government appreciates the importance of the arts, culture and the creative industries to Irish society and to the international artistic reputation of this country. Ireland has a reputation for being supportive of artists through the provision of the tax exemption for artists. Income and pension arrangements for artists can vary widely across the sector. Employment in the arts sector encompasses a wide range of activities. It can include those engaged in the arts practice within specific artistic genres and encompass areas that flow from such artistic pursuits. It may also embody the industrial creative sectors, including audiovisual production.

I was particularly pleased that the Government introduced a 25% increase in the artists' tax exemption for 2015. This measure recognises the invaluable contribution which arts and culture practitioners make here at home and abroad.

Aosdána was established in 1981 and is a unique State initiative which honours artists whose work has made an outstanding contribution to the arts in Ireland. There are up to 250 artists who are members of Aosdána. A means-tested grant is available to members and is designed to enable them to devote their energies fully to their work. Artists can also avail of other State supports and payments, subject to the standard eligibility conditions.

The Arts Council has recently published its strategy "*Making Great Art Work*", which sets out its plans for leading the development of the arts in Ireland over the next decade. It has a particular focus on the role of artists.

Finally, my Department through its support for the Arts Council, the Film Board, and other cultural initiatives also provides significant support for creative workers in Ireland. This year, as part of Budget 2016, I was pleased to announce a 12% increase in allocations across a range of areas, including the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme, and a new investment programme for regional arts and cultural centres. There will be significant benefits accruing for artists and

creative workers from many of the Ireland 2016 programmes supported by this additional funding, including at an international level.

Heritage Schemes

54. **Deputy Michael Conaghan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if there are proposals in place for Inchicore and Kilmainham to become an industrial heritage hub due to industrial revolution sites in the area; and if she will consider the area as a cultural and heritage hotspot to entice tourists to visit sites, parks and museums therein. [43505/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My role, as Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, with regard to the protection and management of our built and natural heritage, is set out in the provisions of relevant legislation. Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, provides for the protection of the architectural heritage. The Act gives primary responsibility to planning authorities to identify and protect the architectural heritage by including relevant structures on the Record of Protected Structures or within a designation of an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA). Inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures places a duty of care on the owners and occupiers of protected structures and also gives planning authorities powers to deal with development proposals affecting them and to seek to safeguard their future. I am aware of the important legacy of Industrial Heritage and its role with respect to cultural, heritage and economic development in areas such as Inchicore and Kilmainham and elsewhere throughout the country. Indeed, my Department has recently undertaken a National Inventory of Architectural Heritage for Dublin 8, which has recorded such structures in the area.

However, I consider that any proposals for Inchicore/Kilmainham to become an industrial heritage hub and/or a cultural/heritage hotspot, or for the setting up of such areas, would be a matter for the relevant Local Authority in the first instance.

Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge

55. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an gcuirfidh sí an t-eolas is deireanaí maidir leis an Straitéis 20 Bliain ar fáil agus cathain a bheidh sé ar fáil; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [43463/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): Mar is eol don Teachta, is ar mo Roinnse atá an fhreagracht uileghabhálach an *Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010-2030* a chomhordú i gcomhar le páirtithe leasmhara éagsúla. Cuirtear é seo i gcrích tríd na struchtúir éagsúla, lena n-áirítear an Coiste Rialtais don Ghaeilge agus don Ghaeltacht, an Coiste Comhairleach, an Grúpa Idir-Rannach agus na grúpaí ardleibhéil éagsúla. Beidh an *Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge* cúig bliana ar an bhfód ag deireadh na bliana seo. Sa chomhthéacs sin, tá díospóireacht oscailte ar pholasaí faoin Straitéis eagraithe ag mo Roinnse. Is í an aidhm atá leis an díospóireacht oscailte ná breathnú siar ar an méid atá déanta faoin Straitéis le cúig bliana anuas agus breathnú chun tosaigh ar na tosaíochtaí faoin Straitéis don tréimhse cúig bliana atá romhainn. Ag eascairt as an bpróiseas comhairliúcháin atá ar siúl mar chuid den díospóireacht oscailte, beifear ag súil na príomhthosaíochtaí straitéiseacha don tréimhse cúig bliana ó 2016 ar aghaidh a aithint agus a fhoilsíú.

Beidh comhdháil faoin díospóireacht oscailte ar siúl amárach i mBaile Átha Cliath. Beidh an chomhdháil dírithe ar na réimsí gnímh atá sonraithe faoin Straitéis, ach go háirithe oideachas, an Ghaeltacht, an teaghlach, seirbhísí poiblí, na meáin chumarsáide agus an teicneolaíocht. Mar

chuid den díospóireacht oscailte, eagraíodh cruinnithe Gaeltachta le coicís anuas in Indreabhán, Co. na Gaillimhe, i gCill Airne, Co. Chiarraí agus i nGaoth Dobhair, Co. Dhún na nGall. Bhí na cruinnithe Gaeltachta dírithe ach go háirithe ar chur i bhfeidhm praiticiúil an phróisis pleanála teanga faoi Acht na Gaeltachta 2012.

Mar chuid den díospóireacht oscailte fosta, tá plépháipéar foilsithe ar shuíomh gréasáin mo Roinne. Táthar ag díriú ar shaincheisteanna straitéiseacha ar leith sa phlépháipéar chun fócas a thabhairt don phróiseas comhairliúcháin atá á reáchtáil mar chuid den díospóireacht oscailte ar pholasaí. Cuirtear fáilte roimh aighneachtaí faoin bplépháipéar a chur chuig mo Roinn faoin 18 Nollaig.

Chomh maith leis an díospóireacht oscailte ar pholasaí a reáchtáil, tá mo Roinnse ag déanamh comhordú ar an eolas atá le foilsiú ag na Ranna Rialtais go léir faoin méid atá bainte amach faoin Straitéis le cúig bliana anuas. Táthar ag súil go mbeidh an t-ábhar seo foilsithe go han-luath.

Built Heritage Jobs Leverage Scheme

56. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the supports she provides for the restoration and conservation of built heritage, including the recently announced Built Heritage Investment Scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43477/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Funding for the protection of built heritage will continue to be provided by my Department via a number of schemes, which will be either directly administered or delivered through local authorities and agencies such as the Heritage Council. This year my Department operated a Structures at Risk Fund to enable conservation works to heritage structures, in both private and public ownership, protected under the Planning and Development Acts 2000, as amended, which are deemed to be at significant risk of deterioration. This fund, which has an allocation of €624,000 in 2015, is administered through the local authorities and encourages the regeneration and reuse of heritage properties and helps to secure the preservation of protected structures which might otherwise be lost. This fund, which is now closed, was open to two applications per local authority.

The Heritage Council, which my Department funds, also provides grants for the protection and preservation of the built heritage. It is primarily a matter for the Heritage Council to decide how its funding should be allocated across the range of research, education and conservation programmes it supports annually having regard to competing priorities for limited resources. The announcement of any proposed grant schemes can be monitored on www.heritagecouncil.ie.

The remainder of my Department's built heritage capital budget for 2015 is focused on the conservation and presentation of the State's heritage portfolio, which is managed by the Office of Public Works.

The recently announced new €2 million investment scheme for the repair and conservation of protected structures – the Built Heritage Investment Scheme – will operate, via the Local Authorities, on the same model as the very successful Built Heritage Jobs Leverage Scheme (BHJLS), which ran in 2014, and is expected to support a significant number of projects across the country and create employment in the conservation and construction industries, while helping to regenerate urban and rural areas. This announcement will come as a welcome boost to the custodians of heritage properties.

It seeks to encourage the investment of private capital in a number of small-scale, labour intensive projects to repair and conserve historic structures and to support the employment of skilled and experienced conservation professionals, craft workers and tradespeople. Protected structures, proposed protected structures and structures that contribute to the character of an Architectural Conservation Area will be eligible for assistance.

The minimum level of funding awarded will be €2,500 with up to a maximum of €10,000 generally applicable, while up to a maximum of €15,000 will be available to the 6 city local authorities. The State's contribution to each project must be matched by a similar contribution from the private sector per application. The scheme will operate through 2016 and will be administered by the local authorities, all of which have been informed of their allocations and the process and timelines involved.

With respect to 2016, my Department is currently finalising its consideration of the funding available for the protection and conservation of the built heritage next year in the context of its overall allocations. I will publish details of the funding schemes for 2016 as soon as these are finalised.

Special Areas of Conservation Management

57. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if all outstanding issues arising from the impact on landowners of special areas of conservation and natural heritage areas, with particular reference to traditional farming activities and turf cutting, have been satisfactorily resolved; if the European authorities has responded to submissions made in this regard; if an equilibrium is likely to emerge in respect of the contentious issues; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43495/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Ireland, like all EU Member States, is bound by the requirements of the Habitats Directive. This Directive aims to ensure the protection of habitats and species which have been selected for conservation within special areas of conservation and special protection areas. The Habitats Directive has been transposed into national law under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011. It is recognised that the nomination of a site for designation as a special area of conservation may have an impact on the manner in which certain lands may be farmed. The designation of lands does not mean that the lands are subject to blanket restrictions. However, they must be managed appropriately.

In accordance with the relevant legislation, certain activities in protected sites may only be undertaken with my consent, as Minister. Compensation may be payable where a person has been refused consent by me for a prescribed activity within a designated site that he or she had been undertaking in the five year period prior to the refusal. However, compensation schemes have generally been put in place, where required, without the need to undergo a formal process under the relevant legislation.

Since this Government has come into office, huge efforts have been made to solve the issue of the protection of Ireland's raised bog special areas of conservation, within the framework of the Habitats Directive. This has included intense and on-going engagement with turf cutting interests, farmers, non-governmental organisations and with the European Commission.

A long term compensation scheme has been introduced to compensate turf cutters for their loss arising from the cessation. This cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme is comprised of a payment of €1,500 per annum, index-linked, for 15 years or relocation, where fea-

sible, to a non-designated bog, together with a once-off incentive payment of €500.

The draft National Raised Bog SAC Management Plan was published in January 2014. It sets out how the raised bog special areas of conservation are to be managed into the future and how the needs of turf cutters are to be addressed. It is expected that this Plan will be finalised early next year.

Final resolution of all issues in relation to the protection of Ireland's raised bog special areas of conservation will only be brought about by everyone working together, within the law, with my Department and with the Peatlands Council, which was established with the purpose of ensuring the input from all stakeholders.

The Review of Raised Bog Natural Heritage Area Network, published in January 2014, provides detail on future arrangements regarding turf cutting on each of the 75 current raised bog natural heritage areas. The Review has concluded that Ireland could more effectively achieve conservation of threatened raised bog habitat through focused protection and restoration of a reconfigured network. This will entail the phasing out of turf-cutting on certain natural heritage areas by 1 January 2017 and the partial or complete de-designation of certain natural heritage areas.

Wildlife Protection

58. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the action she will take to address concerns regarding the survival of the Golden Eagles in County Donegal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43496/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Parliamentary Question No 66 today. The issues affecting the long-term survival of golden eagles re-introduced over the last 15 years are complex. My Department and the Golden Eagle Trust will meet in the coming weeks to review the performance of the project to date and will examine what genuinely effective options are available in the short and medium term. My Department will then be in a position to decide if further discussions with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in regard to agri-environment measures would be useful.

Easter Rising Commemorations

59. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the implementation of the Ireland 2016 centenary programme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43544/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme, which was launched on 31 March last, includes a rich diversity of programmes and events, complementary and additional to the formal State occasions, which will run throughout 2016 to commemorate the centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising. The Programme is an invitation to everyone on the island of Ireland and to the global Irish community to shape and engage in a diverse range of historical, cultural and artistic activities – all designed to facilitate reflection, commemoration, celebration, debate and analysis and an active imagining of our future. Officials of my Department have facilitated an intensive consultation period over the last few months, including active engagement with schools, universities, colleges, business and voluntary organisations, arts and culture institutions, historical societies,

local authorities and representative groups – at home and in our Diaspora around the world – to inform, to stimulate debate and discussion about 2016, and to foster programme initiatives. Work has been ongoing to implement a comprehensive programme and planning is well under-way for the range of initiatives within the seven programme strands.

Among the key milestones achieved to date are the following:

- I was delighted to host the first of the State ceremonial events of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme on 1 August last to commemorate the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa in Glasnevin Cemetery, in the presence of President Michael D Higgins and An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, T.D.

- Over 84 public consultation meetings were held with local communities all around the country. 31 individual county plans were launched on 8 October last containing over 1,800 events across the country. €1m was allocated to facilitate these plans this year, with a further €3m to be made available next year.

- An allocation of €22 million in capital funding is being provided through my Department's Vote in 2015 for the 'Permanent Reminder' projects, with a further €31m being provided next year. These capital projects are progressing well.

- The Global and Diaspora Programme was launched on 29 June and was very positively received at home and abroad.

- On 6 August, the Arts Council announced 9 major arts projects to commemorate 1916.

- The National Flag Initiative was launched on 14 September, marking the commencement of the delivery by the Defence Forces of our National Flag and the Proclamation to over 3,300 national schools across the country. Well over 2,000 flags have now been delivered and the project has been very well received.

- The Irish Language strand - An Teanga Bheo - was launched at the end of October by An Taoiseach.

- The Education Programme strand was launched on 22 September for the primary, post-primary and third-level education sectors.

- Consultation is ongoing with relevant stakeholders in Northern Ireland, including official, political, media, artistic and NGO stakeholders.

- The National Cultural Institutions are planning a range of innovative exhibitions and projects and all are progressing well. The National Library launched its 2016 plans just yesterday.

- The official Culture Ireland programme "I am Ireland" was launched by Minister of State Ó Ríordáin on 3 October. This will showcase the best of Irish arts and culture on the international stage.

- On 10 November, I announced that work was to start on the development of the new Commemorative Centre at the National Monument in Moore Street, which was acquired by the State earlier in the year.

Further information in relation to the various events, activities and initiatives taking place under each of 7 strands of the Programme, including the 31 county plans launched in October, can be found on my Department's dedicated website at www.ireland.ie.

60. **Deputy Catherine Byrne** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the financial supports she will provide to local authorities to make the over 2,000 community events and initiatives that have been confirmed for 2016 as part of the local authority-led county plans a reality; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43541/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Under the Community Participation strand of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme, some 84 public consultations, facilitated by the local authorities with support from my Department, have taken place nationwide. Each of the local authorities has developed a rich and diverse series of events and projects that will take place next year. I was very pleased to participate with An Taoiseach and other Government colleagues at the official launch on 8 October last of the 31 individual county plans arising from this process. My Department provided €1m this year to assist local authorities in preparing for their local commemorative programmes and I recently announced a further funding package of €3m for all local authorities in 2016 in conjunction with the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and IPB Insurance. This will be distributed equally across each local authority and will allow communities to fully engage with next year's centenary.

The local authorities are now in the process of organising individual launches of their county plans, which include a wide variety of events, lectures and opportunities for the public to get involved with the centenary programme.

With funding also being provided to support a range of events across the 7 strands of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme, I am satisfied that all citizens will be able to participate in this major commemoration next year.

Further information in relation to the various events, activities and initiatives taking place under each of the programme strands, including the 31 county plans launched in October, can be found on my Department's dedicated website at www.ireland.ie.

National Library

61. **Deputy Catherine Byrne** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if the recently announced €10 million capital investment programme for the National Library will address outstanding concerns at the library; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43542/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The National Library is one of our foremost National Cultural Institutions, charged with collecting, preserving, promoting and making accessible the documentary and intellectual record of the life of Ireland. I am acutely aware of the challenges facing the National Library, and indeed other cultural institutions, following the reduction in resources available to the Exchequer as a result of the economic crisis. There are significant challenges which will not be fixed overnight, and indeed will most likely take a number of years to address.

It is widely acknowledged that the Library holds part of its collection in an historic Victorian-era building in Kildare Street that would not meet modern standards in terms of environmental and other controls. In this regard, I was delighted to be in a position to announce a major new capital investment plan for the National Library's historic Kildare Street premises, as part of the Government's Public Capital Programme – *Building on Recovery* 2016-2021. I have earmarked an allocation of €10m in funding for the first phase of the works.

The investment will be delivered as a phased programme of works in partnership with the

Office of Public Works. The redevelopment will address the following key areas:

- Refurbishment of the 1890s building to meet modern standards for universal access, fire prevention, health and safety, circulation, security, mechanical and electrical services, and environmental sustainability;
- Upgrading and enhancement of visitor and reader facilities;
- Upgrading the conditions in which heritage collections are kept;
- Improvement of both access and security;
- Upgrading and rationalisation of operational areas; and
- Provision of better linkages throughout the Library's extended buildings complex.

I am confident that investment plan will allow the Library to continue to deliver on its core objectives, including the protection and conservation of its collections, as well as enabling it develop its place as a venue for research, culture, learning and tourism. The investment will help transform the Library into a world-class facility for the storage and display of some of our most important historical documents.

State Papers

62. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her timeframe for introducing a 20-year rule for the release of State papers; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43499/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Under the National Archives Act 1986, Government Departments, Offices and the Courts have an obligation to transfer records older than 30 years, subject to certain exemptions, to the National Archives. The Government has now agreed to amend the legislation to reduce the period for the transfer of records to the National Archives from 30 years to 20 years. Given that the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland have already moved to a 20 year rule, I was cognisant of the importance of maintaining, as far as possible, synchronicity of release of records with the UK and Northern Ireland, especially in regard to Anglo-Irish matters. In particular, the Government agreed to:

- reduce from 30 years to 20 years the time limit for the deposit of Departmental records with the National Archives of Ireland;
- implement the change on a phased basis, starting with the Departments of An Taoiseach, Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Justice and Equality;
- extend the reduction to other Departments as resources permit; and
- engage with Government Departments to deal with the current backlog of records over 30 years old, which have not yet been transferred to the National Archives.

These changes will be implemented following the enactment of the relevant legislation to amend the National Archives Act 1986. My Department, in consultation with the Director of the National Archives, has begun drafting Heads of a Bill, which I will bring to Government in due course.

Built Heritage Jobs Leverage Scheme

63. **Deputy Helen McEntee** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the recently announced built heritage investment fund; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43457/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Funding for the protection of built heritage will continue to be provided by my Department via a number of schemes, which will be either directly administered or delivered through local authorities and agencies such as the Heritage Council. This year my Department operated a Structures at Risk Fund to enable conservation works to heritage structures, in both private and public ownership, protected under the Planning and Development Acts 2000, as amended, which are deemed to be at significant risk of deterioration. This fund, which has an allocation of €624,000 in 2015, is administered through the local authorities and encourages the regeneration and reuse of heritage properties and helps to secure the preservation of protected structures which might otherwise be lost. This fund, which is now closed, was open to two applications per local authority.

The Heritage Council, which my Department funds, also provides grants for the protection and preservation of the built heritage. It is primarily a matter for the Heritage Council to decide how its funding should be allocated across the range of research, education and conservation programmes it supports annually having regard to competing priorities for limited resources. The announcement of any proposed grant schemes can be monitored on *www.heritagecouncil.ie*.

The remainder of my Department's built heritage capital budget for 2015 is focused on the conservation and presentation of the State's heritage portfolio, which is managed by the Office of Public Works.

The recently announced new €2 million investment scheme for the repair and conservation of protected structures – the Built Heritage Investment Scheme – will operate, via the Local Authorities, on the same model as the very successful Built Heritage Jobs Leverage Scheme (BHJLS), which ran in 2014, and is expected to support a significant number of projects across the country and create employment in the conservation and construction industries, while helping to regenerate urban and rural areas. This announcement will come as a welcome boost to the custodians of heritage properties.

It seeks to encourage the investment of private capital in a number of small-scale, labour intensive projects to repair and conserve historic structures and to support the employment of skilled and experienced conservation professionals, craft workers and trades people. Protected structures, proposed protected structures and structures that contribute to the character of an Architectural Conservation Area will be eligible for assistance.

The minimum level of funding awarded will be €2,500 with up to a maximum of €10,000 generally applicable, while up to a maximum of €15,000 will be available to the 6 city local authorities. The State's contribution to each project must be matched by a similar contribution from the private sector per application. The scheme will operate through 2016 and will be administered by the local authorities, all of which have been informed of their allocations and the process and timelines involved.

With respect to 2016, my Department is currently finalising its consideration of the funding available for the protection and conservation of the built heritage next year in the context of its overall allocations. I will publish details of the funding schemes for 2016 as soon as these are finalised.

Heritage Projects

64. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the details of the recently announced proposals to safeguard Ireland's historic houses; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43498/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, I am aware of the growing risk to the sustainable future of the remaining stock of Irish Historic Houses in private ownership, where owners have consistently struggled, throughout the last century, to find sustainable alternative means of meeting the on-going costs of their maintenance. I have also recognised that these Houses are often a hugely important resource for local communities and a vital attraction for tourists, which can and do contribute significantly to the local economy. It is within this context that I had the *Action Plan for Irish Historic Houses in Private Ownership* developed and secured Government approval for it. I was very pleased, therefore, to subsequently launch the Action Plan on 30 November last.

The objective of the Action Plan is to assist historic houses in general with their on-going protection, management and promotion into the future. Specific actions include:

- working with the local authority to develop a more streamlined, partnership approach with the local economy;
- seeking to optimise the provision of existing supports and fiscal incentives; and
- seeking to develop new initiatives that might help to establish priorities by way of targeted support mechanisms.

Údarás na Gaeltachta Funding

65. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if additional funding will be made available to Údarás na Gaeltachta in the supplementary budget allocations, given its excellent record in job creation, and to help realise the potential which exists for further job creation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43502/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Parliamentary Question No. 12 of 12 November 2015 in relation to this matter. As I outlined in that reply, as Minister of State with responsibility for the Gaeltacht, I very much understand the importance of job creation in retaining sustainable communities in Gaeltacht areas. I am also very cognisant of the ongoing challenge of maintaining existing jobs, in addition to creating new jobs, in the Gaeltacht. In that context, I wish to acknowledge the important enterprise and employment function of Údarás na Gaeltachta as the regional economic agency for the Gaeltacht. I am well aware of Údarás na Gaeltachta's proposal to increase its capital budget over a period of time to €12m per annum. I am also very aware and supportive of the case advanced by the organisation that such an increase in funding would enable it to create an additional 300 jobs per annum. The case for funding outlined specific measures, including the upgrading of its existing property portfolio and the provision of new property solutions in a number of geographic and sectoral areas.

The Deputy will be aware that Údarás na Gaeltachta's capital provision for 2016 is €5.687m. The Deputy will, of course, also be aware that, during the Revised Estimates process for 2015, I secured an additional capital allocation of €1m for Údarás na Gaeltachta. I wish to again as-

sure the Deputy that I am continuing to seek further funding for Údarás na Gaeltachta under the Revised Estimates process for 2016.

Wildlife Protection

66. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will introduce urgent measures to conserve the Golden Eagle population which has fallen to a critically low level; if she has discussed eliminating the threats to the Golden Eagle population in and around the Glenveagh National Park in County Donegal with the management of the National Parks and Wildlife Service or with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43490/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Golden Eagle Reintroduction Project is managed by the Golden Eagle Trust in partnership with, and with funding from, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, which, as the Deputy will be aware, is a section within my Department. The purpose of the reintroduction project was to bring back eagles to Ireland, restoring a species that had been persecuted in the late 19th Century. The golden eagle was present in Glenveagh until 1910.

Experts on eagles in Scotland visited Glenveagh, by then a National Park, in the 1990s, and considered that the habitats in north Donegal were suitable for a reintroduction programme. 61 birds, sourced as chicks in Scotland, were released in Glenveagh between 2001 and 2012. The original plan was to release 75 birds over five years but it became increasingly difficult to find suitable donor stock in Scotland, resulting in fewer releases over a longer time span than originally planned.

Using data from radio and satellite tags and wing tags fitted to the released birds, it was established that some birds moved around Ireland and some even returned to Scotland. Some birds are known to have died of natural causes but 3 of the 10 satellite-tagged birds were poisoned, two in Donegal and one in Northern Ireland. My Department produces annual reports on all known cases of mortality and persecution of birds of prey.

The re-introduced eagles have nested over a number of years, and in 2014 and 2015 there were 3 known nests. However, breeding success has not been as good as anticipated. Sometimes, as is the case in 2015, this may be due to adverse weather at critical stages during nesting. However, as has been pointed out by the Golden Eagle Trust in recent weeks, there may also be issues to do with habitat quality and the amount of food prey available in the landscape.

There are many factors at play in matters concerning the ecology and behaviour of the golden eagle. Certainly, large-scale burning, as has occurred in recent years, is a factor in reducing habitat quality. Such burning poses a threat to property and forestry as well as to wildlife, and my Department is working with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to try to reduce this problem.

My Department and the Golden Eagle Trust will meet in the coming weeks to review the performance of the project to date and will examine what genuinely effective options are available in the short and medium term. My Department will then be in a position to decide if further discussions with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in regard to agri-environment measures would be useful.

Wildlife Protection

67. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her response to issues associated with hen harrier conservation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43486/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): An Inter-Departmental Steering Group was convened in July 2014 to assist in the development of a Hen Harrier Threat Response Plan. The Group is examining all of the issues at hand, including forestry and financial supports for farmers, with a view to determining the appropriate course of further action. A Consultative Committee with representatives from all the relevant sectors was also set up, including representatives of agriculture and forestry. This year my Department undertook a survey of Hen Harriers in Ireland. Such surveys are carried out every 5 years. It was agreed by all parties on the Consultative Committee that the results of the 2015 Hen Harrier survey should be incorporated into the Plan. The Steering Group and Consultative Committee met in the past month to consider the results of the 2015 Hen Harrier Survey and will meet again shortly to continue work towards the first draft of the Plan.

Scéimeanna Tacaíochta Gaeilge

68. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Seán Kyne** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta i gcomhthéacs luach na Gaeilge sa gheilleagar agus staidéar a deir gur fiú os cionn €136 milliún do gheilleagar na Gaillimhe gach bliain an Ghaeilge, arbh fhiú breathnú ar scéim náisiúnta a thabhairt isteach chun gnólachtaí a spreagadh agus a mhealladh le níos mó Gaeilge a úsáid; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [43501/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): Cuirtear maoiniú bliantúil ar fáil faoi Scéimeanna Tacaíochta Gaeilge mo Roinne do na heagraíochtaí Gaillimh le Gaeilge, Gnó Mhaigh Eo agus Gael Taca i gcathair Chorcaí, a bhfuil sé mar aidhm acu an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn san earnáil ghnó. Tá os cionn €1.5m curtha ar fáil i ndeontais ag mo Roinn do na heagraíochtaí seo le linn na tréimhse ó 2011 go dáta. Cuireann Foras na Gaeilge cúnaimh, comhairle agus maoiniú ar fáil don earnáil ghnó chun úsáid na Gaeilge a spreagadh trína fheachtas sainbhrandála *Gnó Means Business* agus faoina Scéim Tacaíochta Gnó agus faoin gciste tacaíochta Nuálachas san Earnáil Ghnó. Tá eolas maidir leis na tacaíochtaí seo le fáil ar shuíomh gréasáin Fhoras na Gaeilge ag an nasc <http://www.gaeilge.ie/gno-means-business/>

Tá tionscnaimh ar leith á bhforbairt ag Foras na Gaeilge fosta chun dea-chleachtas a éascú san earnáil ghnó trí mholtaí agus réitigh phraiticiúla a chur ar fáil maidir le húsáid éifeachtach an dátheangachais i gcomhréir le dea-chleachtais idirnáisiúnta i leith mionteangacha. Chuige sin, tá treoirleabhar dírithe ar úsáid an dátheangachais ar chomharthaíocht (*Comharthaíocht Dhátheangach – Treoir ar an gCleachtas is Fearr*) ar fáil ón bhForas agus táthar ag súil treoirleabhar nua ar dhea-chleachtais an dátheangachais ar phacáistíocht a fhoilsiú i mí Eanáir 2016. Ina theannta sin, tá scéim náisiúnta *Q-Mharc Gnó le Gaeilge* á hullmhú ag Foras na Gaeilge i láthair na huairé chun gnólachtaí a spreagadh agus a mhealladh le níos mó Gaeilge a úsáid.

National Parks and Wildlife Service

69. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the efforts she has made since the wildfires of spring 2015 which threatened large parts of Killarney National Park in County Kerry to ensure that the national park will not be as vulnerable to wildfires, deliberately started or otherwise, in spring 2016; and if she will make a statement on

the matter. [43460/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I would like to thank the Deputy for raising this important issue. Significant environmental damage is caused by wildfires. This issue has become more acute in recent years, as evidenced by the spate of fires in various parts of the country, including Co. Kerry, last spring. The main source of such wildfires is thought to be the deliberate starting of fires without concern for the consequences. My Department is one of a number of agencies represented on the Inter-Agency Gorse Fire Group that explores issues surrounding such fires. An Garda Síochána, which is also represented on the Group, leads any criminal investigation. My Department, of course, cooperates fully with Garda investigations and any other investigations that may be initiated by other statutory bodies.

Since 2011, my Department has taken over 40 prosecutions against individuals for breaches of section 40 of the Wildlife Acts. Fines were imposed in most cases, ranging from €50 to €600. In some cases, the defendants were also ordered by the Court to pay legal costs and expenses.

Members of An Garda Síochána are also authorised officers to prosecute breaches of the Wildlife Acts. My Department continues to work closely with the Department of Agriculture, the Marine and Food and with An Garda Síochána, as appropriate, to investigate the causes of wild fires which have affected Killarney National Park and, where evidence is forthcoming, to pursue appropriate action under the Wildlife Act or other legislation.

Cultural Policy

70. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her views on the creation of a body, or the adaptation of an existing body, which would provide funding, upskilling, legal advice and promotion for emerging musicians, perhaps along the lines of the Music Commission in New Zealand; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43484/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): In Ireland, the Arts Council is the agency which is charged with the development of the arts, including music. I have no plans to create a new agency for music. The issue of the music industry has also been raised during the public consultation process which I put in place for the development of Ireland's first national cultural policy, *Culture 2025*. This will be reflected in the policy document which I will publish early in the New Year.

National Monuments

71. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht why a 3,000 year old Bronze Age timber roadway at Mayne Bog in Coole in County Westmeath was completely destroyed in June 2015; why the recommendation of the National Monuments Service, which examined this site in 2006 and advised further archaeological work, was not acted upon; why no attempt was made to legally protect this site, despite her Department being aware of its significance for the past ten years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43488/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department's National Monuments Service arranged for initial archaeological investigations in this case in 2006, which confirmed the existence of the Bronze Age trackway. Significant remains of the trackway still survive within the developed bog and it is likely that substantial

parts also survive in adjacent intact areas of the bog. My Department, through the relevant development control frameworks and in co-operation with the landowner, is pursuing an archaeological response in this case that is based on preservation in-situ of those parts of the trackway, where it is a realistic option, and preservation by record, where it is no longer viable.

Most recently in that context, my Department submitted a set of archaeological observations, with three specific recommendations in relation to the trackway, to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in connection with an Integrated Pollution Control licence application to the Agency earlier this year for peat extraction at Mayne Bog. The form and extent of the archaeological excavation sought by my Department was directly comparable to the archaeological mitigation strategies adopted in relation to similar monuments on Bord na Móna peatlands.

The archaeological investigations recommended by my Department to the EPA have since been carried out by the landowner under a separate licence I granted, as Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, under section 26 of the National Monuments Act 1930. The works were inspected and verified at the time by my Department's National Monuments Service.

A report on the investigations has since been received by my Department and is being examined. My Department will, inter alia, liaise with the landowner in relation to any further archaeological work on the trackway that it determines from the report as being necessary and appropriate.

Waterways Issues

72. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent of Waterways Ireland's role in developing and using canal ways and canal banks to incorporate recreational cycle and walking routes; the sections of the canals which have been developed to incorporate such routes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43487/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I have been informed by Waterways Ireland that the Royal and Grand Canals and Barrow Navigation comprise over 400 km of canals which are under its management. These are important publicly owned recreational corridors which support a wide range of boating and water sports. The canal towpaths represent opportunities for both local communities and tourists to enjoy off-road cycling and walking while enjoying the built and natural heritage of these resources. Waterways Ireland works in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, including local authorities, Fáilte Ireland, the National Roads Authority, the National Trails Office and local communities to develop and enhance the towpaths along the canals in its care.

In Dublin, a programme to upgrade the towpaths into premium walking and cycleways has been ongoing for a number of years. Most recently, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport has supported the development of 2.4 km of greenway on the canal towpath from the 10th Lock at Ashtown to the 12th Lock at Castleknock.

One of Waterways Ireland's objectives is to upgrade the towpaths along the entire route of the Royal and Grand Canals, making it possible to travel the 140 km along either canal from Dublin to the Shannon and also to connect the towpaths to the many amenities and attractions along these routes.

Other projects that have been developed or are under development include the following:

- In cooperation with Longford County Council, the re-opening in 2014 of 16 km of multi-use towpath along the disused Longford Branch of the Royal Canal;

- With financial support from Kildare County Council, the upgrading of 3 km of towpath, which forms part of the Arthur's Way Greenway project, has been completed recently;

- On the Barrow Navigation, Waterways Ireland is leading a consortium of local authorities to enhance the Barrow towpath and create enhanced access to this 100 km valley and canalised river navigation; and

- 60 km of the proposed Dublin to Galway Greenway runs along the Royal Canal towpath and the relevant local authorities have a central role in progressing this project in cooperation with the National Transport Authority and Waterways Ireland.

Easter Rising Commemorations

73. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to ensure that children and young persons are involved in the Ireland 2016 centenary programme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43478/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Together with my Government colleagues, I am committed to ensuring that the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme engages with children and young people to the greatest extent possible. My Department's Ireland 2016 Project Team has been working with the Department of Education and Skills to ensure that the Youth and Imagination strand of the Programme reaches every school in the country. The programme of activities focused on the education sector was launched in September of this year and the response to date from educators and young people has been extremely positive and encouraging. There has been a particularly welcome response to the delivery of our National Flag by the Defence Forces to primary schools throughout the country.

My Department has also been working with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to support the engagement of children and young people outside of the formal education sector. Six consultations have taken place with children aged 8-12 and with young people aged 13-17 from around the country on the theme of 'Imagining Our Future'. The outcome of these consultations will be compiled in a report to be presented by children and young people to Ministers and decision-makers at a major young people's event next year.

Further details in relation to all of the events taking place under the Youth and Imagination strand of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme can be found on the website www.ireland.ie. As well as this comprehensive programme for schools, communities are also developing plans at local level for a whole range of events across the country and I hope that children and young people will also get involved in their local communities and take part in the various events.

Arts Funding

74. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her views that arts funding as a proportion of gross domestic product is too low, given its social, cultural and economic importance; and if it should be increased to at least European Union levels; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43503/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Expenditure on the arts in Ireland comes from multiple sources, both public and private. I understand that the CSO does not produce national statistics that capture the totality of this expenditure as a percentage of GDP. My Department's expenditure on the arts is, in the main, directed through

the Arts Council. That expenditure is published annually in the Revised Estimates Volumes at *www.per.ie*. The issue of capturing public and private expenditure in this area has been one which arose during the public consultation process which I put in place for the development of Ireland's first national cultural policy, *Culture 2025*. This will be reflected in the policy document which I will publish early in the New Year.

Arts Funding

75. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the measures she is taking to improve the working environment for artists; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43500/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Government appreciates the importance of the cultural and creative industries to Ireland. The Arts Council is the main mechanism through which the Government directs funding to the arts and to artists. The Council provides significant support to individual artists through bursaries as well as individual grants. It also funds means-tested payments to members of Aosdána. The Arts Council recently published its new Strategy Statement: *Making Great Art Work*. This sets out the Council's plans to lead the development of the arts in the decade to 2025 and prioritises two policy areas – the artist and public engagement. The work of the Film Board, which my Department funds, is also a significant support for creative workers in Ireland. This sector is also supported by the improved tax incentive system introduced by this Government.

This year, as part of Budget 2016, I was pleased to announce a 12% increase in allocations across a range of areas, including the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme, and a new investment programme for regional arts and cultural centres. There will be significant benefits accruing for artists and creative workers from many of the Ireland 2016 programmes supported by this additional funding, including at an international level.

I was also particularly pleased that the Government introduced a 25% increase in the ceiling for the Artists Exemption from 2015. This important measure recognises the invaluable contribution which artists make to Irish society. The feedback available to me indicates that artists very much welcome the increase in the exemption limits. The scheme ensures that Ireland continues to be a place where the work of artists is valued.

My Department continues to work with other Departments to promote the cultural and creative industries within the framework of the Government's overall objectives under the Action Plan for Jobs.

Finally, the place of artists in society has been a significant theme arising from the public consultation process, which I put in place for the development of Ireland's first national cultural policy, *Culture 2025*. This will be reflected in the policy document which I will publish early in the New Year.

Built Heritage Jobs Leverage Scheme

76. **Deputy Helen McEntee** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the supports she provides to protect the built heritage; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43456/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Funding

for the protection of built heritage will continue to be provided by my Department via a number of schemes, which will be either directly administered or delivered through local authorities and agencies such as the Heritage Council. This year my Department operated a Structures at Risk Fund to enable conservation works to heritage structures, in both private and public ownership, protected under the Planning and Development Acts 2000, as amended, which are deemed to be at significant risk of deterioration. This fund, which has an allocation of €624,000 in 2015, is administered through the local authorities and encourages the regeneration and reuse of heritage properties and helps to secure the preservation of protected structures which might otherwise be lost. This fund, which is now closed, was open to two applications per local authority.

The Heritage Council, which my Department funds, also provides grants for the protection and preservation of the built heritage. It is primarily a matter for the Heritage Council to decide how its funding should be allocated across the range of research, education and conservation programmes it supports annually having regard to competing priorities for limited resources. The announcement of any proposed grant schemes can be monitored on *www.heritagecouncil.ie*.

The remainder of my Department's built heritage capital budget for 2015 is focused on the conservation and presentation of the State's heritage portfolio, which is managed by the Office of Public Works.

The recently announced new €2 million investment scheme for the repair and conservation of protected structures – the Built Heritage Investment Scheme – will operate, via the Local Authorities, on the same model as the very successful Built Heritage Jobs Leverage Scheme (BHJLS), which ran in 2014, and is expected to support a significant number of projects across the country and create employment in the conservation and construction industries, while helping to regenerate urban and rural areas. This announcement will come as a welcome boost to the custodians of heritage properties.

It seeks to encourage the investment of private capital in a number of small-scale, labour intensive projects to repair and conserve historic structures and to support the employment of skilled and experienced conservation professionals, craft workers and trades people. Protected structures, proposed protected structures and structures that contribute to the character of an Architectural Conservation Area will be eligible for assistance.

The minimum level of funding awarded will be €2,500 with up to a maximum of €10,000 generally applicable, while up to a maximum of €15,000 will be available to the 6 city local authorities. The State's contribution to each project must be matched by a similar contribution from the private sector per application. The scheme will operate through 2016 and will be administered by the local authorities, all of which have been informed of their allocations and the process and timelines involved.

With respect to 2016, my Department is currently finalising its consideration of the funding available for the protection and conservation of the built heritage next year in the context of its overall allocations. I will publish details of the funding schemes for 2016 as soon as these are finalised.

Heritage Projects

77. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the main recommendations in the historic houses action plan; how she can help to provide a sustainable future for historic houses which are a hugely important resource for local communities and a

vital attraction for tourists; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43543/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, I am aware of the growing risk to the sustainable future of the remaining stock of Irish Historic Houses in private ownership, where owners have consistently struggled, throughout the last century, to find sustainable alternative means of meeting the on-going costs of their maintenance. I have also recognised that these Houses are often a hugely important resource for local communities and a vital attraction for tourists, which can and do contribute significantly to the local economy. It is within this context that I had the *Action Plan for Irish Historic Houses in Private Ownership* developed and secured Government approval for it. I was very pleased, therefore, to subsequently launch the Action Plan on 30 November last.

The objective of the Action Plan is to assist historic houses in general with their on-going protection, management and promotion into the future. Specific actions include:

- working with the local authority to develop a more streamlined, partnership approach with the local economy;
- seeking to optimise the provision of existing supports and fiscal incentives; and
- seeking to develop new initiatives that might help to establish priorities by way of targeted support mechanisms.

Cultural Policy

78. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the implementation of Culture 2025. [43466/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The aim of the new national cultural policy, *Culture 2025*, is to set out the high-level aims and policies of the Government in this area for the period up until 2025. It will seek to reinforce the crucial role of culture in society by supporting the cultural sector and providing the conditions which will allow the sector to develop and flourish across all sectors of society. *Culture 2025* will also seek to reflect the modern multi-cultural Ireland and will be uplifting, accessible, relevant and easy to communicate.

To facilitate public consultation on the proposed policy, my Department published a discussion document on 8 August last. This was followed up by holding a series of local workshops to enable people across the country to have their views heard. Meetings took place in Cavan, Cork, Galway, Limerick, Kilkenny and Dublin.

The Dublin event, which I attended, followed the participative ‘world café’ model and was held under the Open Policy Debates programme, in line with the Civil Service Renewal Plan. I am pleased to inform the House that this event, which was held in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, was an excellent occasion, with a very high level of engagement by those attending. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who participated, as well as those who were involving in organising and running the event.

Over 600 people attended the consultation events and more than 200 written submissions were received before the closing date of 31 October last. The feedback from the regional meetings and the submissions are currently being examined in detail as part of the process of drafting the cultural policy. An Experts Group and a Steering Group, established by my Department

and made up of a range of cultural stakeholders, are also inputting into the consultation and drafting process.

I intend that *Culture 2025* will be a high-level and living document that will set out the framework of cultural policy for the next decade. I propose to submit it to Government shortly with the intention of publishing it early in the New Year.

Seirbhísí trí Ghaeilge

79. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Michael P. Kitt** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cad é an dul chun cinn atá déanta maidir leis an moladh go mbeidh 10% de na hoibrithe poiblí in ann gnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge leis an bpobal; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [43493/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): Is mian liom a chur in iúl don Teachta go bhfuil sraith de chruinnithe déthaobhacha tionscanta agam le hAíreí sna ranna stáit éagsúla maidir le tionscnaimh pholasaí áirithe a bhfuil sé mar aidhm acu forbairt a dhéanamh ar sholáthar seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge. Cuimsíonn an cur chuige seo moltaí éagsúla atá déanta maidir leis an ábhar atá luaite ag an Teachta. Tá an méid seo a leanas san áireamh sna tionscnaimh pholasaí seo:

- Na céatadáin íosta do na painéil do dhátheangaigh fheidhmiúla a ardú ón íosmhéid de 6% i gcomórtais earcaíochta do ghráid neamh-speisialtóireachta. Is í an mhianaidhm an céatadán a ardú ar bhonn incriminteach go dtí 20% thar thréimhse ama, ag tosú le hardú go dtí 10% mar thús.

- Treisiú a dhéanamh ar an gcreatlach pleanála don fhórsa saothair do Ranna Rialtais trína gcuirtear iachall orthu mír ar leith a bheith sna pleananna gníomhaíochta don fhórsa saothair a shonraíonn na poist/réimsí oibre ina mbíonn gá le dátheangaigh fheidhmiúla le fócas ar leith ar an nGaeltacht.

National Heritage Plan

80. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht why no national heritage plan has been in place since 2007; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43491/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Following on from the National Heritage Plan 2002-2007, my Department's responsibilities for the development of policies for the protection and promotion of our built and natural heritage have been actively concentrated on various ongoing policy developments responding to the range of challenges for each of the sectorial areas within my overall Heritage remit. My Department has no specific plans at this stage to develop an overall heritage plan updating the National Heritage Plan of 2002-2007. However, the need for a new plan will be kept under review within the overall context of policy development and prioritisation.

National Monuments

81. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the tendering process for restoration contracts for Nos. 14 to 17 Moore Street in Dublin 1; the

estimated cost of the restoration and who costed it; and if proposals will be made available to relatives and interested parties. [43482/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Government decided to acquire the national monument at Nos. 14–17 Moore Street because of its historic association with the events of Easter 1916. This decision demonstrates and acknowledges the historical importance of the site in a clear and substantive way and ensures that the long-term future of this historical landmark will be preserved and safeguarded. Bringing the monument into public ownership also allows for the development of a 1916 Commemorative Centre on the site. The legal steps to bring the national monument into my ownership as Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht have been completed. My Department has also concluded a tendering process for the scheme of conservation works initiated when the property was under lien by the National Asset Management Agency in order to get construction work underway as speedily as possible to prevent further deterioration to the fabric of the national monument buildings.

This conservation work has now commenced and will be completed during the 2016 Centenary year. Provision has been made in the contract to facilitate managed public access to the monument for some centenary events.

I met the 1916 relatives following my announcement on 10 November 2015 that work was about to get underway. They were given a detailed briefing by the project team. I will continue to keep the relatives and other interested parties informed about the project as it progresses.

I also refer the Deputy to my reply to Question No.5 on 12 November 2015.

National Parks and Wildlife Service

82. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if Killarney National Park in County Kerry has an effective defence against wildfire; if a co-ordinated approach to by her is required; if she will renew efforts to put such an approach in place; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43461/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I would like to thank the Deputy for raising this important issue. Significant environmental damage is caused by wildfires. This issue has become more acute in recent years, as evidenced by the spate of fires in various parts of the country, including Co. Kerry, last spring. The main source of such wildfires is thought to be the deliberate starting of fires without concern for the consequences. My Department is one of a number of agencies represented on the Inter-Agency Gorse Fire Group that explores issues surrounding such fires. An Garda Síochána, which is also represented on the Group, leads any criminal investigation. My Department, of course, cooperates fully with Garda investigations and any other investigations that may be initiated by other statutory bodies.

Since 2011, my Department has taken over 40 prosecutions against individuals for breaches of section 40 of the Wildlife Acts. Fines were imposed in most cases, ranging from €50 to €600. In some cases, the defendants were also ordered by the Court to pay legal costs and expenses.

Members of An Garda Síochána are also authorised officers to prosecute breaches of the Wildlife Acts. My Department continues to work closely with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Food and with An Garda Síochána, as appropriate, to investigate the causes of wild fires which have affected Killarney National Park and, where evidence is forthcoming, to pursue appropriate action under the Wildlife Act or other legislation.

Legal Costs

83. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Taoiseach the amount of financial resources allocated for public prosecution services for each of the years 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43723/15]

The Taoiseach: I am informed by the Director of Public Prosecutions that the following table outlines the details requested by the Deputy.

Year	Gross Expenditure - €000	Appropriations in Aid - €000	Net Expenditure - €000
2011	€37,820	€1,043	€36,777
2012	€39,890	€1,043	€38,847
2013	€37,145	€996	€36,149
2014	€37,675	€973	€36,702
2015(to end November)	€34,801	€819	€33,982

Poverty Data

84. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Taoiseach what percentage of the population was at risk of poverty prior to social transfers from 2011 to date. [44033/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC) in Ireland is a household survey covering a broad range of issues in relation to income and living conditions.

The results for 2014, the most recent year for which SILC data are available, show that 49.3% of the population were at risk of poverty (prior to social transfers). The percentage of the population at risk of poverty (prior to social transfers) was 50.7%, 50.3% and 49.8% in the years 2011, 2012 and 2013 respectively. Data for 2015 are not yet available. The table below shows the at risk of poverty rate prior to social transfers from 2011 to 2014. The table also includes the at risk of poverty rate of the population including old-age and survivors' benefit but excluding all other social transfers.

The at risk of poverty rate is the share of persons with an equivalised income below 60% of the national median income. Anyone with an equivalised income of less than 60% of the median is considered at risk of poverty at a 60% level.

SILC calculates income data on an equivalised basis, i.e. household income is adjusted to take account of household composition and size. Disposable income is defined as gross income less tax and social contributions.

The results of the 2015 SILC are due to be released by the end of November 2016.

National at risk of poverty rates (2011 -2015)

Poverty Risk Rate	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
At risk of poverty rate (including all social transfer)	16.0	16.5	15.2	16.3	N/A
At risk of poverty rate (including old-age and survivors' benefit but excluding all other social transfers)	39.8	39.0	38.4	37.4	N/A
At risk of poverty rate (excluding all social transfer)	50.7	50.3	49.8	49.3	N/A

Source: EU-SILC, CSO

N/A: Not available

Poverty Data

85. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Taoiseach what percentage of the population up to 17 years of age was at risk of poverty post social transfers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44034/15]

86. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Taoiseach the percentage of the population aged from 18 to 64 years of age at risk of poverty post social transfers from 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44035/15]

87. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Taoiseach the percentage of the population aged 65 years or older who were at risk of poverty post social transfers from 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44036/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 85 to 87, inclusive, together.

The Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC) in Ireland is a household survey covering a broad range of issues in relation to income and living conditions.

The results for 2014, the most recent year for which SILC data are available, show that 18.6% of the population aged 0-17 years were at risk of poverty (post social transfers). The percentage of the population aged 0-17 years at risk of poverty (post social transfers) was 18.8%, 18.8% and 17.9% in the years 2011, 2012 and 2013 respectively.

The results for 2014 show that 16.5% of the population aged 18 to 64 years were at risk of poverty (post social transfers). The percentage of the population aged 18 to 64 years at risk of

poverty (post social transfers) was 15.9%, 16.4% and 15.3% in the years 2011, 2012 and 2013 respectively.

The results for 2014 show that 10.3% of the population aged 65 years or older were at risk of poverty (post social transfers). The percentage of the population aged 65 years or older at risk of poverty (post social transfers) was 9.7%, 12.1% and 9.2% in the years 2011, 2012 and 2013 respectively.

Data for 2015 are not yet available. The table below shows the at risk of poverty rate post social transfers from 2011 to 2014.

The at risk of poverty rate is the share of persons with an equivalised income below 60% of the national median income. Anyone with an equivalised income of less than 60% of the median is considered at risk of poverty at a 60% level.

SILC calculates income data on an equivalised basis, i.e. household income is adjusted to take account of household composition and size. Disposable income is defined as gross income less tax and social contributions.

The results of the 2015 SILC are due to be released by the end of November 2016.

The at risk of poverty rate classified by age group (2011-2015)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
State	16.0	16.5	15.2	16.3	N/A
0-17	18.8	18.8	17.9	18.6	N/A
18-64	15.9	16.4	15.3	16.5	N/A
65+	9.7	12.1	9.2	10.3	N/A

Source: EU-SILC, CSO

N/A: Not available

Unemployment Data

88. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Taoiseach the long-term unemployment rate in County Tipperary from 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44037/15]

89. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Taoiseach the percentage of the population aged 15 to 64 in employment in County Tipperary from 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44038/15]

90. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Taoiseach the percentage of population up to 17 years of age living in jobless households in County Tipperary from 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44039/15]

91. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Taoiseach the percentage of population from 18 to 59 years of age living in jobless households in County Tipperary from 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44040/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 88 to 91, inclusive, together.

The exact information requested by the Deputy is not available.

The Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) is the official source of estimates of employment and unemployment in the State. The most recent figures available are for Q3 2015.

Due to methodology and sample size it is not possible to produce reliable Tipperary County estimates from the QNHS.

Estimates of employment, unemployment and statistics on jobless households are produced from the QNHS by NUTS 3 Regions.

The NUTS 3 Mid-West region includes Clare, Limerick City, Limerick County, and North Tipperary. The NUTS 3 South-East region includes Carlow, Kilkenny, South Tipperary, Waterford City, Waterford County and Wexford.

Table 1 below shows the long-term unemployment rate of persons aged 15 to 74 years classified by the NUTS 3 Mid-West and South-East regions in Q3 of each year from 2011 to 2015.

Table 2 below shows the employment rate (ILO) of persons aged 15 to 64 years classified by the NUTS 3 Mid-West and South-East regions in Q3 of each year from 2011 to 2015.

Table 3 below shows the percentage of persons aged 0 to 17 years living in jobless households classified by the NUTS 3 Mid-West and South-East regions in Q3 of each year from 2011 to 2015.

Table 4 below shows the percentage of persons aged 18 to 59 years living in jobless households classified by the NUTS 3 Mid-West and South-East regions in Q3 of each year from 2011 to 2015.

Table 1 Long-term unemployment rate of persons aged 15 to 74 years classified by Mid-West and South-East regions, Q3 2011-Q3 2015

%

NUTS 3	Q3 11	Q3 12	Q3 13	Q3 14	Q3 15
Mid-West	10.1	9.6	8.2	5.7	5.1
South-East	11.2	12.2	10.9	8.5	7.8

Data may be subject to sampling or other survey errors, which are greater in respect of smaller values or estimates of change.?’;

Source: Quarterly National Household Survey, Central Statistics Office.?’;

Reference period: Q3=Jul-Sept.

Table 2 Employment rate (ILO) of persons aged 15 to 64 classified by Mid-West and South-East regions, Q3 2011-Q3 2015

%

NUTS 3	Q3 11	Q3 12	Q3 13	Q3 14	Q3 15
Mid-West	59.7	58.5	60.6	62.4	63.3
South-East	54.5	54.5	57.2	60.4	62.1

Data may be subject to sampling or other survey errors, which are greater in respect of smaller values or estimates of change.?’;

Source: Quarterly National Household Survey, Central Statistics Office.?’;

Reference period: Q3=Jul-Sept.

Table 3 Percentage of persons aged 0 to 17 years living in jobless households classified by Mid-West and South-East regions, Q3 2011-Q3 2015
%

NUTS 3	Q3 11	Q3 12	Q3 13	Q3 14	Q3 15
Mid-West	16.3	17.8	16.6	13.7	13.8
South-East	23.3	23.4	19.6	13.9	11.9

Data may be subject to sampling or other survey errors, which are greater in respect of smaller values or estimates of change.?’;

Source: Quarterly National Household Survey, Central Statistics Office.?’;

Reference period: Q3=Jul-Sept.

Table 4 Percentage of persons aged 18 to 59 years living in jobless households classified by Mid-West and South-East regions, Q3 2011-Q3 2015
%

NUTS 3	Q3 11	Q3 12	Q3 13	Q3 14	Q3 15
Mid-West	14.4	15.0	13.9	12.1	11.7
South-East	19.1	20.3	18.3	14.2	14.2

Data may be subject to sampling or other survey errors, which are greater in respect of smaller values or estimates of change.?’;

Source: Quarterly National Household Survey, Central Statistics Office.?’;

Reference period: Q3=Jul-Sept.

Departmental Expenditure

92. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Taoiseach his Department’s photography costs since he came into office, inclusive of costs incurred from use of the ministerial allowance by year in tabular form; the occasions for which photographers were booked; the photographers used; the costs associated with each occasion; the policy in place regarding the booking of photographers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43638/15]

The Taoiseach: The total expenditure by my Department on photography from 9th March 2011 to 4th December 2015 is provided in the following table:

Year	Amount spent on photography
2011 (9th March to December)	€28,069
2012	€13,449
2013	Department €6,778EU Presidency €38,172
2014	€12,750

Year	Amount spent on photography
1/01/15 - 4/12/15	€9,820

Photography costs in my Department have reduced by 85% from €83,398 in 2008 to €12,750 in 2014.

The use of local photographers on international trade missions is required to distribute images to the domestic media to accompany the coverage of domestic journalists who are travelling on behalf of their organisations. Utilising local agencies is cost efficient and costs are kept to a minimum. Increasingly my Department utilises its own staff to take photographs in-house, thereby reducing costs.

In relation to the EU Presidency costs - as is standard for all Presidencies there is a host photographer to capture the images for the Presidency and to distribute them around the world.

The following table lists the occasions for which photographers were used and costs associated with each occasion:

Photography Costs from 9th March 2011 to 16th January 2015

Vendor Name	Description	Cost
The Press Association	The Press Association, Nottingham	€ 139.30
Hackett's Reprographics	Visa photos for 1 of the Taoiseach's delegation for USA Mar 2011, 10 Mar 2011	€ 20.25
Maxwell Photography	1916 Commemoration 24/04/2011	€ 502.45
Maxwell Photography	SDLP 14/04/2011	€ 371.17
Maxwell Photography	Launch of Census 10/3/2011	€ 357.25
Maxwell Photography	Newly appointed Ministers 15/03/2011	€ 478.25
Maxwell Photography	Jesse Jackson 21/03/2011	€ 409.58
Maxwell Photography	Book of Condolence - Japan 22/03/2011	€ 401.42
Maxwell Photography	US Ambassador Dan Rooney 28/03/2011	€ 401.42
Maxwell Photography	Jpegs 1916 Commemoration 04/04/2011	€ 60.50
Maxwell Photography	Mass New Dáil 09/03/2011	€ 508.50
Maxwell Photography	Taoiseach Office Photo Call 09/03/2011	€ 538.75
Maxwell Photography	Reception New Ministers 09/03/2011	€ 391.13
Maxwell Photography	New Cabinet Meeting 10/03/2011	€ 492.17
Maxwell Photography	New Ministers Appointments 09/03/2011	€ 780.75

Vendor Name	Description	Cost
Maxwell Photography	The Late Dr. Garret FitzGerald's Funeral 21-22 May 2011	€ 2,359.50
My Photobook.ie	27 May 2011 - My Photo-Book.ie	€ 140.80
Maxwell Photography	President Obama Visit 23 May 2011	€ 4,537.50
Maxwell Photography	Taoiseach Enda Kenny & Church Leaders on 19 May 2011 at Government Buildings	€ 409.58
Maxwell Photography	British PM Visit to Gov. Buildings on 18 May 2011.	€ 629.50
Maxwell Photography	US Congressman on 16 May 2011. assignment covering attendance, taking colour, processing, digital contact sheet.	€ 280.42
Maxwell Photography	Hungarian Prime Minister 01-06-11	€ 409.58
Maxwell Photography	Excellence Awards 09/06/2011	€ 857.59
Maxwell Photography	North South Ministerial Council 10-6-11	€ 812.21
Maxwell Photography	President of European Council 17/6/11	€ 562.04
Maxwell Photography	President Obama Visit 23 May 2011	€ 260.15
Maxwell Photography	Obama and Cabinet Ministers 23 May 2011	€ 740.52
Maxwell Photography	Maxwells Invoice - New Ambassadors 30-6-11	€ 332.75
Maxwell Photography	Chinese Delegation	€ 357.25
Maxwell Photography	Saudi Minister 14 June 2011	€ 280.42
Maxwell Photography	Richard Haass meets Taoiseach Enda Kenny on 01/04/2011	€ 371.17
LK Photo	Costs relating to St. Patricks Day Visit to Washington 2011	€ 2,106.14
Maxwell Photography	New Sec Gen and Ian Paisley on 26/07/2011.	€ 318.84
Maxwell Photography	Meeting EU Parliament President 12 July 2011.	€ 696.05
Maxwell Photography	Strategy for International Services Industry 14-7-2011	€ 349.08

Questions - Written Answers

Vendor Name	Description	Cost
Hackett's Reprographics	Product code FPP-75DIG10-15, (QTY 10-15) 7x5 Digital Prints.	€ 30.76
J. Higgins Photos	Photos Taoiseach 4/5 May 2011 visit to New York	€ 303.30
Maxwell Photography	Arvato meeting with Taoiseach 21 Sept 2011.	€ 560.84
BANK OF IRELAND	19 November 2011 - www.gettyimages.com	€ 212.96
Maxwell Photography	Photocall TAOISEACH & New SDLP Leader 09/11/2011.	€ 340.92
Maxwell Photography	Photographer for the Presidential Inauguration on 11/11/2011.	€ 3,956.70
2012		
Maxwell Photography	Taoiseach signs Book of condolence 20 Dec 2011.	€ 371.17
Maxwell Photography	Taoiseach - Christmas Media Meeting 22 Dec 2011.	€ 296.75
The Press Association	12 January 2012 - Photos of Prime Minister David Cameron with Taoiseach Enda Kenny 10 Downing Street.	€ 122.01
Maxwell Photography	British Irish council 13/01/12	€ 531.05
Maxwell Photography	Photos/Taoiseach meeting with Deputy PM Nick Clegg	€ 377.30
Maxwell Photography	Blue Star Programmes on 07/02/2012.	€ 539.36
Maxwell Photography	EU Presidency Job winning logo on 02/02/2012.	€ 687.26
Maxwell Photography	Taoiseach & Tánaiste attend 'Progress to date' launch 07/03/2012.	€ 195.57
Frank Fennell Photography Ltd	Launch of the Stability Treaty Website, 19 April 2012.	€ 409.63
Frank Fennell Photography Ltd	Olympic Torch Photocall at Govt Buildings on 06/06/2012.	€ 268.45
QiLai	Photographer for Taoiseach's visit to China 25/28 March 2012	2,817.49
Maxwell Photography	Carers Strategy Launch in the Italian Room on 19th July 2012.	€ 439.11

Vendor Name	Description	Cost
LK Photos	Taoiseach's visit to US 19-21 March 2012.	€ 1,774.78
Lafayette Photography Ltd	NSMC in Farmleigh on 15/06/2012	€ 174.24
Lafayette Photography Ltd	National Day of Commemoration 08/07/2012	€ 555.75
Lafayette Photography Ltd	Olympic Reception at Farmleigh 15/08/2012 -CD of photographs	€ 330.16
Lafayette Photography Ltd	Official Photography services for visit of Secretary of State Northern Ireland on 01 Oct 2012.	€ 87.66
Michael Hudson Photos	Taoiseach's Visit to Chicago, 17 March 2012	€ 302.35
Lafayette Photography Ltd	18hrs of photography over 4 days for the JPEGs for Whos Who on the Irish Presidency Website	€ 3,168.51
2013		
Frank Fennell Photography Ltd	EU Conference of Presidents, Dublin Castle on 31 December 2012	€ 116.85
Frank Fennell Photography Ltd	Presidency meeting of European Parliament Leaders, Dublin Castle 29th Nov 2012	€ 430.51
Maxwell Photography	Photography Prints for Convention Inaugural Meeting on 1st Dec 2012.	€ 1,763.46
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Family photo shot, post production touch up + prints (36 copies) for the EU Directors General Informal meeting (13-14/1/2013)	€ 512.62
Maxwell Photography	2 JPEG images of the Taoiseach/Cyprus President Nov 2005 - 28 Jan 2013.	€ 34.44
Lafayette Photography Ltd	Eucharistic Congress Reception Dublin Castle 1st July 2012	€ 171.01
Lafayette Photography Ltd	Visit of Secretary of State Northern Ireland on 01 Oct 2012, 18 images sent to media	€ 19.43
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Photocall for 40 years in the EU, Art Exhibition, 25 February 2013.	€ 318.54

Questions - Written Answers

Vendor Name	Description	Cost
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Informal Justice and Home Affairs meeting, Dublin Castle, 18/01/13	€ 1,471.99
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	EU Council President Herman Van Rompuy visit, Dublin Castle, 9/1/2013	€ 1,645.47
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Informal Justice and Home Affairs meeting, session 2, Dublin Castle, 17/1/2013	€ 1,449.89
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Informal EU Affairs meeting, Dublin Castle 21/01/13.	€ 1,564.62
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Informal meeting of Employment 8th Feb. 2013 Dublin Castle.	€ 817.91
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Informal meeting of Employment 7th Feb. 2013 Dublin Castle.	€ 1,573.31
Levon Biss Photography Ltd	Prints of Taoiseach's Time Magazine cover 26/11/2012	€ 111.95
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	31st Dec 2012 for EU Flag Raising Ceremony attended by Taoiseach at Dublin Castle.	€ 669.09
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Visit of Presidents Barroso & Schulz at Government Buildings on 28/2/2013. - Post Production Fee	€ 257.43
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Informal meeting of Defence Ministers 13/2/2013, Dublin Castle.	€ 817.91
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Informal meeting of Development & Co-operation Ministers 12/2/2013, Dublin Castle.	€ 1,559.45
M M McNally Photographer	Taoiseach's visit to Downing Street on 11 March 2013.	€ 335.03
E Hill Photography	Taoiseach's visit to Enniskillen, 11 November 2012.	€ 700.60
Peter Cavanagh Photography	Whos Who for Presidency. 27/28 Sept. 2012 & 16 Oct 2012.	€ 1,600.00
Magnum Computers	Photos of Taoiseach's visit to Cleveland, Ohio. October 2012.	€ 192.41
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Gymnich meeting - 23rd March 2013.	€ 484.58

Vendor Name	Description	Cost
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Prints, Presentation Folders, Envelopes relating to Host Photography for Informal Meeting of Energy Ministers at Dublin Castle 24 April, 2013	€ 1,181.62
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Prints, Presentation Folders, Envelopes relating to Host Photography for Informal Meeting of Environment Ministers at Dublin Castle 23 April, 2013	€ 1,307.04
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Informal Meeting of Environment Ministers at Dublin Castle on 22nd April 2013	€ 821.57
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Prints, Presentation Folders, Envelopes relating to Host Photography for Informal Meeting of Ministers for Trade at Dublin Castle 18 April, 2013	€ 1,535.67
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Hunger-Nutrition Conference at Dublin Castle 15 April, 2013	€ 968.41
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	ECOFIN Ministerial Informal meeting on 13/4/2013	€ 1,870.49
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Prints, Presentation Folders, Envelopes relating to Host Photography for Informal Meeting of ECOFIN Ministerial Informal 12 April 2013.	€ 4,126.55
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Hunger-Nutrition & Climate Change at Dublin Castle on 16th April 2013.	€ 817.91
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Commission College meeting Dublin Castle on 10 Jan 2013 - Prints & Digital Imaging	€ 2,042.61
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Health Informal Ministerial Meeting 4th March, Dublin Castle attendance	€ 276.75
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	EU Presidency Team Group Shot on 01 May 2013.	€ 302.58
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Health Informal Ministerial Meeting 5th March 2013- Dublin Castle.	€ 1,134.33

Questions - Written Answers

Vendor Name	Description	Cost
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Gymich meeting 22nd March 2013, Photography & high resolution imaging	€ 1,570.00
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Ministerial Informal, Agriculture Ministers on 27th & 28th May 2013	€ 2,453.74
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Ministerial Informal - Competitiveness [Dept. DJEI] 2nd May 2013	€ 817.91
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Informal meeting of Competitiveness - Council day on 03 May 2013.	€ 1,134.34
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Family photos of Presidency team at Government Buildings on 01 May 2013.	€ 31.38
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Presidency Liaison Officers Photos at Dublin Castle on 27 May 2013.	€ 162.01
Marty Katz Photography & James Higgins Photography	St Patrick's Day Visit, New York - 16-17 March 2013	€ 2,235.66
Maxwell Photography	North South Ministerial Meeting on 05/07/2013 at Dublin Castle Sundays F.T.P. images to Media outlets	€ 706.02
Maxwell Photography	EU Presidency staff event on 05/07/2013 at Dublin Castle - Upload of images to online gallery	€ 292.74
Maxwell Photography	Round table discussion with the Taoiseach and on Online Retailers on 06 Sept 2013.	€ 292.74
Maxwell Photography	Taoiseach's meeting with Bill Clinton at Government Buildings - 09/10/2013	€ 249.69
2014		
Maxwell Photography	Extra copies of prints of the Queen & President Obama's visit, May 2011 ordered for Taoiseach	77.18
Maxwell Photography	Photography assignment, Taoiseach's Address of the Nation, 15th December 2014	956.94
Maxwell Photography	Photography Services for the Convention on the Constitution final plenary meeting 22nd & 23rd February 2014	511.68

Vendor Name	Description	Cost
DNP Service	Taoiseach's visit to Japan, 3-4 December 2013.	244.23
Maxwell Photography	Photography assignment for the visit of the Spanish on the 6th March 2014	519.06
Maxwell Photography	Photography assignment for the visit of the German Prime Minister on the 7th March 2014	396.06
Maria Photography	Taoiseach's visit to Abu Dhabi & Dubai, January 2014.	2695.8
Dan Hallissey Photography	Taoiseach's visit to Boston, 16 March 2014.	506.77
Marty Katz Photography	Photography for Taoiseach Enda Kenny & delegation's trip to Washington DC on 13 & 14 March 2014	1740.64
Maxwell Photography	Official Photography at State Funeral of the late Albert Reynolds 23rd Aug 2014 at Mansion House and Donnybrook Church	2841.3
James Higgins Photography	Photographs of the Taoiseach's visit to New York on 17 March 2014.	252.71
Dowlings Pharmacy	Passport photos for Pat Shelly 04 Sep 2014	6
Boots Chemist	Photo's for Taoiseach 13 July 2014	2.1
Getty Images International	EU, All About Jobs campaign, purchase of iStock photo subscription for 3 months, 7th Oct 2014	207.87
Maxwell Photography	Photography for North South Ministerial Council on 3rd Oct 2014, Dublin Castle.	547.35
CreativeShot Photography	United Irish Cultural Center - San Francisco 4 June 2014.	753.07
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	EU - Photography of Minister Ged Nash at 2 events in Carlow 26th November 2014	491.14
1 January to 4 December 2015		

Questions - Written Answers

Vendor Name	Description	Cost
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	EU - 10 Low Resolution images from Minister Ged Nash events in Carlow 26th November 2014	124.85
Getty Images International	EU 'All About Jobs campaign' purchase of monthly iStock photo subscription for January 2015	€207.87
Department of Foreign Affairs	Photographs of the Taoiseach Enda Kenny attending Youth Reception - Irish Consulate New York September 2014	€198.68
Mr John Kingman	Photography for Taoiseach's visit to New York, 22-24 September 2014.	€317.89
Getty Images International	All About Jobs - purchase of one year iStock subscription for stock photos for All About Jobs section of Merrion St, 25th Feb 2015	€1,966.77
Dowlings Pharmacy	Dowlings Pharmacy - Passport photos 26th Feb 2015	€6.00
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Photography costs for the visit of Mr. Manuel Valls Prime Minister of France to Government Buildings 24th April 2015	€160.00
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Photography costs for the visit of Mr. Manuel Valls Prime Minister of France to Government Buildings 24th April 2015	€181.50
Marty Katz Photographer	St. Patrick's Day 2015. Taoiseach's visit to Washington, DC, USA. 16-17 March 2015.	€2,459.34
Allison Shirref Photographer	Taoiseach's visit to Atlanta, USA, 13th & 14th March 2015.	€1,112.10
Lensmen & Associates	Minister J. Deenihan TD photoshoot with Soyna O'Sullivan on 30 April 2015 at Government Buildings	€553.50
Conor McKeown Photographer	Photographer for US Ambassador's visit to Castlebar - April 2015	€120.00

Vendor Name	Description	Cost
Maxwell Photography	Photography costs for Data Protection Event on 2 July 2015	€447.72
Maxwell Photography	Photography Assignment for State Funeral of Thomas Kent - 18th September 2015	€1,475.80
Fotogioberti Studio	Taoiseach's photos with PM Renzi, 10 July 2015.	€488.00

Public Relations Contracts Data

93. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Taoiseach his Department's use of external public relations firms since he came into office by year in tabular form; the uses of these firms and the policy regarding employing them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43654/15]

The Taoiseach: The following table provides details of external public relations firms employed by my Department from 9 March 2011 to 4 December 2015:

Year	Name of Consultant	Purpose of Consultancy
2012 & 2013	Caroline Erskine, Media and Public Affairs Consultant	To assist in the implementation of the communications plan for Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union and Associated Projects
2013 & 2014	Q4 Public Relations	Support for the Convention on the Constitution

My Department ensures that it gets best value for money in the procurement of all goods and services and keeps to a minimum the engagement of public relations firms. In the cases set out above, the use of external public relations firms was limited to work carried out for Ireland's EU Presidency in 2013 and the Constitutional Convention.

Departmental Reports

94. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Taoiseach the reports he commissioned from external consultants since March 2011 by year, by title, by cost, by date published and by company, in tabular form. [43670/15]

The Taoiseach: The following table details the external consultant reports commissioned by my Department since March 2011.

Title	Company involved	Cost	Publication date
Health and Safety Statement 2011	QTS	€1,270.50	2011
Health and Safety Statement 2012	QTS	€1,270.50	2012

Title	Company involved	Cost	Publication date
Health and Safety Statement 2013 and Risk Assessment	QTS	€1,783.50	2013
PEEP Assessment and Disabled Access Review	QTS	€307.50	2014
Local Diaspora Toolkit	UCD Clinton Institute	€14,300	2015
Research into citizen-related data privacy/protection concerns arising from the development of Smart Cities	National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis, Maynooth University	€14,058	To be published shortly

Ministerial Advisers Data

95. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Taoiseach the number of special advisers on his staff and their yearly salary from 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43686/15]

The Taoiseach: There are five Special Advisors on staff in my Department. The following table provides a breakdown of gross salary for Special Advisors per annum from 2011 to 2015.

Total Gross Salary 2011	Total Gross Salary 2012	Total Gross Salary 2013	Total Gross Salary 2014	Total Gross Salary 2015
€576,153	€586,011	€557,788	€566,878	€574,534

Live Register Data

96. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Taoiseach the number of persons for each individual local social protection office and Intreo centre in County Donegal, who are recorded as having been on the live register on the last Friday of January in each of the years 2005 to date in tabular form; the number of claimants of jobseeker's allowance and of jobseeker's benefit, including the annual change to claimant numbers, in respect of each of these payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43200/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe) (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The exact information requested by the Deputy is not available.

The Live Register series gives a monthly breakdown of the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Benefit, Jobseeker's Allowance and other registrants as registered with the Department of Social Protection. The most recent Live Register figures available are for November 2015.

Table 1a below shows the number of persons in each local office in County Donegal on the Live Register in January of each year from 2004 to 2015 and the latest November 2015 figures.

Table 1b below shows the annual change in the number of persons in each local office in County Donegal on the Live Register in January of each year from 2005 to 2015.

Table 2a below shows the number of persons in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance, Jobseek-

er's Benefit and Other Registrants in each local office in County Donegal in April of each year 2005 to 2015 (this information is only available twice yearly in April and October).

Table 2b below shows the annual change in the number of persons in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance, Jobseeker's Benefit and Other Registrants in each local office in County Donegal in April of each year 2006 to 2015 (this information is only available twice yearly in April and October).

In relation to Tables 2a and 2b, 2005 to 2009 data refers to the week of the second last Friday in the reference period. 2010 to 2015 data refers to the week of the last Friday in the reference period. April 2005 data are the earliest data which can be sourced at this time. April 2015 are the latest data published at this level of detail.

It should be noted that the Live Register is not a definitive measure of unemployment as it includes part-time workers, and seasonal and casual workers entitled to Jobseeker's Benefit or Allowance.

Table 1a Persons on the Live Register in County Donegal classified by Local Office in January 2005 - 2015 and November 2015

Total persons	Jan 2004	Jan 2005	Jan 2006	Jan 2007	Jan 2008	Jan 2009	Jan 2010	Jan 2011	Jan 2012	Jan 2013	Jan 2014	Jan 2015	Nov 2015
Ballybofey	890	801	735	833	942	2,101	2,662	2,689	2,674	2,673	2,545	2,306	2,153
Ballyshannon	588	559	498	588	642	1,152	1,532	1,597	1,581	1,592	1,489	1,388	1,283
Buncrana	1,821	1,754	1,573	1,684	1,928	3,939	5,005	4,938	4,711	4,421	3,900	3,528	2,976
Donegal	519	476	437	622	632	1,155	1,501	1,453	1,432	1,482	1,394	1,204	981
Dunfagh	1,091	954	845	824	842	1,304	1,620	1,650	1,660	1,628	1,508	1,322	1,154
Dungloe	1,633	1,455	1,361	1,270	1,232	1,740	2,256	2,207	2,247	2,144	1,999	1,931	1,769
Killybegs	900	1,009	940	869	812	1,096	1,253	1,296	1,284	960	1,138	1,061	832
Letterkenny	2,889	2,582	2,391	2,329	2,621	4,269	5,644	6,005	5,978	6,005	5,749	5,454	4,908
Total County Donegal	10,331	9,590	8,780	9,019	9,651	16,756	21,473	21,835	21,567	20,905	19,722	18,194	16,056

Source: CSO Live Register

Table 1b Persons on the Live Register in County Donegal classified by Local Office in January 2005 - 2015 - Annual change

Total persons	Jan 2005	Jan 2006	Jan 2007	Jan 2008	Jan 2009	Jan 2010	Jan 2011	Jan 2012	Jan 2013	Jan 2014	Jan 2015
Ballybofey	-89	-66	98	109	-1,159	561	27	-15	-1	-128	-239
Ballyshannon	-29	-61	90	54	510	380	65	-16	11	-103	-101
Buncrana	-67	-181	111	244	2,011	1,066	-67	-227	-290	-521	-372
Donegal	-43	-39	185	10	523	346	-48	-21	50	-88	-190
Dunfagh	-137	-109	-21	18	462	316	30	10	-32	-120	-186
Dungloe	-178	-94	-91	-38	508	516	-49	40	-103	-145	-68

Questions - Written Answers

Total persons	Jan 2005	Jan 2006	Jan 2007	Jan 2008	Jan 2009	Jan 2010	Jan 2011	Jan 2012	Jan 2013	Jan 2014	Jan 2015
Killybegs	109	-69	-71	-57	284	157	43	-12	-324	178	-77
Letterkenny	-307	-191	-62	292	1,648	1,375	361	-27	27	-256	-295
Total County Donegal	-741	-810	239	632	7,105	4,717	362	-268	-662	-1,183	-1,528 Source: CSO Live Register

Source: CSO Live Register

Table 2a - Number of persons on the Live Register in County Donegal classified by Local Office and Social Welfare Scheme in April 2005 - 2009

County Donegal	Social Welfare Scheme	April 2005 ¹	April 2006 ¹	April 2007 ¹	April 2008 ¹	April 2009 ¹
Ballybofey	Jobseekers Benefit	412	414	249	406	985
	Jobseekers Allowance	282	289	475	671	1,349
	Others	34	29	23	21	42
	Total	728	732	747	1,098	2,376
Ballyshannon	Jobseekers Benefit	251	251	230	294	630
	Jobseekers Allowance	194	204	269	357	626
	Others	34	23	28	34	37
	Total	479	478	527	685	1,293
Buncrana	Jobseekers Benefit	1,061	1,030	504	700	1,729
	Jobseekers Allowance	441	473	1,027	1,407	2,566
	Others	104	99	81	89	120
	Total	1,606	1,602	1,612	2,196	4,415
Donegal(BO)	Jobseekers Benefit	189	192	394	396	766
	Jobseekers Allowance	238	233	188	229	463
	Others	11	12	12	28	39
	Total	438	437	594	653	1,268
Dunfanaghy	Jobseekers Benefit	526	489	227	257	517
	Jobseekers Allowance	265	191	484	512	797
	Others	58	47	49	59	69
	Total	849	727	760	828	1,383
Dungloe	Jobseekers Benefit	813	795	371	443	716
	Jobseekers Allowance	458	361	697	708	1,011
	Others	156	130	129	119	157
	Total	1,427	1,286	1,197	1,270	1,884
Killybegs	Jobseekers Benefit	202	233	620	579	781
	Jobseekers Allowance	639	677	193	205	360
	Others	71	75	55	54	58
	Total	912	985	868	838	1,199

County Donegal	Social Welfare Scheme	April 2005 ¹	April 2006 ¹	April 2007 ¹	April 2008 ¹	April 2009 ¹
Letterkenny	Jobseekers Benefit	1,657	1,635	584	733	1,708
	Jobseekers Allowance	665	638	1,595	1,828	2,821
	Others	97	99	98	105	145
	Total	2,419	2,372	2,277	2,666	4,674
County Donegal	Jobseekers Benefit	5,111	5,039	3,179	3,808	7,832
	Jobseekers Allowance	3,182	3,066	4,928	5,917	9,993
	Others	565	514	475	509	667
	Total	8,858	8,619	8,582	10,234	18,492

Table 2a cont'd - Number of persons on the Live Register in County Donegal classified by Local Office and Social Welfare Scheme in April 2010 - 2015

County Donegal	Social Welfare Scheme	April 2010 ²	April 2011 ²	April 2012 ²	April 2013 ²	April 2014 ²	April 2015 ²
Ballybofey	Jobseekers Benefit	688	475	406	327	279	165
	Jobseekers Allowance	1,839	2,088	2,116	2,161	2,153	1,912
	Others	56	76	100	110	103	90
	Total	2,583	2,639	2,622	2,598	2,535	2,167
Ballyshannon	Jobseekers Benefit	478	391	296	247	190	154
	Jobseekers Allowance	926	1,103	1,127	1,160	1,140	1,021
	Others	68	84	103	101	118	115
	Total	1,472	1,578	1,526	1,508	1,448	1,290
Buncrana	Jobseekers Benefit	1,107	871	676	500	327	248
	Jobseekers Allowance	3,595	3,743	3,560	3,448	3,230	2,903
	Others	196	238	242	264	264	259
	Total	4,898	4,852	4,478	4,212	3,821	3,410
Donegal(BO)	Jobseekers Benefit	608	514	415	417	295	243
	Jobseekers Allowance	703	812	827	891	884	787
	Others	63	82	92	96	93	93
	Total	1,374	1,408	1,334	1,404	1,272	1,123
Dunfanaghy	Jobseekers Benefit	343	264	213	170	139	126
	Jobseekers Allowance	1,117	1,193	1,226	1,187	1,112	962
	Others	109	134	143	145	136	119
	Total	1,569	1,591	1,582	1,502	1,387	1,207
Dungloe	Jobseekers Benefit	650	462	370	290	221	248
	Jobseekers Allowance	1,381	1,489	1,549	1,514	1,415	1,352
	Others	206	235	255	266	264	240
	Total	2,237	2,186	2,174	2,070	1,900	1,840
Killybegs	Jobseekers Benefit	675	675	610	483	415	363
	Jobseekers Allowance	498	576	565	608	626	538
	Others	88	99	102	106	105	109

Questions - Written Answers

County Donegal	Social Welfare Scheme	April 2010 ²	April 2011 ²	April 2012 ²	April 2013 ²	April 2014 ²	April 2015 ²
	Total	1,261	1,350	1,277	1,197	1,146	1,010
Letterkenny	Jobseekers Benefit	1,347	1,280	931	763	585	440
	Jobseekers Allowance	4,024	4,568	4,611	4,743	4,773	4,426
	Others	231	275	312	338	343	317
	Total	5,602	6,123	5,854	5,844	5,701	5,183
County Donegal	Jobseekers Benefit	5,896	4,932	3,917	3,197	2,451	1,987
	Jobseekers Allowance	14,083	15,572	15,581	15,712	15,333	13,901
	Others	1,017	1,223	1,349	1,426	1,426	1,342
	Total	20,996	21,727	20,847	20,335	19,210	17,230

CSO: Live Register

1 Data refer to the week of the second last Friday in the reference period.

2 Data refer to the week of the last Friday in the reference period. **Table 2b - Number of persons on the Live Register in County Donegal classified by Local Office and Social Welfare Scheme in April 2006 - 2009 - Annual change**

County Donegal	Social Welfare Scheme	April 2006 ¹	April 2007 ¹	April 2008 ¹	April 2009 ¹
Ballybofey	Jobseekers Benefit	2	-165	157	579
	Jobseekers Allowance	7	186	196	678
	Others	-5	-6	-2	21
	Total	4	15	351	1,278
Ballyshannon	Jobseekers Benefit	0	-21	64	336
	Jobseekers Allowance	10	65	88	269
	Others	-11	5	6	3
	Total	-1	49	158	608
Buncrana	Jobseekers Benefit	-31	-526	196	1,029
	Jobseekers Allowance	32	554	380	1,159
	Others	-5	-18	8	31
	Total	-4	10	584	2,219
Donegal(BO)	Jobseekers Benefit	3	202	2	370
	Jobseekers Allowance	-5	-45	41	234
	Others	1	0	16	11
	Total	-1	157	59	615
Dunfanaghy	Jobseekers Benefit	-37	-262	30	260
	Jobseekers Allowance	-74	293	28	285
	Others	-11	2	10	10
	Total	-122	33	68	555
Dungloe	Jobseekers Benefit	-18	-424	72	273
	Jobseekers Allowance	-97	336	11	303
	Others	-26	-1	-10	38
	Total	-141	-89	73	614
Killybegs	Jobseekers Benefit	31	387	-41	202
	Jobseekers Allowance	38	-484	12	155

County Donegal	Social Welfare Scheme	April 2006 ¹	April 2007 ¹	April 2008 ¹	April 2009 ¹
	Others	4	-20	-1	4
	Total	73	-117	-30	361
Letterkenny	Jobseekers Benefit	-22	-1,051	149	975
	Jobseekers Allowance	-27	957	233	993
	Others	2	-1	7	40
	Total	-47	-95	389	2,008
County Donegal	Jobseekers Benefit	-72	-1,860	629	4,024
	Jobseekers Allowance	-116	1,862	989	4,076
	Others	-51	-39	34	158
	Total	-239	-37	1,652	8,258

Table 2b cont'd - Number of persons on the Live Register in County Donegal classified by Local Office and Social Welfare Scheme in April 2010 - 2015 - Annual change

County Donegal	Social Welfare Scheme	April 2010 ²	April 2011 ²	April 2012 ²	April 2013 ²	April 2014 ²	April 2015 ²
Ballybofey	Jobseekers Benefit	-297	-213	-69	-79	-48	-114
	Jobseekers Allowance	490	249	28	45	-8	-241
	Others	14	20	24	10	-7	-13
	Total	207	56	-17	-24	-63	-368
Ballyshannon	Jobseekers Benefit	-152	-87	-95	-49	-57	-36
	Jobseekers Allowance	300	177	24	33	-20	-119
	Others	31	16	19	-2	17	-3
	Total	179	106	-52	-18	-60	-158
Buncrana	Jobseekers Benefit	-622	-236	-195	-176	-173	-79
	Jobseekers Allowance	1,029	148	-183	-112	-218	-327
	Others	76	42	4	22	0	-5
	Total	483	-46	-374	-266	-391	-411
Donegal(BO)	Jobseekers Benefit	-158	-94	-99	2	-122	-52
	Jobseekers Allowance	240	109	15	64	-7	-97
	Others	24	19	10	4	-3	0
	Total	106	34	-74	70	-132	-149
Dunfanaghy	Jobseekers Benefit	-174	-79	-51	-43	-31	-13
	Jobseekers Allowance	320	76	33	-39	-75	-150
	Others	40	25	9	2	-9	-17
	Total	186	22	-9	-80	-115	-180
Dungloe	Jobseekers Benefit	-66	-188	-92	-80	-69	27
	Jobseekers Allowance	370	108	60	-35	-99	-63
	Others	49	29	20	11	-2	-24
	Total	353	-51	-12	-104	-170	-60
Killybegs	Jobseekers Benefit	-106	0	-65	-127	-68	-52
	Jobseekers Allowance	138	78	-11	43	18	-88

Questions - Written Answers

County Donegal	Social Welfare Scheme	April 2010 ²	April 2011 ²	April 2012 ²	April 2013 ²	April 2014 ²	April 2015 ²
	Others	30	11	3	4	-1	4
	Total	62	89	-73	-80	-51	-136
Letterkenny	Jobseekers Benefit	-361	-67	-349	-168	-178	-145
	Jobseekers Allowance	1,203	544	43	132	30	-347
	Others	86	44	37	26	5	-26
	Total	928	521	-269	-10	-143	-518
County Donegal	Jobseekers Benefit	-1,936	-964	-1,015	-720	-746	-464
	Jobseekers Allowance	4,090	1,489	9	131	-379	-1,432
	Others	350	206	126	77	0	-84
	Total	2,504	731	-880	-512	-1,125	-1,980

CSO: Live Register

1 Data refers to the week of the second last Friday in the reference period.

2 Data refers to the week of the last Friday in the reference period.

Public Sector Staff Redeployment

97. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Taoiseach the number of employees who will be employed in the 2016 centenary programme office by grade; the criteria and processes used to select these employees; the number of applications received from employees of the Revenue Commissioners by grade and why all these applications were rejected; if unsuccessful applicants have any appeal or review options open to them; and if he will make a statement on the matter [43827/15]

The Taoiseach: The 2016 Centenary Programme Office is shared between my Department and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. In my Department, 1 Assistant Principal Officer, 1 Higher Executive Officer (seconded) and 1 Clerical Officer (seconded) will be assigned to the Programme Office.

Expressions of interest for temporary assignment to the 2016 Centenary Programme Office were sought from across the Civil Service via the Human Resource (HR) Units in each individual Department and Office. Prospective candidates were requested to complete an application form and submit their Curriculum Vitae and any relevant supporting documentation to their local HR Unit for onward transmission to the HR Unit in my Department.

All applications received (179 in total) were considered by a Selection Board comprising staff from my Department and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Each candidate's application was scored based on the criteria specified in the application form i.e. event management / project management experience; Irish language proficiency; ICT skills; and other relevant experience. At the end of the process, 9 candidates were selected for assignment to the 2016 Centenary Programme Office. All applicants received feedback on the selection process along with a scoresheet detailing their marks under each criterion.

34 applications were received from the Office of the Revenue Commissioners broken down by grade as follows: 2 Assistant Principal Officers; 7 Higher Executive Officers; 1 Administrative Officer; 14 Executive Officers and 10 Clerical Officers.

It is open to any applicant to request further feedback from my Department's HR Unit on

the selection process.

Departmental Legal Costs

98. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Taoiseach the total cost to his Department, and those under his aegis, for the procurement of legal services in the State from 2011 to 2015 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44566/15]

The Taoiseach: My Department does not procure legal services as such. When necessary, my Department avails of the services of the State Claims Agency and obtains legal advice from the Office of the Attorney General.

The legal costs incurred by my Department and the National Economic and Social Development Office from 2011 to 2015 is provided in the following table:

Year	€
2011	€43,535
2012	*€241,676
2013	Nil
2014	€22,909
2015	€3,650

The table does not include any costs that have been incurred in relation to the Tribunal of Inquiry (Moriarty) or the Commissions of Investigation (Fennelly and Cregan).

*In 2012 my Department paid €241,676 in legal costs incurred in respect of the applicant's costs in proceedings taken against the previous Government about the holding of a by-election in Donegal South-West.

Disability Allowance Payments

99. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if arrears under the disability allowance scheme will issue before Christmas 2015 to a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43515/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am pleased to inform you that disability allowance arrears issued to the person in question on 2 December 2015.

Carer's Allowance Payments

100. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if a person (details supplied) in Dublin 17 is receiving the full entitlement under the carer's allowance scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43526/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned has been in receipt of CA since 15 July 2010 and is on a reduced rate of payment based on her husband's earnings.

The person concerned will be requested to submit up to date information on her means so that her entitlement may be reviewed to ensure that it remains valid and correct.

Water Conservation Grant Eligibility

101. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection why a water conservation grant has not been paid to a person (details supplied) in County Wexford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43528/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The eligibility criteria for the Water Conservation Grant are set out in the Water Services Act 2014 (Water Conservation Grant) Regulations 2015. Under regulation 5(1) a person who registers with Irish Water, as required under section 5(2)(a) of the Water Services Act 2014, on or before 30 June 2015 shall be eligible to receive the grant in 2015 if they were normally resident at the principal private residence on that date.

To date Irish Water has transferred details of over 1.3 million registered households to this Department including the details of the person concerned. A letter issued to the person concerned at the address given inviting them to apply for the grant before the deadline of 8 October 2015 and advising them that they could make this application either online or with the assistance of the Water Grant Support Team by telephone. Statutory Instrument 434 of 2015 provided for the extension of the deadline for the submission of a completed application for the Water Conservation Grant to the Department of Social Protection from 8 October 2015 to 22 October 2015. However, there is no record of the person having applied for the grant prior to the closing date.

Water Conservation Grant Eligibility

102. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection why a water conservation grant has not been paid to a person (details supplied) in County Wexford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43529/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The eligibility criteria for the Water Conservation Grant are set out in the Water Services Act 2014 (Water Conservation Grant) Regulations 2015. Under regulation 5(1) a person who registers with Irish Water, as required under section 5(2)(a) of the Water Services Act 2014, on or before 30 June 2015 shall be eligible to receive the grant in 2015 if they were normally resident at the principal private residence on that date.

So far Irish Water has transferred details of over 1.3 million registered households to this Department. However, the details for the person concerned have not been received by the Department to date.

Carer's Allowance Applications

103. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection why a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan has been waiting almost a month for contact from a social protection inspector so that an application under the carer's allowance scheme can be completed. [43532/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 4 September 2015.

The application was referred to a local social welfare inspector (SWI) on 4 November 2015 to confirm the number of hours worked by the applicant and to determine if adequate care was provided for the care recipient while the person concerned was working.

Subsequently, the Department was notified of the death of the care recipient in this case.

This case will be expedited and, once the SWI has reported, a deciding officer will make a decision on the application as quickly as possible and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

On behalf of myself and the Department, sincere sympathy is offered to the applicant and to the family of the care recipient on their recent bereavement.

Illness Benefit Applications

104. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of a claim under the illness benefit scheme by a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43563/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Illness benefit is a payment for people who cannot work due to illness and who satisfy the pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions. One of the PRSI conditions is that a person must have a minimum of 39 reckonable contributions paid or credited in the governing contribution year. Claims made in 2015 are governed by the 2013 tax year, and only PRSI Classes A, E, H, and P are reckonable for illness benefit purposes.

The person concerned made an application for illness benefit from 19 Oct 2015 and has an entitlement to illness benefit at the graduated personal weekly rate of €147.30 based on weekly earnings of €231.29 in 2013. They also qualify for payment of qualified child allowance at the rate of €59.60. The total weekly entitlement is €206.90.

The person concerned was in receipt of supplementary welfare allowance at the time the application for illness benefit was made. Supplementary welfare allowance is a means tested payment and it was necessary to offset any arrears of illness benefit against the amount paid by way of supplementary allowance. This has now been done and illness benefit payment issued to the bank account of the person concerned on 23/11/15.

Social Welfare Fraud Investigations

105. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will undertake a national print media advertising campaign to encourage members of the public to report social protection fraud; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43570/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): It is evident that the vast majority of social welfare recipients are legitimately entitled to the payments they receive. However social welfare fraud undermines public confidence in the entire social protection system as well as being unfair to other recipients of social welfare payments and to taxpayers. Control of fraud and abuse of the social welfare system is one of the three key functions of the Department and therefore has been one of my priorities since I came to the Department.

The Department has made some significant inroads in tackling social welfare fraud. In April of 2014 the Department published a new Compliance and Anti-Fraud Strategy 2014 –

2018. The new strategy builds on the approach and progress made under the previous Initiative.

Enhanced access channels - both online and dedicated phone lines - are available to citizens who wish to report incidences of welfare fraud. Citizens who wish to report suspected incidences of welfare fraud can do so both online and to dedicated phone lines as follows:

- By email: www.welfare.ie
- By phone: (01) 6732123 or (071) 9672648 or Locall: 1890 927999.
- By Post: Central Control Division, DSP, Shannon Lodge, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim.

A payment is not suspended or stopped solely on the basis of an anonymous report. The anonymous report, however, may be a “trigger” for the instigation of a review of a customer’s entitlement. All anonymous or confidential reports received are examined and where relevant, are referred for follow-up action. A total of 12,787 reports were dealt with by the Department’s Control Division from January - October 2015.

There are no plans to undertake a national print media advertising campaign encouraging members of the public to report social welfare fraud at this time. It should be borne in mind that there is often a perception of fraud however 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 e.g. working and receiving a OPF payment provided earnings are within the limits and the Department is aware of the situation is legitimate.

Social Welfare Fraud Data

106. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the number of persons prosecuted for social protection fraud in each of the years 2013 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43571/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): 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 and must ensure that all necessary evidential proofs are available.

In considering, or when referring, 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, and previous incidences of social welfare fraud.

In 2013, a total of 275 cases were referred for legal proceedings; of which 207 (198 criminal and 9 civil) were sent to the Chief State Solicitors Office/DPP and a further 68 cases were referred to the Gardaí for consideration of criminal proceedings to be taken under the Criminal Justice (Fraud and Theft) Act 2001.

The corresponding figures for 2014 were 321 cases, of which 206 (201 criminal and 5 civil) cases were sent directly to the Chief State Solicitors Office//DPP and 115 cases were referred to the Gardaí.

As at the end of October 2015, the Department had sent a total of 146 cases to the Chief State Solicitors Office//DPP. The number of cases referred to the Gardaí for prosecution under Criminal Justice legislation will be collated at the end of the year. The overall total for 2015 is expected to be similar to previous years.

The Courts are totally independent of the State and Judges have the discretion to decide on the appropriate penalty to be applied in any case having regard to the evidence presented to them in relation to the case and the relevant maximum penalties.

Carer's Allowance Applications

107. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application under the carer's allowance scheme by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43577/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned is in receipt of carer's allowance (CA) in respect of the care of her son since 2012. I confirm that on the 27 October 2015 the department received an application for CA from the person concerned in respect of a second care recipient, her daughter. The application is currently being processed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Ministerial Meetings

108. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the number of meetings requested by private external lobby groups and the number of meetings held, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43605/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): As the Deputy will appreciate, in view of the range of my remit as Minister I receive representations, including requests for meetings from a broad range of sources, including members of the Oireachtas, local and voluntary groups and private individuals and companies.

I meet with a wide number of groups and organisations in the normal course of my duties both formally and informally. While my Office does not maintain a register of all such requests for meetings or invitations received, I can advise the Deputy that since 2014, I have attended some 150 meetings with a variety of individuals and groups, including meetings with representatives of those bodies under the aegis of my Department and other public representatives. These figures would not include informal unscheduled meetings that might arise from time to time.

I have met with groups such as St. Vincent de Paul, Social Justice Ireland, Barnardo's, Age Action Ireland, Alone, Carer's Association, Centre for Independent Living, Children's Rights Alliance, DFI, EAPN, FLAC, Focus Ireland, Irish Council for Social Housing, Inclusion Ireland, INOU, Irish Senior Citizens Parliament, Threshold, One Family and Simon formally, I would also meet members of these groups and others informally, in my duties while attending events both as Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection.

The Deputy will be aware that the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 has recently been enacted by the Oireachtas and commenced on 1 September 2015. The Act provides that the Standards in Public Office Commission (the Standards Commission) will establish and maintain an online register of lobbying and oversee compliance with the legislative provisions. The purpose of the register is to make information available to the public on the identity of those communicating with designated public officials. Persons lobbying have to register with the Standards Commission and are required to submit returns on their lobbying activities.

Departmental Expenditure

109. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection her Department's photography costs since she came into office, inclusive of costs incurred from use of the ministerial allowance by year in tabular form; the occasions for which photographers were booked; the photographers used; the costs associated with each occasion; the policy in place regarding the booking of photographers; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43637/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Photography services are used, in conjunction with some press releases and conferences, to communicate the Department's initiatives, schemes and services to customers and to the regional and national media.

The procurement of these photography services is carried out in accordance with national and EU procurement procedures and since March 2012, the Department has been procuring photography services under the Framework Agreement established by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in February 2012.

I do not use my ministerial allowance for this purpose.

Since March 2011, photography services were used for the occasions as set out in the following table.

Year: 2011	Details	Photographer	Cost (€)
29 July 2011	Launch of JobBridge	Maxwells	1,035.16
16 Aug 2011	Departmental Summer School, Maynooth	Kevin Morris Photography	950.00
07 Nov 2011	Mortgage Arrears Seminar	Ark Photography	254.10
09 Nov 2011	Social Inclusion Forum	Ark Photography and Dragana Jurisic	547.50
21 Nov 2011	2 Social Inclusion Projects	Ark Photography	326.70
		Total 2011:	€3,113.46
Year: 2012	Details	Photographer	Cost (€)
13 Feb 2012	Launch of 'Partial Capacity' and 'Employability'	Maxwells	338.25
23 Feb 2012	Launch of Pathways to Work	Maxwells	536.28
27 Apr 2012	Opening of Community Campus in Phibblestown	Lensmen	280.44
06 Sep 2012	Launch of Mortgage Information Helpline	Ark Photography	258.30
13 Sep 2012	Launch of Good Practice Guide for Breakfast Clubs	Ark Photography	184.50

Year: 2012	Details	Photographer	Cost (€)
17 Sep 2012	Presentation of Report of the Actuarial Review of the Social Insurance Fund	Ark Photography	184.50
15 Oct 2012	Launch of Intreo, Sligo	Joe Travers	300.00
19 Oct 2012	Intreo roadshow in Limerick	Picsure Ltd (Kieran Clancy)	233.70
26 Oct 2012	Employer roadshow in Galway	Joe Travers	125.00
01 Nov 2012	Employer roadshow in Cork	Tony O'Connell Photography	227.00
16 Nov 2012	Employer roadshow in Dublin	Ark Photography	258.30
		Total 2012:	€2,926.27
Year: 2013	Details	Photographer	Cost (€)
22 Mar 2013	Launch of Intreo in Tallaght	Lensmen	323.48
16 Apr 2013	Launch of JobBridge Arts in Killarney	MacMonagle Photography	338.25
19 Apr 2013	Briefing for Employers in Blanchardstown and Launch of Intreo in Blanchardstown	Lensmen	851.25
1 May 2013	Publication of Indecon Report on JobBridge	Lensmen	589.79
2 May 2013	EU Presidency Conference, Leuven	Peter Cavanagh	707.25
10 May 2013	Kilkenny Local Office	Vicky Comerford	123.00
18 July 2013	Launch of Pathways to Work	Maxwells	482.16
25 Sept 2013	Inaugural Meeting of the Labour Market Advisory Council	Maxwells	424.35
22 Nov 2013	Launch of Intreo in Loughrea (Minister and Taoiseach)	Joe Travers	225.00
		Total 2013:	€4,064.53
Year: 2014	Details	Photographer	Cost (€)
15 Jan 2014	Launch of Benefit of Work ready reckoner and official opening of Intreo in Ballyfermot office	Ark Photography	322.88

Questions - Written Answers

Year: 2014	Details	Photographer	Cost (€)
20 Jan 2014	Official opening of Intreo in Limerick	Kieran Clancy	221.40
21 Feb 2014	Official opening of Intreo in Castlebar	Joe Travers	300.00
3 April 2014	Medical Assessor Admin Conference	Bobby Studios Photography	270.60
30 April 2014	Launch of Interim Report of Labour Market Council	Ark Photography	258.30
10 Oct 2014	Launch of Pathways to Work 2015	Ark Photography	387.45
29 Dec 2014	Official launch of secondment of Gardaí to Special Investigations Unit	Mac Innes Photography	€378.84
Total 2014			€2,139.47
Year: 2015	Details	Photographer	Cost (€)
24 April 2015	Tánaiste meeting with French Prime Minister in Leinster House	Mac Innes Photography	€246.32
28 Sept 2015	Launch of Jobs Week	Maxwell Photography	€413.28
11 Nov 2015	Launch of Intreo in Galway	Joe Travers Photography	€175.00

Public Relations Contracts Data

110. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection her Department's use of external public relations firms since she came into office by year, in tabular form; the uses of these firms and the policy regarding employing them; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43653/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): In line with Department of Social Protection policy, the press office deals with all media queries and public relations matters. It is the Department's policy to use in-house resources as much as possible and to restrict the use of external firms to a minimum.

During the period referred to by the Deputy, the Department has used the services of one external public relations firm for training purposes, details of which are outlined in the following table.

Year	Company	Function
2012	Carr Communications, 5 Northumberland Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.	Communications training for senior management.

Year	Company	Function
2014	Carr Communications, 5 Northumberland Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.	Media Skills one-day training for a group of officials.
2015	Carr Communications, 5 Northumberland Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.	Interview training for a group of managers.

Consultancy Contracts Data

111. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the reports she commissioned from external consultants since March 2011 by year, by title, by cost, by date published and by company in tabular form. [43669/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The procurement of services is essential to support the Department in providing a high quality service to the public in a cost effective and efficient manner and is governed by a comprehensive regulatory, legal and procedural framework.

The Department engages consultants (individuals or organisations) to provide intellectual or knowledge based services (e.g. expert analysis and advice) including the delivery of reports, studies, assessments, recommendations and proposals that contribute to decision making or policy making.

The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following tables.

Report	Name of Consultants	Commissioned	Publication Date	Cost €
External quality assessment of DSP Internal Audit under the D/PER Internal Audit standards 2012	EisnerAmper Ireland	Nov-2015	Internal Management Report	€5,535
Analysis & Measurement of Poverty & Social Exclusion 2015 Programme: 1. Changes in social risks by life-cycle group 2. Developing a multi-dimensional quality of life indicator	ESRI	Q3 2015	Q1-Q2 2016	€80,000

Questions - Written Answers

Report	Name of Consultants	Commissioned	Publication Date	Cost €
Jobseeker Customer Satisfaction Survey	W5 Marketing Intelligence Ltd	Aug-2015	Q1 2016	€71,463
Confidential Information Security Report	Deloitte	July 2015	Internal Management Report	€7,749
Social Inclusion Forum – Conference Report	Aidan Lloyd	Mar-2015	Q4 2015	€1,650
Policy and practice report: Key lessons learned from the Ballymun Youth Guarantee Project	NUI Maynooth	Jan-2015	March 2015	€11,135*
Evaluation of the Disability Activation Project	Indecon International Economic Consultants	Feb-2015	November 2015	€29,520
Review of the EmployAbility (Supported Employment) Service	Indecon International Economic Consultants	Jan-2015	To be determined following completion of the review	€59,280
Confidential Forensic Services	Rits	Mar-2015	Internal Management Report	€11,480
Windows Tablet PC Hardening Review (Limited Scope) Windows Laptop PC Hardening Review (Limited Scope) Windows Phone Device Hardening Review (Limited Scope)	Deloitte	Mar-2015	Internal Management Report	€4,151
Project coordination of Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Work Positive Framework	Sharon Gallagher	Mar- 2015	To be determined following completion of the review	€3,000

Report	Name of Consultants	Commissioned	Publication Date	Cost €
Technical review of rent supplement under the Equal Status Acts.	Mel Cousins & Associates	Mar-2015	Internal Management Report	€18,000
Microfilm Condition Report	Martin Bradley, Archives and Records Management Consultant	Nov -2014	Internal Management Report	€1,691
Report on the effectiveness & efficiency of the guidance model used during Youth Guarantee Pilot	NUI Maynooth	Nov-2014	Internal Management Report	€14,145*
Ex-ante Evaluation to support the preparation of the Operational Programme for the European Fund for the Most Deprived 2014-2020	Mel Cousins and Associates	July-2014	Internal report required by EU Regulation (EU) No 223/2014	€16,000
Assessment for Application Lifecycle Management	Microsoft Ireland	May-2014	Internal Management Report	€22,586
Confidential Forensic Services	Rits	Apr-2014	Internal Management Report	€2,340
Confidential Forensic Services	Rits	Apr-2014	Internal Management Report	€4,201
Security Partner Services - IT Forensics	Deloitte	Mar-2014	Internal Management Report	€2,398
Identification & containment of malicious software	Deloitte	Apr-2014	Internal Management Report	€15,699
Social Inclusion Forum – Conference Report	Aidan Lloyd	Mar-2014	Dec-2014	€1,650

Questions - Written Answers

Report	Name of Consultants	Commissioned	Publication Date	Cost €
Analysis & Measurement of Poverty & Social Exclusion 2014 programme: 1. Transitions into and out of household joblessness using CSO SILC data 2. Measuring Irish joblessness: The SILC and LFS data sources	ESRI	Q1-2014	1. Sept-2015 2. May-2015	€80,000
Evaluation Research (Back to Education Allowance)	ESRI	Nov-2013	Internal Management Report	€24,809
Social Welfare Appeals Office – Research into Revising Decisions	Mel Cousins & Associates	Dec -2013	Internal Management Report	€2,400
Evaluation of the Youth Guarantee Pilot	Franklin Research Ltd	Oct- 2013	Jan 2015	€20,000*
Report on Organisation Development	Axiom Consultants	Sept- 2013	Internal Management Report	€122,692
Auto Enrolment & Applicability to Ireland (Pensions)	TOR Financial Consulting Ltd.	Mid-2013	Internal Management Report	€9,900
Advisory report on implementation of European Youth Guarantee in Irish circumstances	Organisation for Economic co-operation & Development (OECD)	Sept- 2013	Jan-2014	€50,000
A Review of In-work Supports for the Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare	Mel Cousins & Associates	July-2013	TBC	€10,000

Report	Name of Consultants	Commissioned	Publication Date	Cost €
Delivery of Administrative Profiling Models to Identify those at Risk of Labour Market Disadvantage	ESRI	July-2013	June-2014	€33,745
Analysis & Measurement of Poverty & Social Exclusion (AMPSE) 2013 programme: 1. Social Transfers & Poverty in Boom & Recession (for 2013 annual report) 2. Indicators of Economic Strain in the Great Recession (for 2013 technical paper)	ESRI	June-2013	1. Dec-2013 2. Apr-2014	€67,979
Diet Supplement Diet Costing's Update	Irish Nutrition & Dietetic Institute	Apr-2013	Sep-2013	€4,000
Social Inclusion Forum – Conference Report	Aidan Lloyd	Mar-2013	Sep-2013	€1,500
Mobile Applications Opportunity Exploration	Accenture	Feb-2013	Internal Management Report	€33,388
Contracted Employment Service Model	Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion	Nov-2012	Internal Management Report	€140,989
Report on Pension Priority Order	Mercer	Sep-2012	Feb-2013	€18,450
Developing system architecture for the National Employment & Entitlements Service	Compass Point	June-2012	Internal Management Report	€4,600

Questions - Written Answers

Report	Name of Consultants	Commissioned	Publication Date	Cost €
Evaluation of JobBridge (National Internship Scheme)	Indecon International Economic Consultants	Apr-2012	Apr-2013	€59,555
Actuarial Review of the Social Insurance Fund	KPMG	Feb-2012	Jun-2012	€153,750
FÁS IS Applications Systems Review	Accenture	Jan-2012	Internal Management Report	€44,772
Analysis & Measurement of Poverty & Deprivation 2012:1. Work & Poverty in Ireland: An Analysis of CSO Survey on Income & Living Conditions 2004-2010 (2012 annual report) 2. Technical Paper on Poverty Indicators – [Appendix C of Report of the Review of the National Poverty Target] 3. Implications of Income Pooling & Household Decision-Making for Poverty & Deprivation (2012 technical paper)	ESRI	Jan-2012	1. Dec-2012. Oct-2012, Oct-2013	€81,230
Review of Irish Pensions Policy	OECD	Jan-2012	Apr-2013	€130,000
Social Welfare Appeals Office – Research on Insurability Issues & Access to Legal Resources	Mel Cousins & Associates	2011	2011	€7,744

Report	Name of Consultants	Commissioned	Publication Date	Cost €
Social Inclusion Forum – Conference Report	Aidan Lloyd	Nov-2011	Aug-2012	€1,500
Report on Pension Charges in Ireland	PWC	Oct-2011	Oct-2012	€61,500
Development & implementation of the National Employment & Entitlements Service	Accenture	June-2011	Aug-2011	€186,563
Report on electronic access to GRO Records for genealogy research	John Grenham	Apr-2011	Internal Management Report	€3,557

* EU Funded Reports

Working Environment Reports

Report	Name of Consultants	Commissioned	Publication Date	Cost €
Survey Air quality in Waterford Intreo	Wright Environmental Services	Dec- 2014	Internal Management Report	€6,863
Survey Air quality in Nutgrove Local Office	Wright Environmental Services	Nov-2013	Internal Management Report	€2,900
Health & Safety Review of DSP premises, Upper Gardiner St, Dublin 1	CPL Training Ltd, trading as Nifast Health & Safety Training	Apr-2013	Internal Management Report	€1,100
Air Quality Investigation, Ballymun Local Office	Wright Environmental Services	Aug-2012	Internal Management Report	€3,644
Air Quality Investigation, Áras Mhic Dhiarmada	Wright Environmental Services	Aug-2012	Internal Management Report	€3,383

Report	Name of Consultants	Commissioned	Publication Date	Cost €
Risk assessments regarding reception areas [Arklow, Tallaght, & Kings Inn, Dublin Local Offices]	Nifast	June-2012	Internal Management Report	€1,845
Investigation of odour/smells, DSP Cobh	Employment Health Advisors Ltd	May-2011	Internal Management Report	€2,023
Investigation of odour/smells, Belmullet Local Office	Wright Environmental Services	Apr-2011	Internal Management Report	€1,699

Ministerial Advisers Data

112. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the number of special advisers on her staff and their yearly salary, from 2011 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43685/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The amount spent by the Department of Social Protection on special advisers for the years 2007-2015 is outlined in the attached tabular statement. Costs include basic salary and employer's liability with regard to pay related social insurance.

TABULAR STATEMENT

SPECIAL ADVISORS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION 2007 TO 2015

YEAR	SPECIAL ADVISORS	TOTAL SALARY	T and S	ANNUAL COST
2015 (to week 52)				
Tánaiste Joan Burton T.D.	4	€459,643	€107	€459,750
2014				
Tánaiste Joan Burton T.D.*	4	€191,319	€0	€191,319
Minister Joan Burton T.D	2	€130,975	€0	€130,975
Total 2014				€322,294
2013				
Minister Joan Burton T.D.	2	€221, 869	€464	€222.333
2012				

YEAR	SPECIAL AD- VISORS	TOTAL SAL- ARY	T and S	ANNUAL COST
Minister Joan Burton T.D.	2	€225,116	€646	€225,762
2011				
Minister Joan Burton T.D.	2	€97,833	€0	€97,833
Minister Eamon O Cúiv T.D.	2	€37,921	€0	€37,921
Total 2011				€135,754
2010				
Minister Eamon O Cúiv T.D.	2	€134,959	€955	€135,914
Minister Mary Hanafin T.D.	2	€47,261	€69	€47,330
Total 2010				€183,244
2009				
Minister Mary Hanafin T.D.	2	€186,976	€405	€187,381
2008				
Minister Mary Hanafin T.D.	2	€111,752	€470	€112,222
Minister Martin Cullen T.D.	1	€35,099	€0	€35,099
Total 2008				€147,321
2007				
Minister Martin Cullen T.D.	1	€48,269	€0	€48,269
Minister Sea- mus Brennan T.D.	2	€110,899	€22,127	€133,026
Total 2007				€181,295

Rent Supplement Scheme Data

113. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the cost of increasing rent supplement limits by 5%, 10% and 15% in the urban areas of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford and Galway; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43739/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Kevin Humphreys): Rent supplement plays a vital role in housing families and individuals, with the scheme supporting approximately 62,000 people at a cost of €298 million in 2015. The provision for 2015 represents a transfer of funding in excess of €20 million to the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government to support the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP).

A review of the rent limits undertaken earlier this year found that the impact of increasing limits at a time of constrained supply will increase costs disproportionately for the Exchequer with little or no new housing available to recipients. Analysis shows that increasing the current

rent limits nationwide by 5% would result in a full year cost in excess of €15 million; a 10% increase would carry a cost of almost €32 million, with a 15% increase costing approximately €51 million. A breakdown of this cost on a county basis is not available; however, as an approximation, the costs to apply such an increase in the Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford regions, would account for approximately 70% of the total share of increased costs for the scheme. Though the costing model accurately reflects the increased cost for the scheme, the likelihood is that increased supply would not be achieved as the market would adjust to the revised rent limits.

Rather than increasing limits at this time rent supplement policy will continue to allow for flexibility where landlords seek rents in excess of current limits. Flexibility is provided under the National Framework for Tenancy Sustainment for both existing customers of the scheme and new applicants. As part of this flexible approach the Department, in conjunction with Threshold, operates a special Protocol in the Dublin and Cork areas where supply issues have been particularly acute. Plans are actively underway to extend this Protocol to Galway City. This approach has assisted over 5,400 households nationwide to retain their rented accommodation through increased rent payments.

I believe that these measures and the reforms to the private rental sector announced in November will provide increased certainty for both tenants and landlords in the current market.

Living Alone Allowance

114. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the cost of increasing the living alone allowance to €15 and to €20; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43745/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The cost of increasing the Living Alone Allowance to €15 and €20 per week is €60.5 million and €110.8 million, respectively, in a full year.

Social Welfare Schemes

115. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the saving she has achieved from the abolition of the telephone allowance in 2015 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43746/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The overall concern of Government in its Budgets has been to protect the primary social welfare rates. Expenditure on pensions at approx. €6.675 billion is the largest block of expenditure in the Department in the Estimate for 2015, representing approx. 34.4% of overall expenditure. Because of demographic changes, the Department's spending on older people is increasing year on year. The Department had to make provision for an additional €168 million in 2015 for the increasing number of pensioners. Maintaining the rate of the State pension and other core payments is critical in protecting people from poverty.

The decision to discontinue the telephone allowance was estimated to provide annual savings of €48 million, and with the year-on-year increase in the number of people qualifying for the household benefits package, this yearly saving will increase. These savings meant that the Department was able to retain the other valuable elements of the household benefits package such as the electricity and gas allowance and the television licence. The Department will spend

approx. €227 million this year on these elements of the household benefits package for over 416,000 customers.

I am keenly aware of the impact of Budget decisions on the Department's clients, and I have sought to ensure that the money available is targeted in the most effective way. In Budget 2016, I was able to announce the first increase in the basic rate of the State pension in seven years, by €3 per week. This will increase the personal rate of the non-contributory pension to €222, and that of the contributory pension to €233.30. I was also pleased to announce a €2.50 increase in the rate of the Fuel Allowance, from €20 to €22.50 per week. I believe that, taken together with other changes, such as increasing the Christmas Bonus to 75% of weekly rate, the impact of this Budget will be very positive for older people.

Social Welfare Schemes

116. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the saving she has achieved from the cuts to free electricity and gas units during the lifetime of the Government, by year to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43747/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department pays an electricity or gas allowance as part of the household benefits package to 416,000 customers, at an estimated cost of €227 million in 2015. The electricity and gas allowance is currently €35 per month. There have been no reductions to this allowance in recent budgets. The allowance represents a contribution towards the energy costs of a household. It is not intended to meet those costs in full.

Changes were made to the household benefits package and fuel scheme during 2011. These changes were provided for in Budget 2011, which was introduced by the previous Government, but details were not specified at the time. The number of free units provided under the electricity and gas allowance was reduced to the level at the start of 2007 (from 2,400 to 1,800). This change was effective from September 2011. Estimated savings for this measure at that time were €29.8 million per year. As this benefit is now delivered by means of a cash amount, rather than the purchase of a set number of units, my Department is no longer in a position to state the actual saving this particular change will deliver in 2015.

Effective from April 2012, new applicants for carer's allowance, who are not living with the person for whom they are providing care, are not entitled to household benefits. It is estimated that this affects approximately 1,000 people in a full year, yielding an estimated saving of approximately €420,000 per annum.

In 2013, the electricity and gas allowance was aligned with the cheapest available market rate for 1,800 units of electricity. Previously the rate had been based on the price of one supplier. This provided a saving to the Department but also allowed customers to obtain savings by switching to cheaper companies without the loss of any credit that may have built up, which wasn't possible under the old system. Estimated savings from this measure was €20 million in 2013 and €22.6 million in each subsequent full year.

Direct Provision Expenditure

117. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the cost of increasing the direct provision adult allowance from €19.10 to €25.00, €30.00, €35.00, €38.74, and the cost of increasing the allowance paid in respect of children from €9.60 to €15.00,

€20.00, €25.00, €29.80 per year in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43756/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Kevin Humphreys) (Deputy Kevin Humphreys): The direct provision allowance is a non-statutory payment administered by the Department of Social Protection on behalf of the Department of Justice and Equality to persons in the Direct Provision system. Government has provided €3.5 million for the direct provision allowance in 2015.

There are approximately 2,990 adults and 1,100 children residing in the system of direct provision in respect of whom the direct provision allowance is being paid. The full year cost of increasing the weekly direct provision allowance payment based on current numbers in respect of adults from €19.10 to €25, to €30, to €35, and €38.74; and the cost of increasing the allowance paid in respect of children from €9.60 to €15, €20, €25 and €29.80; is provided in the following table. The numbers of persons seeking asylum in Ireland is increasing which would increase the costs as set out.

The recent Report of the Working Group on the Protection Process recommended an increase in the rate of the direct provision allowance payment in respect of adults and children. The Government in its decision of the 30 June 2015 recommended that the Report should in the first instance be the subject of detailed discussion at the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform. The recommendation in relation to the rate of direct provision allowance will be considered by the Cabinet Committee in due course.

Cost of increasing the rate of direct provision allowance:

Adult rate €19.10	Additional Annual Cost
Increase to €25	€920,000
Increase to €30	€1,700,000
Increase to €35	€2,470,000
Increase to €38.74	€3,060,000
Child rate €9.60	Additional Annual Cost
Increase to €15	€310,000
Increase to €20	€590,000
Increase to €25	€880,000
Increase to €29.80	€1,150,000

Community Services Programme

118. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection why additional funding has not been awarded to the sponsors of the community services programme to account for the increase in the minimum wage in 2016; if this will negatively impact on the ability of the sponsors to deliver on the programme's objectives; if she will re-examine the issue; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43757/15]

119. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the number of participants on the community services programme, by county; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43758/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Kevin Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 118 and 119 together.

The CSP is designed to address locally identified gaps in the provision of services to communities and to utilise the potential of community assets and resources that are already in place. Funding is provided in the form of a financial contribution for the employment of staff to deliver the service. The CSP became operational in 2006 absorbing a previous programme operated by FÁS including a grant structure linked to the minimum wage. Any such link is historic given that many current contracts have been in place for at least nine years and the wage levels in service providers have increased. The grant structure was remodelled in 2009/10 in response to the financial crisis with the value of the full-time equivalent wage element maintained at €19,033 per annum only. The programme has never provided full funding for wages. The rules of the programme require service providers to pay the local rate for equivalent employment, which is generally well in excess of minimum wage levels. Contracts of up to three years' duration are available to service providers that continue to deliver needed services and demonstrate an ability to generate and maintain income from other sources for the services delivered.

The level of grant support available from the CSP contributes no more than a third of aggregate turnover of the community companies in contract. It has been at all times clear that the CSP represents a contribution only to the cost of employment. The service providers undertake to generate additional revenue from the services they deliver to support the adequate remuneration of staff employed and to provide for overhead, operational and future development costs. Pobal is engaged by the Department to provide contract management and financial oversight and compliance services. Currently, the value of CSP contracts is just under €42 million providing a contribution to 2,111.5 full time equivalent positions. The Department estimates that 2,800 people are directly supported in employment by the CSP contribution when part-time work is taken into consideration. An estimated 300-500 additional employees are supported indirectly from income generated from activities and other public resources provided to the companies.

TABLE

CSP CONTRACT VALUES & NUMBER OF EMPLOYEE APPROVED FOR FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION - 2015

County	Contract Value in 2015 - €	Number of employee supported*
Carlow	460,006	29.5
Cavan	593,474	30.5
Clare	1,235,233	103.5
Cork	2,442,724	142.5
Donegal	3,099,650	143
Dublin	8,461,604	403
Galway	1,997,959	89.5
Kerry	2,170,212	111.5
Kildare	429,078	20.5
Kilkenny	371,979	17.5
Laois	343,429	16
Leitrim	1,355,167	62.5
Limerick	1,156,035	54.5
Longford	480,660	23
Louth	1,350,046	67
Mayo	3,419,506	180

County	Contract Value in 2015 - €	Number of employee supported*
Meath	928,221	44
Monaghan	1,074,419	51
Offaly	1,109,870	51.5
Roscommon	2,200,322	102.5
Sligo	661,309	30.5
Tipperary	688,858	37.5
Waterford	712,924	34
Westmeath	1,110,419	53
Wexford	2,281,026	126.5
Wicklow	1,829,508	87
	41,963,638	2111.5

* Includes contribution to manager position, if employed.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

120. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare who is claiming a social protection payment for 389 and not 390 days can be entitled to the Christmas bonus; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43766/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): A bonus of 75% of the normal weekly payment was paid in December 2015 to people getting a long-term social welfare payment. For clients in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance, long-term is defined as over 15 months or over 390 days of unemployment. As the person concerned had not been in receipt of a payment for the required period, she is not eligible for the payment.

Question No. 121 withdrawn.

Property Tax Administration

122. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection why a person who is reclassified from lone parent to jobseeker is precluded from having weekly deductions from the payment for local property tax, given that the alternative methods of payment, such as payzone, cost the homeowner extra. [43790/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 allows for a person who is liable for the Local Property Tax, and who is in receipt of certain social protection payments, to have Local Property Tax deducted from his or her payments. Currently the following longer term schemes have been specified by the Revenue Commissioners for the deduction at source of the Local Property Tax (LPT)

- State pension (contributory),
- State pension (non-contributory),
- Widow/er's or surviving civil partner's (contributory) pension,
- Widow/er's or surviving civil partner's (non-contributory) pension,

- Blind pension,
- Invalidity pension,
- One-parent family payment,
- Carer's allowance and
- Disability allowance.

The Jobseeker's Allowance payment is not included in this list of schemes because of the level of fluctuation that is experienced on shorter term schemes. This list is being kept under review. Alternative methods of payment of the Local Property Tax are a matter for the Revenue Commissioners.

Carer's Allowance Applications

123. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43804/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person concerned on the 8 September 2015. The application is currently being processed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Carer's Allowance Applications

124. **Deputy Noel Coonan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection when an application for a carer's allowance will be finalised for a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43815/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for CA from the person concerned on 23 June 2015. The evidence submitted in support of this application was examined and the deciding officer (DO) decided that the evidence submitted did not indicate that the care recipient requires continual supervision and frequent assistance throughout the day in connection with normal bodily functions, as required.

The person concerned was notified on 12 September 2015 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

I can confirm that additional evidence received is currently under review by a DO. The person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome of that review. If the outcome is to confirm refusal of the allowance, the person concerned will retain the right of appeal to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office.

Disability Allowance Applications

125. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection why an application for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied) in County Carlow was

not granted, given that the person has a long-term disability and if she will review the case. [43907/15]

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

The person in question requested a review of the decision by a deciding officer (DO) and submitted additional evidence for consideration. The review has now been concluded by a DO but the outcome is that the decision to refuse on medical grounds has been confirmed. The person in question was notified of the outcome of this review on 4 November 2015. They have also been advised of their right to appeal this decision to the independent social welfare appeals office.

Departmental Investigations

126. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the number of investigations she has carried out into the suspected leaking of personal details from the social protection database in each of the past five years, and the outcome in each case. [43923/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The following table contains the information requested.

NUMBER OF INVESTIGATIONS CARRIED OUT INTO SUSPECTED LEAKING OF PERSONAL DETAILS IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS AND OUTCOME

YEAR	NO OF INVESTIGATIONS	NO OF INVESTIGATIONS WHERE BREACH CONFIRMED	NO OF INVESTIGATIONS WHERE NO BREACH CONFIRMED	NO OF CASES WHERE SUSPECTED BREACH STILL UNDER INVESTIGATION
2011	27	7	19	1
2012	22	9	13	0
2013	22	9	11	1
2014	20	0	11	9
2015	18	0	10	8
TOTALS	109	25	62	22

The Department takes its responsibilities in relation to data protection very seriously. Every effort is made to ensure that personal customer data are used solely for business purposes and that they are not compromised in any way. The Department has data protection and information security policies, standards, procedures and guidelines in place governing the use of its computer systems and customer data.

All members of staff of the Department are regularly reminded of their data protection obligations and the consequences of not adhering to policies such as loss of increment, loss of entitlement to enter promotional competitions and dismissal. Staff members are required to sign annual undertakings that they have read, and will act in accordance with, data protection policies and guidelines.

A range of specific measures are in place to strengthen data protection governance and com-

pliance within the Department.

A high-level working group is in place to examine, and progress, all aspects of data protection compliance in the Department.

In June the Department ran its annual Data Protection Awareness Week for staff. Activities this year included a very effective short video on social engineering which was developed in-house and made available to all staff; a data protection newsletter issued to all staff; presentations were made to hundreds of staff nationwide and posters were exhibited in headquarter and local offices drawing attention to the importance of securing customers' personal data.

Oversight is maintained by logging data accesses which are subject to audit. All allegations of data breaches are fully investigated and the Department cooperates fully with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner in all its investigations.

Disability Allowance Applications

127. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Offaly will receive a decision on an application for a disability allowance. [43925/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the person concerned was in receipt of disability allowance (DA) from 23 September 2004 to 19 May 2015. Following a review of entitlement, it was established that the circumstances of the person in question had changed and that the person concerned had means not previously disclosed to the department.

On 4 December 2015, a deciding officer made a revised decision that the person concerned had no entitlement to DA from 2 January 2013 to 19 May 2015, resulting in an overpayment.

The person concerned has been notified of this decision and of their right of appeal to the Social Welfare Appeals Office within 21 days of the date of the notification.

Rent Supplement Scheme Eligibility

128. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the level of payment under the rent allowance scheme to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; if further assistance will be given; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43965/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): All changes in circumstances should be immediately notified to this Department. The client concerned should provide up to date payslips in order for their rate of entitlement to Rent Supplement to be accurately re-assessed.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

129. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if a person (details supplied) in County Mayo has been approved under the carer's allowance scheme following an appeal. [43966/15]

130. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection when payment of a carer's allowance will commence for a person (details supplied) in County Mayo; if that person's appeal is successful. [43967/15]

131. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection when arrears of a carer's allowance will be paid to a person (details supplied) in County Mayo if that person's appeal is successful. [43968/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 129 to 131, inclusive, together.

I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all of the available evidence, has decided to allow the appeal of the person concerned by way of a summary decision. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officer's decision.

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.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

132. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the social protection payments a person (details supplied) in Dublin 8 who has been unemployed for the past two years is eligible to receive. [43988/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all of the available evidence, has decided to allow the disability allowance appeal of the person concerned by way of a summary decision. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officer's decision.

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.

School Meals Programme

133. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the number of on-site inspections conducted to ensure that schools participating in the school meals programme are delivering nutritional and healthy food, the number of schools in breach of the guidelines on healthy meals, the sanctions imposed, by county, for each year since 2012 to date, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43992/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Kevin Humphreys): The school meals programme provides funding towards the provision of food services to some 1,700 schools and organisations which benefit approximately 217,000 children at a total cost of €39 million. An additional €3 million was allocated to the programme as part of Budget 2016, bringing the total allocation to €42 million in 2016.

The Department initiated an inspection programme in 2012 consisting of on-site inspections in participating schools to ensure that the scheme rules are being adhered to. This inspection

process will be rolled out to all schools over the next 3 year period and the Department has assigned additional resources to facilitate this work. A breakdown of on-site inspections by county since 2012 is provided in the tabular statement below.

Some 246 schools and organisations have been examined and finalised to date under inspection programme since 2012. The results show a relatively high rate of compliance by funded organisations / schools with the conditions of the scheme. 208 schools (85%) were found to be operating satisfactorily. In 31 schools, (13%), less serious issues such as non-compliance with scheme rules or errors involving minor amounts were discovered; and serious issues were identified in two schools. These serious issues have been reported to An Garda Síochána.

Schools/groups must reapply for funding in advance of each school year and are required to submit detailed records at the end of each school year. Any expenditure on non-food items and unhealthy foods is deducted from the following year's allocation.

Overpayments are raised as appropriate and agreed recovery arrangements are in place with schools. These arrangements are being monitored and are being adhered to. There is a balance to be maintained by the Department in terms of restricting payments to schools while continuing to provide for a service for the children therein.

A further 143 schools and organisations were examined in 2015. While analysis of the returned reports is ongoing, indications are that the results will be similar to previous years.

Tabular Statement: Breakdown of inspections by county in the school meals local projects scheme

-	No. of on-site inspections	No. of on-site inspections	No. of on-site inspections	No. of on-site inspections
County	2012	2013	2014	2015
Co Carlow	2	4	1	2
Co Cavan	2	4	1	13
Co Clare	2	5	3	0
Co Cork	2	7	11	12
Co Donegal	2	4	2	10
Co Dublin	10	21	19	31
Co Galway	2	6	3	3
Co Kerry	2	1	1	12
Co Kildare	2	3	3	2
Co Kilkenny	2	4	2	1
Co Laois	2	0	0	2
Co Leitrim	2	3	2	0
Co Limerick	2	2	3	7
Co Longford	2	3	2	3
Co Louth	2	3	2	1
Co Mayo	2	5	3	7
Co Meath	2	2	1	0
Co Monaghan	2	4	4	2
Co Offaly	2	3	2	0
Co Roscommon	2	3	1	6
Co Sligo	2	4	2	0

-	No. of on-site inspections	No. of on-site inspections	No. of on-site inspections	No. of on-site inspections
Co Tipperary	2	4	2	8
Co Waterford	2	1	3	10
Co Westmeath	2	3	2	3
Co Wexford	2	4	3	2
Co Wicklow	2	2	3	6
TOTAL	60	105	81	143

Departmental Schemes

134. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will extend the starting point of the homemaker's scheme, given the changes to the State pension (contributory) payment scale and the negative impact this is having on women; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44004/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The State pension contributory is a very valuable benefit and is the bedrock of the Irish pension system. Therefore, it is important to ensure that those qualifying have made a sustained contribution to the Social Insurance Fund over their working lives. To ensure that the individual can maximise their entitlement to a State pension, all contributions paid or credited over their working life from when they first enter insurable employment until pension age are taken into account when assessing their entitlement and the level of that entitlement. Since 1961, when contributory pensions were introduced, the average contributions test has been used in calculating pension entitlement. Once over 16 years of age, the date a person enters into insurable employment is the date used for averaging purposes.

The homemaker's scheme makes qualification for State pension (contributory) easier for those who take time out of the workforce for caring duties. The scheme, which was introduced in and took effect from 1994, allows up to 20 years spent caring for children under 12 years of age (or caring for incapacitated people over that age) to be disregarded when a person's social insurance record is being averaged for pension purposes, subject to the standard qualifying conditions for SPC also being satisfied.

For those with insufficient contributions to meet the requirements for a State pension (contributory), the State pension system provides alternative methods of support. If their spouse has a contributory pension, they may qualify for an Increase for a Qualified Adult amounting up to 90% of a full rate pension, which by default is paid directly to them. Alternatively, they may qualify for a means-tested State Pension (non-contributory), amounting to 95% of the maximum contributory pension rate.

The Government has no plans to backdate this scheme prior to 1994 as the costs would be significant. In addition, under the current rules, the costs of the scheme are expected to increase in the coming years due to the increase in female employment rates since 1994.

Work is underway to replace the 'yearly average' system with a 'total contributions approach'. Under this approach, the number of contributions recorded over a working life will be more closely reflected in the rate of pension payment received. It is expected that the total contributions approach to pension qualification will replace the current average contributions test for State pension (contributory) for new pensioners from 2020, although that date is subject to change, as this is a very significant reform with considerable legal, administrative, and technical challenges to be overcome in its implementation. The position of women who were homemak-

ers will be considered very carefully in developing this reform.

Community Employment Schemes Operation

135. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of a community employment scheme (details supplied) in County Cork; if she will review the situation, given the invaluable contribution this project makes to the community; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44007/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The service provider to which this question relates has held a contract with the community services programme (CSP) to support the operation of a community facility and to operate a telephone, home visiting and handyman service to elderly residents in the surrounding parishes. The community centre operates a schedule of social and entertainment events and activities. Financial support was provided to contribute to the employment of a manager and two full time equivalent positions plus €4,000 in 2015 to support operations. A recent review of the service concluded that the company was well run but raised concerns about its future financial viability and income levels to sustain current operations. Additionally, the review noted that the level of resources provided by the CSP was high in comparison with other similar services. User levels were low leading to a conclusion that good value for money was not being achieved. The Department accepted a recommendation that the funding level should be set to contribute to the cost of supporting two full-time equivalent positions to operate the community facilities. The outcome of the contract review was communicated to the company and no request was received to seek a review of this determination.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

136. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application under the invalidity pension scheme by a person (details supplied) in Dublin 13; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44024/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Invalidity pension (IP) is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions.

The department received a claim for IP for the person concerned on 03 June 2015. The person concerned was refused IP on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. He was notified on the 25 June 2015 of this decision, the reasons for it and of his right of review and appeal. The person in question appealed the decision to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO) who upheld the department's decision and disallowed the appeal. The person in question was notified on the decision of the AO on 24 November 2015.

Illness benefit (IB) is a short-term payment for persons who are incapable of work and who satisfy the PRSI conditions. The medical conditions for the receipt of IP and IB are not the same and qualification for the latter scheme does not imply qualification for the former scheme. The letter from the SWAO dated 7 August 2015, referred to in the details attached to your question, relates to the person's eligibility for the IB scheme and not eligibility for IP.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

137. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection why a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny who is in receipt of jobseekers allowance does not qualify for the Christmas bonus. [44057/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): A bonus of 75% of the normal weekly payment was paid in December 2015 to people getting a long-term social welfare payment. For clients in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance, long-term is defined as over 15 months or over 390 days of unemployment. As the person concerned had not been in receipt of a payment for the required period, he was not eligible for the payment.

National Internship Scheme Eligibility

138. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will review the JobBridge programme to facilitate claimants as in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44074/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Kevin Humphreys): The JobBridge Scheme was introduced in July 2011 with the aim of providing unemployed people with an opportunity to secure work experience and to prove their competence to prospective employers. Participation on the scheme is wholly voluntary and is open to all jobseekers who meet the qualifying criteria.

The criteria includes the requirement that applicants must have a live claim in their own right for a period of 78 days within the last 6 months in order to ensure that limited exchequer resources are targeted at individuals in danger of falling into longer term unemployment.

It is open to persons in respect of whom an increase in respect of a Qualified Adult is in payment to make an application for a jobseeker payment in their own right, once the underlying conditions are satisfied; namely that they are capable of, available for and genuinely seeking work. They can, of course, subsequently participate in JobBridge, subject to satisfying the standard eligibility criteria.

I would point out, however, that the Department has commissioned an independent evaluation of JobBridge to assess its suitability, relevance and effectiveness to date. The outcome of the evaluation will inform any further changes to the scheme.

Illness Benefit Payments

139. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of the case of a person (details supplied) regarding a social protection payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44157/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Illness benefit is a payment for people who cannot work due to illness and who satisfy the pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions and related overlapping payment legislation.

Concurrent payment of illness benefit, at the full rate, to recipients of widows, widowers and surviving civil partners pensions and one-parent family (including deserted wives) payment has been discontinued with effect from 01/02/12. This applies to new claimants for illness benefit.

The person concerned is in receipt of widow's pension since 21 Feb 1997 at the current maximum weekly rate of €193.50. The person concerned made an application for illness ben-

efit from 10 Feb 2014 to 3 Mar 2015. If they chose to receive illness benefit they would only qualify for payment at the weekly personal rate of €188.00. Therefore it would not have been beneficial for the person concerned to claim illness benefit. The person concerned was notified of the position by letter dated 24 Feb 2014.

140. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the cost of increasing the back to school clothing and footwear allowance for children of between 12 and 18 years of age, from €250 to €300, for children of between 4 and 11 years of age, from €150 to €200; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44206/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Kevin Humphreys): The back to school clothing and footwear allowance (BSCFA) scheme provides a once-off payment to eligible families to assist with the extra costs when children start school each autumn. The Government has provided €44.3 million for this scheme in 2015.

In 2015, BSCFA payments were made to some 153,000 families in respect of over 290,000 children. The rate of payment is €100 in respect of children aged 4 to 11 and €200 for children over 12 years in second level education.

The cost of increasing the BSCFA payment by €50 for each eligible child, i.e. from €200 to €250 in respect of children over 12 years in second level education and from €100 to €150 in respect of children aged 4 to 11 years, would be approximately €14.5 million. The cost of increasing the payment by €100 for each eligible child, i.e. to €300 and €200 respectively, would be approximately €29 million.

Any changes to the scheme to increase the rate of payment would have to be considered in a budgetary context.

Departmental Staff Data

141. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the number of Intreo case workers employed to deal with customers between 16 and 25 years of age; the cost to the State of every case worker; the number of cases each case worker is assigned; if all offices have been converted to Intreo offices; and if not, which offices are remaining. [44231/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): At the end of October 2015, the total number of Case Officers (whole-time equivalents), including vacancies, stood at 554. The number of Case Officers assigned to a given area is kept under review in the context of local demand for services.

Case Officers provide activation and case management services to a range of clients, including jobseekers under 25 years of age. The number of clients assigned to an individual Case Officer will vary according to local circumstances and activities. As newly unemployed Jobseekers are a priority cohort for activation and case management, local inflow to the Live Register is a key factor in relation to the numbers of such clients requiring referral to individual Case Officers. Unemployed jobseekers aged under 25 also have access to dedicated measures, such as JobsPlus Youth (recruitment subsidy) and First Steps Youth Developmental Internship.

The vast majority of Case Officers are Higher Executive Officers. The figure used by the

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for the annual cost of a whole-time Higher Executive Officer (including pensions, PRSI and overheads) is currently €74,447.

All but five INTREO locations have been completed by the Office of Public Works. The five pending completion are Carrigaline, Thurles, Letterkenny, Edenderry and Navan. Of these, all but Navan are scheduled for completion by year end, with planned “go-live” in the New Year.

Illness Benefit Applications

142. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will review an application for illness benefit by a person (details supplied) in County Carlow, if the person will be given credits for the period of illness while not in employment and if the person is entitled to another benefit due to being unemployed and confined to home. [44249/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Illness benefit is a payment for people who cannot work due to illness and who satisfy the pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions. One of the PRSI conditions is that a person must have a minimum of 39 reckonable contributions paid or credited in the governing contribution year. Claims made in 2015 are governed by the 2013 tax year, and only PRSI Classes A, E, H, and P are reckonable for illness benefit purposes.

The person concerned made a claim to illness benefit and this claim was received in my department on 26 Aug 2015. This claim was disallowed as the person concerned did not satisfy the above contribution criteria. The person concerned was notified of this decision.

However following a review of the claim it has been decided to award credits for the period 8 March 2013 to 21 Sept 2013. In view of this the person concerned now has an entitlement to illness benefit from 11 Aug 2015 at the graduated weekly rate of €147.30 based on earnings of €265.43 in 2013.

The person concerned was in receipt of jobseekers benefit prior to their illness benefit application and as such it is necessary to close off that payment in advance of payment of illness benefit. This has now been done.

Illness benefit payment will issue to the bank account of the person concerned this week.

Carer's Allowance Applications

143. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44251/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person concerned on the 13 November 2015. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Departmental Legal Costs

144. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the total cost to her Department, and those under her aegis, for the procurement of legal services

in the State from 2011 to 2015 in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44578/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The following table sets out the total cost to the Department for the procurement of legal services in the State from 2011 to 2015, including legal costs awarded against the Department.

Year	Amount €
2011	1,121,000
2012	236,000
2013	407,000
2014	668,000
2015 to date	610,381
Total:	€3,042,381

Costs relating to prosecutions arising from fraudulent claims made to the Department are borne by the Chief State Solicitor's Office.

The statutory bodies operating under the aegis of the Department of Social Protection are the Pensions Ombudsman, the Pensions Authority, the Citizens Information Board, and the Social Welfare Tribunal. The costs of legal services in these statutory bodies from 2011 to 2015 are set out in the following tables:

The Pensions Ombudsman:

Year	Amount €
2011	76,462
2012	111,945
2013	146,207
2014	225,262
2015 to date	205,977
Total:	€765,853

The Pensions Authority:

Year	Amount €
2011	373,000
2012	371,000
2013	78,000
2014	42,000
2015 to date	54,000
Total:	€918,000

Citizens Information Board:

Year	Amount €
2011	7,108
2012	33,797
2013	74,543

Year	Amount €
2014	2,151
2015 to date	40,591
Total:	€158,190

There were no legal fees paid in respect of the Social Welfare Tribunal from 2011 to 2015.

Tax Credits

145. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Finance if he will implement a scheme whereby a tax credit of €620 per hectare per year will be given on special protection area hen harrier designated land, applied where land has lost its total value, due to the Forest Service not issuing any further afforestation licences within the six breeding hen harriers special protection areas, to ensure that in a sale situation, it would sell at a price similar to a land sale for forestry value; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43912/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy is aware, the State has obligations to protect the habitat of the hen harrier and the EU Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the Conservation of wild Birds) provides for the classification of Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Under Article 4 of the Directive, six SPAs covering a total land area of c1,671 Square Kilometres has been classified for the conservation of the hen harrier.

A previous Farmland Birds Scheme operated by the Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht paid out €3.5m annually. In addition, farmers who joined the Green Local Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme (GLAS) were entitled to earn up to €7,000 under a combination GLAS and GLAS plus. However, in October of this year my colleague Minister Coveney announced a new scheme to be developed under the Locally-Led Agri-Environment Schemes. This scheme, when it is approved by the EU Commission, is expected to provide for payments for up to €23m which represents a major increase in public funding for the important conservation action being undertaken by farmers.

The proposal to grant a tax credit can only be of benefit to those individuals who have a tax liability. An individual with no liability would not benefit from such a proposal. It is considered that any State benefit for persons affected by the EU Birds Directive should not be applied selectively and the proposals being developed by Minister Coveney provide a more equitable solution and can have application to all persons affected by the Directive.

Property Tax Exemptions

146. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance the options open to lone parents who have been reclassified as jobseekers who can no longer pay their local property tax weekly, owing to the temporary nature of the jobseeker payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43531/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by Revenue that the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended) provides a wide range of payment and phased payment options that allow property owners to meet their Local Property Tax (LPT) obligations in a manner that best suits individual circumstances.

One of the available phased payment options is Deduction at Source from ten separate pay-

ment schemes operated by the Department of Social Protection (DSP). However deductions are not taken from Jobseekers Allowance as the temporary and intermittent nature of the allowance could result in shortfalls in the amount of LPT deducted leaving property owners with outstanding liabilities at year-end.

In cases where LPT cannot be deducted from DSP payments, there are other phased payment options available to assist property owners in spreading the liability over the course of the year. These options include monthly Direct Debits through banks and certain credit union accounts and flexible payments through four approved Payment Service Providers including An Post, Payzone, Omnivend and PayPoint. Each of these service providers applies various transaction charges that are outside of Revenue's control.

Also, Part 12 of the LPT Act provides for 'Deferral', and 'Partial Deferral' (50%) schemes that may apply to property owners under certain conditions including, 'Income Level', 'Hardship', 'Personal Insolvency' and 'Personal Representative of a Deceased Person'. The income thresholds for a full deferral are €15,000 (single person) per annum and €25,000 (couple) per annum and for a partial deferral are €25,000 (single person) per annum or €35,000 (couple) per annum. These thresholds can also be increased by 80% of any gross mortgage interest payments. However, 'Deferral' and 'Partial Deferral' are not exemptions and the tax becomes payable at a later date and carries an annual interest rate of 4%.

Finally, any property owners who are no longer making LPT payments by Deduction at Source from their DSP payments or, who wish to apply for a 'Deferral' or 'Partial Deferral', can access their records online at www.revenue.ie and amend the payment instruction as required. Alternatively they can contact the LPT Helpline at 1890200255 where an agent will confirm any balances due and assist with making alternative payment arrangements, including Deferral/Partial Deferral as necessary.

Tax Code

147. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance if a tax is being introduced (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43591/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In general, the regulation of compliance with the rules of the road, including such compliance by cyclists, does not come under the responsibility of my Department. I have no plans regarding the introduction of new tax measures relating to cycling.

Ministerial Meetings

148. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance the number of meetings requested by private external lobby groups and the number of meetings held, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43599/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Deputy will appreciate that in view of my remit as Minister for Finance, I receive a large volume of requests for meetings from a broad range of sources, including private individuals, companies, and local and voluntary groups. My Office does not maintain a register of all such requests for meetings.

Since the beginning of the year I have attended approximately 600 meetings, inclusive of all diary engagements.

The Deputy may wish to note that the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 provides for the establishment and maintenance of a publicly accessible register of lobbying. The purpose of the register is to make information available to the public on the identity of those communicating with Designated Public Officials. Under the Act, lobbyists who have registered with the Standards Commission must, by 21 January 2016, have provided the Standards Commission on lobbying activities engaged in during the period 1 September 2015 to 31 December 2015. The register can be accessed at <http://www.lobbying.ie>.

Departmental Expenditure

149. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance his Department's photography costs since he came into office, inclusive of costs incurred from use of the ministerial allowance, by year, in tabular form; the occasions for which photographers were booked; the photographers used; the costs associated with each occasion; the policy in place regarding the booking of photographers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43631/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In response to the Deputy's question the total photography costs for my Department and the details of the occasions on which photographers were used in the period since I came into office are contained in the following table:

Photography Costs

Year	List of Occasions	Photographer Used	Cost €
2011	Signing of Taxation agreement with Germany Engaged on 31st March, 2011	Maxwell Photography Ltd	400.21
2012	Signing ceremony for Double Taxation Agreement with Uzbekistan Engaged on 11th July, 2012	Maxwell Photography Ltd	147.60
2012	Signing ceremony for Double Taxation Agreement with Switzerland: Minister of State Hayes and the Swiss Ambassador Engaged on 26th January, 2012	Maxwell Photography Ltd	285.05
2014	Department of Finance graduation ceremony for the Diploma in Taxation Policy and Practice, the Diploma in Project Management, and the Refund of Fees attended by Minister Noonan Engaged on 3rd September, 2014	Maxwell Photography Ltd	510.75

Year	List of Occasions	Photographer Used	Cost €
2015	Irish Institute of Training and Development (IITD) award to Department of Finance for “Best Learning and Development Organisation”: 2 staff members Engaged on 6th March, 2015 by IITD	Events Portraits Ltd	95.75
2015	Department of Finance Learning and Development Recognition of Awards Ceremony, attended by Minister Noonan Engaged on 29th October, 2015	Maxwell Photography Ltd	462.53
	TOTAL		1,901.89

The Department’s policy regarding the booking of photographers is to follow the relevant public procurement guidelines and procedures.

Public Relations Contracts Data

150. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance his Department’s use of external public relations firms since he came into office by year in tabular form; the uses of these firms and the policy regarding employing them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43647/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I take it that the Deputy is referring solely to external public relations and not to advertising that would be incurred by my Department in the normal course of business, such as entries into telephone directories, the placing of advertisements in national newspapers, recruitment advertising, etc.

The use of external Public Relations firms in respect of my Department in the period since I came into office are outlined in the following table:

Year	Use of external Public Relations Firms	Public Relations Firm
2015	Following the Government decision of 13 May 2015 on mortgage arrears, my Department was asked to coordinate the development and implementation, once approved, of a comprehensive communications strategy around the Government-funded and other available supports for borrowers in arrears, which will advise on the best source of information and advice depending on the requestor's specific circumstances.	Carr Communications was the successful tenderer following a public procurement exercise.

The Department's policy regarding employing external groups is to follow the relevant public procurement rules and procedures.

Consultancy Contracts Expenditure

151. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance the reports he commissioned from external consultants since March 2011, by year, title, cost, date published and company in tabular form. [43663/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table:

Company	External Consultant Report	Cost	Year	Published
Dr Don Thornhill	Review of Local Property Tax	Nil	2015	Published - October 2015
ESRI	Tax breaks and the residential property market	€30,677.43	2015	Published - October 2015
IBFD	Spillover analysis of the effects of the Irish tax system on the economies of developing countries	€94,678.00	2015	Published - October 2015
Indecon	Review of marine taxation	€106,887.00	2015	Published - October 2015

Company	External Consultant Report	Cost	Year	Published
Red C	SME Lending Survey May 2015 - October 2015	€58,979.00	2015	Published September 2015**
John Martin	Assessment of special regeneration areas for the Living City Initiative	€2,500.00	2015	Not published. Used as input to the decisions made on the special regeneration areas. The details of these areas were published when the Living City Initiative was launched.
Antaris Consulting	The provision of a review of the current Health and Safety Arrangements within the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The final objectives are to update the Health and Safety Management Systems within both Departments in order to build on existing Health and Safety culture and practices within both Departments	€16,113.00	2015	Work nearing completion. While the Department of Finance is the client the service is being provided to both the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Sector and Reform
Red C Research & Marketing Ltd	SME Lending Survey November 2014 - April 2015	€58,978.50	2015	Published - April 2015**

Questions - Written Answers

Company	External Consultant Report	Cost	Year	Published
Indecon	Cost benefit analysis of Irish Agri-taxation measures and international benchmark against other Agri-taxation incentives	€103,689.00	2014	Published - October 2014
Seamus Coffey	Effective rates of corporation tax in Ireland	€4,900.00	2014	Published - April 2014
ESRI	Importance of tax policy in the location choices of multi-nationals	€30,750.00	2014	Published - October 2014
ESRI	Research Programme on funding for Small, Medium Enterprises	€122,833.96	2014	Published - October 2014
Ernst & Young	The historical development and international context of the Irish corporate tax system	€6,150.00	2014	Published - October 2014
Red C Research & Marketing Limited	SME Lending Survey April-October 2014	€58,978.50	2014	Published - November 2014**
Red C Research & Marketing Limited	SME Lending Survey October-March 2014	€58,978.50	2014	Published - June 2014**
MKF Property Services	Review of existing facilities management processes	€28,720.50	2014	Published - June 2014

Company	External Consultant Report	Cost	Year	Published
PMCA Economic Consulting	Assistance and Analysis in the Preparation of the Medium-Term Economic Strategy 2014-2020	€49,043.00	2013	Final report submitted to the Department of Finance on 6 December 2013. It was not published because it was commissioned to provide evidence-based economic analysis as an input to the MTES. This analysis is reflected in the text of the MTES.
Crowe Horwath	Report to Department in respect of a survey of R&D Active Companies 2013	€36,850.80	2013	Published
Indecon	Ex ante cost benefit analysis of proposed Living City Initiative	€28,290.00	2013	Published
Red C Research & Marketing Limited	SME Lending Survey October-March 2013	€59,593.50	2013	Published**
Red C Research & Marketing Limited	SME Lending Survey April-September 2013	€58,978.50	2013	Published**
Mercer (Ireland) Limited	Remuneration Review of Covered Institutions	€146,370.00	2013	Published
Deloitte & Touche	External Review of the Compilation of General Government Debt Statistics	€ 61,553.00	2012	Published

Company	External Consultant Report	Cost	Year	Published
BDO and Amara	(a) Survey of audio-visual producers (b) Review on international review of audio-visual state supports	€64,575.00	2012	Published
Grant Thornton	Assessment of Credit Review Office	€31,807.80	2012	Published
Mazars	SME Lending Survey October-March 2012	€60,885.00	2012	Published**
Mazars	SME Lending Survey April-September 2011	€52,453.50	2011	Published**
Red C Research & Marketing Limited	SME Lending Survey April-September 2012	€61,438.50	2012	Published**
Charles River Associates	Acquisition by AIB of EBS Building Society	€50,000.00	2011	Published

**Reimbursed by AIB & Bank of Ireland.

Ministerial Advisers Appointments

152. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance the number of special advisers on his staff and their yearly salary, from 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43679/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I wish to advise the Deputy that I have two Special Advisers on my staff.

The following table outlines by year the number of Special Advisers I have had and their annual salary for the years 2011-2015.

Year	Total number of my Special Advisers:	Salary per annum:	Salary per annum:	Salary per annum:
2011	2	€83,337	€83,337	
2012	2	€86,604	€83,337	
2013	2	€89,898	€86,604	
2014	2	€87,258	€84,706	€78,670
2015	2	€87,258		€81,676

Please note that in 2011 the second of my Advisers did not commence his role as Special

Advisor until end of October. In July 2014 one of my Special Advisors commenced a career break and was then replaced, in August 2014.

The salaries of my Special Advisors are in line with guidelines issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on the appointment of Ministerial staff.

Living City Initiative

153. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Minister for Finance if he will expand the living city initiative to special regeneration areas in county towns such as Ennis in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43712/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Living City Initiative, which was enacted by Finance Act 2013, and commenced on 5 May 2015, has been extended beyond the original pilot cities of Limerick and Waterford, to include the cities of Dublin, Cork, Galway and Kilkenny. In line with my Department's commitment to evidence based policy-making, the inclusion of these additional four cities followed consultation with the relevant city councils and a comprehensive, independent ex-ante cost benefit analysis. Specific criteria were set down in respect of the areas which should be included within the remit of the Living City Initiative, which were required to be taken into account by the relevant city councils when putting forward the proposed Special Regeneration Areas for each city.

It is important to note that I do not see this as a wide-spread Initiative and I do not currently intend to extend it further than the six cities. However, I will closely monitor the progress of the Initiative and will keep the matter of any potential extension of it under review.

Consultancy Contracts Expenditure

154. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the payments for consultancy services for banking stabilisation measures classified by service provider in each of the years 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43721/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table:

Consultancy Services for bank stabilisation	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015 (to date)
Arthur Cox	€1,373,060	€2,879,427	€1,728,407	€824,247	€754,202
Deloitte				€97,935	
Hayes Solicitors				€6,888	
Mason Hayes & Curran				€10,455	€18,282
Matheson		€289,604	€717,923	€79,950	€6,150
Dr. Anil Shivdasani			€82,853		
Deloitte LLP				€97,935	

Consultancy Services for bank stabilisation	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015 (to date)
William Fry				€20,664	€488,938
NAMA			€23,351	€26,632	€8,581
Byrne Wallace				€6,605	
Red C	€52,454	€61,439	€118,572	€117,957	€117,957
Thomas J Foley		€71,217			
Mazars	€52,454	€60,885			
Aram International Partners	€121,000				
Charles River Associates	€60,500				
David Barniville	€36,402				
Niamh Hyland	€24,657				
Mercer		€73,800	€72,570		
PWC*	€168,190	€85,485			

*secondments to the Department

Tax Collection

155. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the effect, in percentage and absolute terms, on the investment component of gross domestic product and the knock-on effect on gross domestic product if the largest single transaction related to intellectual property by a multinational was excluded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43791/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the CSO that a large factor behind the increase in investment in the second quarter national accounts this year related to a large acquisition of an intellectual property. However it is important to note that where transactions occur in intellectual property in a particular period, in general the impact on GDP is zero. This is because in the national accounts these investment transactions give rise to an increase in investment, which adds to GDP, as well as an offsetting increase in imports. In contrast, R&D created solely in Ireland will add to GDP in the same period. Of course, acquired intellectual property assets are expected to generate future income streams and increase GDP into the future. In Ireland because of the substantial presence of Multi-National Corporations, transactions of this nature in intellectual property occur frequently enough. It is important to stress that the contribution of this intellectual property transaction to overall investment or imports in the second quarter cannot be calculated with precision with publicly available data. The Deputy will be aware that due to confidentiality reasons the CSO are not in a position to comment on firm specific developments. In fact, the Statistics Act 1993 restricts the use of information supplied to the CSO solely to statistical purposes and prohibits identifying the undertakings which supply this information.

Tax Collection

156. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the arrangements in place for persons to pay a compromise sum to the Revenue Commissioners for breach of the regulations regarding mineral oil containing a prescribed marker in their private car, if the payment can be made in instalments, when these provisions came into effect; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43842/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Revenue Commissioners have responsibility for the collection of mineral oil tax and for tackling illicit trade in mineral oil products. The use of marked mineral oil in the fuel tank of a private car is an offence under Section 102 of the Finance Act 1999. The penalty for this offence, prescribed in Section 102 of the Act, is a fine of €5,000, on summary conviction. Section 130 of the Finance Act 2001 permits the courts to mitigate the amount of the penalty by a maximum of 50% to €2,500.

Under the provisions of Section 1065 of the Taxes Consolidation Act, 1997 on mitigation of fines and penalties and in accordance with the care and management provisions relating to mineral oil tax, Revenue may, depending on the circumstances of a case, offer an offender the option of settling a case in lieu of legal proceedings on payment of a compromise penalty. These arrangements have been in place for many years.

Where it is determined that a case is suitable to be dealt with by way of a compromise penalty in lieu of legal proceedings, Revenue will write to the offender indicating that they are disposed to deal with the offence in that way. The letter will specify the details of the detection and the offence, advise the offender of the amount of the compromise penalty and the timescale in which it must be paid (generally within a month). The penalty must be paid in full in a single payment sum for this compromise arrangement to be extended by Revenue.

Excise Duties

157. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Finance the additional yield if the excise duty for a publican's licence was increased from €2,535 to €2,825, based on annual turnover between €952,500 to €1,270,000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43846/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that based on the figures set out by the Deputy and on the number of publican licences issued during the period 1 October 2014 to 30 September 2015, the additional yield would be €65,540.

Excise Duties

158. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Finance the additional yield if the excise duty for a publican's licence was increased from €3,805 to €4,600 based on annual turnover in excess of €1,270,000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43847/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that based on the figures set out by the Deputy and on the number of publican licences issued during the period 1 October 2014 to 30 September 2015, the additional yield would be €279,045.

Customs and Excise Controls

159. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Finance if he is satisfied with the current arrangements in place by customs and Revenue for the detection of drugs that have been ingested by passengers prior to their arrival at airports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43854/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that Customs Officers use a range of technologies, indicators and other skillsets to identify drug smugglers, including persons suspected of ingesting controlled drugs. These include the use of detector dog teams, X-ray and other technology on one hand and intelligence development and profiling on the other.

The Commissioners have advised me that they have changed their procedures for dealing with persons suspected of ingesting controlled drugs as a result of two Supreme Court judgements dealing with the right to due process for persons detained. Consequently, Customs Officers are no longer seeking the provision of urine samples on a voluntary basis. No other aspect of the work is impacted by the judgements and Officers are still detecting ingested drugs. Tests involving biological samples have a very high requirement for specialist handling in order to be of value as evidence while protecting the rights of the person concerned. Revenue is satisfied that the present arrangements, which include inter-agency co-operation in appropriate cases, enable good detection rates at a reasonable cost to the taxpayer. They are however continually monitoring the situation and will seek additional powers if they deem this necessary.

Where ingestion of controlled drugs is strongly suspected and cannot be immediately confirmed, there are agreed procedures for the Customs Officer to alert An Garda Síochána, who have extensive detention powers under the provisions of Section 2 of the Criminal Justice (Drug Trafficking) Act 1996.

As Minister, I am satisfied with the current arrangements and I will support any additional legislation the Commissioners may seek in the fight against drug trafficking.

Customs and Excise Staff

160. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Finance the number of detections of illegal drugs in the west, Border and midlands region in the years 2009 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43855/15]

161. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Finance the number of full-time and part-time staff within the Customs and Excise section of the Revenue Commissioners who are engaged solely in the detection and investigation of illegal importation of drugs and who are based at sea ports and airports in counties Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43856/15]

162. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Finance the number of staff within the Customs and Excise section of the Revenue Commissioners who are detailed to investigate illegal narcotics and the illegal importation of drugs in counties Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan and Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43857/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 160 to 162, inclusive, together.

Revenue is a fully integrated tax and customs administration and I am advised by Revenue

that it is not possible to disaggregate the resources deployed exclusively at any given time to the detection and investigation of illegal drugs importations. Revenue currently has approximately 2,000 staff countrywide engaged on activities that are dedicated to targeting and confronting non-compliance. These activities include anti-smuggling and anti-evasion, investigation and prosecution, audit, assurance checks, anti-avoidance, returns compliance and debt collection.

There are currently over 800 Revenue staff serving in the Border, Midlands, West Region, of which approximately 127 are engaged on these activities in the North West area.

Revenue has provided me with the following information in relation to drug detections in the Border Midlands West Region:

BORDER MIDLANDS WEST REGION DRUG SEIZURES

2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
474	184	84	73	73	68	56

I am advised by Revenue that as part of its risk focused approach to the discharge of its role in this area, harbours and inlets along the coastline are monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis from the point of view of the potential for smuggling. This work is supplemented by Revenue's Customs Drug Watch Programme, which incorporates a Coastal and Airfield reporting mechanism. This allows members of the public, coastal and local maritime communities etc. to notify us in confidence of suspect or unusual movements at sea or around the coast through our confidential 24/7 Drugs Watch free phone facility. Revenue is very active in the area of targeting and combatting drugs smuggling and is committed to playing an active role, in conjunction with other relevant agencies, in working against this criminal activity and those responsible for it.

Revenue has an enforcement presence at all key airports and ports and at other strategic locations throughout the country and place particular emphasis on developing an intelligence-based focus at both national and regional level, deploying resources to areas of highest risk. Enforcement strength at particular locations is regularly augmented with additional personnel on a risk-assessment basis, or when particular operations are taking place against illegal activity.

Corporation Tax Regime

163. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question Number 207 of 1 December 2015, the number of companies which paid €5,000,0001 to €7,500,000, €7,500,001 to €10,000,000, €10,000,001 to €15,000,000, €15,000,001 to €20,000,000, €20,000,001 to €30,000,000, €30,000,001 to €40,000,000, €40,000,001 to €50,000,000 and €50,000,000 plus, and the total amount paid in each band, in corporation tax, in tabular form. [43940/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the number of companies who paid over €5 million in Corporation Tax in certain payment bands is as set out in the following table. As the Revenue Commissioners have an obligation to observe confidentiality in respect of taxpayers' information, and arising from the small numbers of taxpayers involved in certain payment bands requested by the Deputy, some bands requested have been merged.

Payment Band €	Number of Companies	Amount Paid in 2014 €m
5,000,001-7,500,000	44	272
7,500,001-10,000,000	21	176
10,000,001-15,000,000	28	337
15,000,001-30,000,000	25	524
>30,000,000	22	2,157

Mortgage Interest Relief Expenditure

164. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of restoring 100% mortgage interest relief for all landlords; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43969/15]

165. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of providing 100% mortgage interest relief for all new landlords; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43970/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 164 and 165 together.

In relation to the cost of restoring 100% mortgage interest relief for all landlords, I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that a breakdown between rent received from residential and other types of property is not sought or provided in tax returns. However, based on the information that is available and making certain assumptions, it is estimated that the cost to the Exchequer of increasing the level at which individuals can claim interest repayments against tax for residential rental properties from 75% to 100%, could be in the order of €80 million.

This estimate is premised on the assumption that tax relief is allowed at the Income Tax rate of 40% and the figures provided could therefore be regarded as the maximum Exchequer cost in respect of those taxpayers.

Rental income of companies is returned as net of interest on borrowings and the figures for interest are not separately distinguished in Corporation Tax returns. There is, therefore, no basis for an estimate of the cost of increasing the tax relief for corporate landlords.

The restriction was introduced in the April 2009 supplementary budget in respect of all residential lettings as part of an urgent revenue-raising package aimed at stabilising the public finances. As the Deputy will be aware, in the current Finance Bill I am providing for a full 100% interest deduction where the landlord undertakes, for a period of at least three years, to provide accommodation to tenants in receipt of social housing supports and registers such undertakings with the Private Residential Tenancies Board within certain time limits.

With regard to the cost of providing 100% mortgage relief to all new landlords, I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that they have no information on either the likely number of new landlords or the level of mortgage interest relief they might claim. There is therefore no basis upon which to estimate the cost of the measure proposed by the Deputy.

Universal Social Charge Application

166. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of eliminating the universal social charge on income up to €25,000, €30,000, €40,000, €50,000, €60,000, €70,000,

€80,000 and €100,000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43971/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the estimated first and full year costs of increasing the exemption threshold for the Universal Social charge (USC) from the amount set out in Budget 2016 of €13,000 to the various thresholds requested by the Deputy is outlined in the following table.

USC Exemption Threshold (€)	First Year Cost €m	Full Year Cost €m
25,000	162	222
30,000	293	400
40,000	622	842
50,000	943	1,275
60,000	1,222	1,652
70,000	1,428	1,933
80,000	1,584	2,148
100,000	1,788	2,433

These figures are estimates from the Revenue tax forecasting model using latest actual data for the year 2013, adjusted as necessary for income, self-employment and employment trends in the interim. They are estimated by reference to 2016 incomes and are provisional and may be revised.

Tax Code

167. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of completing the equalisation of tax treatment for the self-employed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43973/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I assume that the equalisation the Deputy is referring to the removal of the 3% USC surcharge on non-PAYE incomes in excess of €100,000 and increasing in the Earned Income Credit (EIC) to €1,650, the same level the existing PAYE credit. On this basis I'm informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the estimated total first and full year costs of such proposals would be in the order of €70 million and €235 million respectively. It should also be noted that this estimate does not take into account the ability of the EIC to be fully absorbed.

These figures are estimates from the Revenue tax forecasting model using latest actual data for the year 2013, adjusted as necessary for income, self-employment and employment trends in the interim. They are estimated by reference to 2016 incomes and are provisional and may be revised.

Credit Unions

168. **Deputy Gabrielle McFadden** asked the Minister for Finance if he acknowledges the concerns of credit unions that the planned consultation paper 88 regulations will seriously damage credit unions, restrict their ability to provide services, and to compete with other financial institutions; if the Registrar of Credit Unions has reported on the draft regulations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43993/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Credit Union and Co-operation with Overseas Regulators Act 2012 (2012 Act) was signed into law by the President in December 2012.

It was agreed at that time that it would be neither practical nor feasible to commence the 2012 Act in its entirety in one fell swoop. Following on from that, an implementation timetable for the 2012 Act was devised in consultation with stakeholders, including credit union representative bodies.

Commencement of all sections of the 2012 Act has been aligned with the credit union financial year and the introduction of the underpinning Central Bank regulations, with a view to implementation of the 2012 Act in a coherent and cohesive manner. This has provided credit unions with the time necessary to ensure that the required processes and procedures are in place prior to implementation of each tranche.

I have met with the three credit union representative bodies and their concerns around the new regulations were discussed. Officials from my Department have also met with the sector. It is my intention to commence the remaining sections of the 2012 Act on 31 December 2015 in line with the introduction of the regulations by the Registrar of Credit Unions. These sections of the 2012 Act, when commenced will replace, amend or supplement existing sections of the 1997 Act.

Separately to the consultation process, as outlined in the Central Bank's feedback statement on CP88, I proposed that in the interests of clarity and fairness, credit unions are provided with details of the process of applying for a retention of savings above the limit amount. I have been informed by the Registry of Credit Unions that all credit unions have been contacted and given further information on its application criteria for the retention of savings in excess of €100,000. The Registry of Credit Unions intends to engage with the representative bodies and to invite comments from them prior to finalisation of the application process. On finalisation of the application process, the Registry will provide an application form and explanatory notes in order to assist credit unions in making an application. It is anticipated that application forms will be available this month. It is envisaged that applications will be accepted in the first quarter of 2016 and that applicant credit unions will be informed by the end of the second quarter of 2016 on the outcome of the process, which is well within the 12 month transitional period. Where a credit union has demonstrated that it meets the criteria, it will be in a position to retain members' savings in excess of €100,000 held at the commencement of the regulations.

I welcome the steps that have been taken to provide clarity for credit unions on the criteria for retaining savings of over €100,000 and I also welcome the Central Bank proposed engagement with the representative bodies to seek their comments on the application process.

The Central Bank has also informed me that it is committed to undertaking a review of the continued appropriateness of the savings limit, once the impact of the restructuring process can be assessed. It is envisaged that this review will commence within three years of the introduction of the regulations. My officials have asked the Central Bank to consider accelerating this review and this is currently under consideration by the Central Bank. The Central Bank has agreed to provide regular updates to my Department on developments regarding this matter.

The Central Bank has further informed me that all credit unions were contacted and invited to attend information seminars being held around the country from mid to end November. These seminars provided credit unions with the opportunity to engage with the Central Bank on the new regulations and to discuss development of the credit union business model, including any changes to the regulatory framework that might be required to facilitate those developments.

The Government's priorities remain the protection of members' savings, the financial stability of credit unions and the sector overall and it is absolutely determined to continue to support a strengthened and growing credit union movement.

Home Renovation Incentive Scheme Eligibility

169. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Finance if a person who is totally reliant on social protection can partake in the home renovation incentive scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44097/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Home Renovation Incentive (HRI) came into operation on 25 October 2013 and will run until 31 December 2016. The incentive provides tax relief for homeowners by way of a tax credit at 13.5% of qualifying expenditure incurred on repair, renovation or improvement work carried out on a principal private residence. Qualifying expenditure is that which is subject to the 13.5% VAT rate. The work must cost a minimum of €4,405 (exclusive of VAT) at which level it would attract a credit of €595. Where the cost of the work exceeds €30,000 (exclusive of VAT) a maximum credit of €4,050 will apply. The credit is payable over the two years following the year in which the work is carried out.

As the HRI is a tax relief, it is not possible to extend it to individuals who have no tax liability. However, the tax credit is being provided over a period of two years in order to assist those with low incomes. In addition, unused credits may be carried forward for use in future years, should an individual subsequently have an income level which is liable to income tax.

It is worth noting that the SEAI operates the Better Energy Homes Scheme where cash grants are provided for qualifying works. The SEAI also install energy efficiency measures at no cost to qualifying individuals under the Warmer Homes Scheme. Further information on these schemes is available on the SEAI website, www.seai.ie. In addition to the grants available from the SEAI, grants are also provided by local authorities to assist individuals in the carrying out of works that are necessary to accommodate the needs of a person with a disability. Further information on these grants are available from local authorities.

State Debt

170. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the annual report of the Comptroller and Auditor General in 2014, which showed that Ireland is required to borrow €1 billion each year just to pay the interest on that part of the sovereign debt which was created solely to bail out the banks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44106/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In Chapter 3 of his Annual Report for 2014, The C&AG included his estimate of the opportunity cost to date of servicing the debt to fund the bank investments. In addition, he also included his estimate of the future cost in this regard, under certain scenarios e.g. the amount the State receives from any future disposals of its remaining banking investments, and market interest rates in the future.

In our reporting, we do not include such estimates and we only include the verifiable cash amount invested in the banks, and the amounts returned from disposals, income received on these investments, and fees.

If my Department was to diverge from such an approach we would be straying into the area of counterfactual analysis, in which case there are wider considerations that would also need

to be taken into account. The most obvious would be the direct and indirect costs to the State and its citizens if the taxpayer had not invested in the banks due to their systemic importance.

Housing Provision

171. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding social housing construction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44137/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I welcome the announcement by NAMA that, subject to commercial viability, it expects to be in a position to fund the construction of up to 20,000 new residential units, predominantly located in Dublin and the neighbouring counties of Wicklow, Kildare and Meath, over the next five years. NAMA will in this way make an important contribution, on a strictly commercial basis, to increased supply over the coming years and will be part of the overall housing solution, although only one part of the solution.

NAMA debtors and receivers control about 30% of zoned residential sites in the Dublin area. Accordingly, market participants who control the other 70% of the sites also have a major role to play in addressing the supply/demand imbalance in the years ahead.

This Government is examining what role it can play in supporting increased output by the wider development sector and in particular is examining how to address infrastructure deficits that are holding up the supply of commercially viable new housing in the main urban growth centres.

I am encouraged by the increasingly visible activity of other market participants as demonstrated by the recent announcement by Cairn Homes that their successful acquisition of Ulster Bank's Project Clear portfolio will provide them with the opportunity to build over 14,000 new homes, with an expected net development value of in excess of €2 billion.

The Deputy rightly identifies increased social housing provision as a priority for Government. That priority is reflected in the housing package announced recently by Minister Alan Kelly and in the substantial increases in direct Exchequer funding for social housing over the lifetime of this Government.

It is important to point out that NAMA cannot subvent the supply of social housing. Section 10 of the NAMA Act requires NAMA to act in a commercial manner to obtain the best financial return for taxpayers. In line with NAMA's obligations under Section 10, all residential projects will be required to pass a stringent commercial viability threshold before NAMA approves funding and funding will only be made available if it is expected to increase the overall recovery for NAMA from the security being funded. NAMA must act akin to a private sector commercial entity.

NAMA has, however, already played a very important role in facilitating on a commercial basis the supply of houses and apartments for social housing from within its existing portfolio. By the end of this year, NAMA will have facilitated the supply of 2,000 houses and apartments for social housing through its debtors and receivers. This equates to more than one-third of total social housing provision under Part V (Social Housing) legislation in the years between 2002 and 2011. It should also be noted that NAMA originally made over 6,500 houses and apartments available for social housing under this commercial initiative but local authorities confirmed demand for just over 2,500 of these.

Therefore, NAMA's contribution to the housing market and, by association, social housing,

is certainly both timely and welcome. The core housing issue that we currently face is that of insufficient supply. It is only by substantially increasing housing supply, particularly in the greater Dublin area, that we can deliver a sustainable solution to the current housing situation. By increasing the level of housing output, we will increase the affordability of housing generally, which in turn will have a positive effect on our ability to provide social housing.

NAMA continues to be mindful of commercially attractive opportunities in the social housing sector. However, the reality is that current social housing delivery models require direct Exchequer subvention. The Government is fully committed to delivering on our Social Housing 2020 strategy, which will provide 35,000 new social housing units at a cost of €3.8 billion over the period to 2020.

We are also combining these long term measures with interim solutions to deal with the immediate issues that families currently face. This is why Budget 2016 increased the current allocation for social housing by €69 million to €414 million. This will enable local authorities to secure accommodation for an additional 14,000 households.

Under the Government's 6 year capital investment framework, "Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021", which was recently announced by Minister Howlin, the current allocation for emergency accommodation for the homeless, has been increased by €17 million. This increase will bring Exchequer support to €70 million, which amounts to a 56% increase since last year. This injection of funding will help the homeless transition to long term sustainable housing.

The Government also recently agreed on a package of measures designed to give certainty to tenants in relation to their rent, to better protect tenants in their homes and to provide clarity to both tenants and landlords as regards their rights and obligations. The primary measure in this package is the amendment of the Residential Tenancies Act so that rent reviews for all tenancies will take place every 24 months, rather than every 12 months as currently is the case. This will provide tenants with a longer period of predictable rent.

Therefore, addressing the issues facing the housing market generally, social housing, and homelessness, particularly among families, are clearly key priorities for this Government. The above measures are tangible evidence of our commitment to tackle those issues head on.

Tax Code

172. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the additional revenue that would be generated if the band A9 vehicle registration tax rate was increased from 30% to 33.5%, if the band A10 rate was increased from 34% to 38.5%, and the band A11 rate was increased from 36% to 43%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44208/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that additional revenue of €4 million is estimated to be generated in a year from introducing the proposed rates of VRT for Categories E, F, and G, assuming a similar pattern of new and used car registrations in 2016 as in 2015.

In the first eleven months of 2015 these categories accounted for 0.7% of the new car registrations and 6.5% of the used car registrations which are liable to VRT.

Tax Code

173. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the additional revenue that would be generated from a reduction of the pension fund allowance for tax purposes on retirement from €2 million to €0.95 million; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44209/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I assume that the Deputy's reference to a pension fund allowance is meant to refer to the Standard Fund Threshold or SFT. The SFT is the maximum allowable pension fund on retirement for tax purposes which was introduced in Budget and Finance Act 2006 to prevent over-funding of pensions through tax-relieved arrangements. The threshold was initially set at €5 million, which was subsequently reduced to €2.3 million in 2010 and further reduced in Budget 2014 and Finance (No 2) Act 2013 to €2 million with effect from 1 January 2014.

Information on the numbers and values of individual pension funds or on individual accrued benefits in pension schemes are not generally required to be supplied to either the Revenue Commissioners or to my Department by the administrators of pension schemes and personal pension arrangements. The estimate of the yield expected to arise from the changes to the SFT regime introduced in Budget 2014 and Finance (No 2) Act 2013 referred to above was arrived at following considerable internal work over a period by my Department involving, among other things, data gathering and consultation with private sector sources relating to the specific changes to be made. There is no readily available underlying data or methodology on which to base reliable estimates of the tax yield that would arise from further changes to the SFT of the scale envisaged in the question.

Tax Code

174. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding tax relief on mortgages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44213/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): When calculating rental income for tax purposes, an individual may be allowed a deduction of 75% of the interest paid on borrowed money used to purchase, improve or repair rented premises when calculating rental income. There are also a number of other allowances and deductions available to reduce the tax on rental income paid. These include, for example, the cost to the landlord of any goods provided or services rendered to a tenant and the cost of maintenance, repairs, insurance and management of the property.

The Office of the Revenue Commissioners has published a guide to the income tax treatment of rental income. It sets out the amount of rental income to be taken account of for income tax purposes and provides a comprehensive list of expenditure items that are allowable for deduction in computing rental income for tax purposes. This guide is available at: <http://www.revenue.ie/en/tax/it/leaflets/it70.html>.

The Deputy may also be aware that in the current Finance Bill I am providing for a full 100% interest deduction where the landlord undertakes, for a period of at least three years, to provide accommodation to tenants in receipt of social housing supports and registers such undertakings with the Private Residential Tenancies Board within certain time limits.

I am conscious of the challenges that individuals continue to face, despite the improving economic conditions. However I would also note that the changes to the income tax system included in Budget 2015 mean that individuals who paid Income Tax and or USC in 2014 are facing reduced tax bills in 2015, where incomes are equal. Budget 2016 is now continuing this

process of reducing the tax burden on low and middle income earners including, among other changes, a decrease in the three lowest rates of USC announced to take effect from January 2016.

Departmental Legal Costs

175. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the total cost to his Department, and those under his aegis, for the procurement of legal services in the State from 2011 to 2015 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44573/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The information requested by the Deputy in relation to the cost of procurement of legal services is set out in the following tables:

Department of Finance:

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015 (to date)
€1,434,119	€3,169,031	€2,529,183	€1,349,737	€1,680,311

Agencies:

Agency	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015 (to date)
Office of the Appeals Commissioners	Nil	Nil	Nil	€5,535	Nil
C&AGs	€12,032	€20,213	€18,959	€33,376	€37,399 (to 4 December 2015)
Credit Reviewer	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Credit Union Advisory Committee	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Credit Union Restructuring Board (ReBo)	Nil	Nil	€59,813	€39,368	€20,636
Disabled Drivers Medical Board of Appeal	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Financial Services Ombudsman Bureau	€1,386,255	€1,440,709	€994,533	€650,618	€720,000 (estimated to year end)
Financial Services Ombudsman Council	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

Questions - Written Answers

Agency	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015 (to date)
Investor Compensation Company Limited	€39,000	€42,000	€108,000	€119,000	€40,500
Irish Fiscal Advisory Council	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
National Asset Management Agency	€9,478,000	€4,634,000	€2,975,000	€8,574,000	€2,398,000 (to end October)
National Treasury Management Agency*	€7,754,146	€445,380	€1,094,252	€894,184	€606,157
National Development Finance Agency**	€695,087	€399,782	€581,497	€787,263	€549,387
State Claims Agency***	€13,612,000	€16,497,000	€18,759,000	€20,520,000	€14,793,218
National Pensions Reserve Fund (transitioned to ISEF w.e.f. 22.12.14)	€461,312	€344,111	€448,502	€842,581	€484,649
Office of the Revenue Commissioners	€6,823,340	€7,527,781	€7,375,465	€7,679,111	€7,057,914
Social Finance Foundation	€6,437	€4,273	€22,420	€12,020	€22,374
Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland	N/A	N/A	N/A	Nil. Legal Fees related to the SBCI reported by NTMA for 2014.	€69,711
Irish Financial Services Appeal Tribunal	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

* The amounts above set out the legal fees incurred by the NTMA and related agencies (other than NAMA and SBCI (except for 2014)).

** Fees and expenses incurred by the NDFA in the performance of its financing and advi-

sory functions in relation to specific public investment projects (Public Private Partnerships) are reimbursed by the relevant State Authority to the NTMA

*** The State Claims Agency legal fees incurred in the management of personal injury and property damage claims against the State are reimbursed by the relevant State Authority to the NTMA.

Note: The State Claims Agency also discharges certain plaintiff legal expenses; these are not included in the table.

Information for the Central Bank and the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation could not be collated in the time available. I will respond to the Deputy directly as soon as possible.

Ministerial Meetings

176. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of meetings requested by private external lobby groups and the number of meetings held, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43604/15]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In response to the Deputy's question I receive representations and requests for meetings from a broad range of sources, including members of the Oireachtas, local and voluntary groups, private individuals and companies.

While my Office does not maintain a register of all such requests for meetings or invitations received, I can advise the Deputy that during 2015 I have attended over seventy meetings with a variety of individuals and groups, including meetings with representatives of those bodies under the aegis of my Department and other public representatives. These figures would not include informal unscheduled meetings that may arise from time to time.

The Deputy will be aware that the Regulation of Lobbying Act commenced on 1 September 2015. The Act provides that the Standards in Public Office Commission (the Standards Commission) will establish and maintain an online register of lobbying and oversee compliance with the legislative provisions. The purpose of the register will be to make information available to the public on the identity of those communicating with designated public officials. Persons lobbying are required to register with the Standards Commission and are required to submit returns on their lobbying activities. This register is available to the public and can be viewed on *www.lobbying.ie*. Lobbying activity carried out during the period 1 September 2015 to 31 December 2015 must be returned by 21 January 2016.

Departmental Expenditure

177. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his Department's photography costs since he came into office, inclusive of costs incurred from use of the ministerial allowance by year in tabular form; the occasions for which photographers were booked; the photographers used; the costs associated with each occasion; the policy in place regarding the booking of photographers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43636/15]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In response to the Deputy's question I can confirm that the engagement of service providers by my Department operates within the parameters of value for money and where possible every effort is

made to minimise costs. In line with stated Government policy, all public bodies must use a competitive process for the purchase of any goods and services, whatever the value.

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Photography Costs

Event/Occasion	Name of Photographer	Breakdown of Costs	Total Cost
Irish Presidency EU-PAN HRWG/IPSG meeting	Fennell Photography	Event Photographer per hour: €75Medium Resolution Image: €10VAT@ 13.50%: €19.55	€104.55
Irish Presidency EUPAN Directors General meeting	Fennell Photography	Event Photographer per hour: €75Medium Resolution Image: €10VAT@ 13.50%: €19.55	€104.55
Public Service Excellence Awards 2012	Maxwell Photography	Photographer hired to take photographs of the award recipients and provide copies for them	€811.52
ONE HR learning and Development Strategy 2015-2017	Marc O'Sullivan Photography	There is no further breakdown.	€369.00
Implementation of Action 13 Civil Service Renewal Plan	Steven Langan t/a City Headshots	Services provided to illustrate a range of civil servants at work in different roles to inform "Pride in the Civil Service" project and the first Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards supporting employee reward and recognition as part of the implementation of the Civil Service Renewal Plan.	€1,500
Total			€2,889.62

I understand the Office of Public Works will contact you directly regarding this matter.

Public Relations Contracts Data

178. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his De-

partment's use of external public relations firms since he came into office by year in tabular form; the uses of these firms and the policy regarding employing them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43652/15]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In response to the Deputy's question I can confirm that with the exception of the Office of Public Works, the services of a public relations firm have not been engaged by my Department since its formation in 2011. The appointment of service providers by my Department operates within the parameters of value for money and every effort is made to minimise costs. In line with stated Government policy, all public bodies must use a competitive process for the purchase of any goods and services, whatever the value.

I understand the Office of Public Works will contact you directly regarding this matter.

Consultancy Contracts Data

179. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the reports he commissioned from external consultants since March 2011, by year, title, cost, date published and company, in tabular form. [43668/15]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In response to the Deputy's question the following table outlines the total amount spent on external consultancy reports commissioned by my Department since 2011.

Name of External Report	Costs	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Name of External Consultant
Independent verification of savings arising under the Public Service Agreement	€35,819	June 2011	MKO Partners Ltd
Report on Reasons Behind Voter Behaviour in the Oireachtas Inquiry Referendum 2011	€41,043	January 2012	Red C Research and Marketing Ltd.
Independent verification of savings arising under the Public Service Agreement	€31,586	13 June 2012	Grant Thornton
Capacity and Capability Review of Central Procurement Function	€30,750	6 September 2012	Accenture
ICT-MF Executive Assessment	€30,750	November 2012	Innovation Value Institute, NUIM
Independent verification of savings arising under the Public Service Agreement	€24,206	3 July 2013	Grant Thornton

Questions - Written Answers

Name of External Report	Costs	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Name of External Consultant
Debt Management Final Report	€135,514	Published 24 July 2014	BearingPoint
Report of a Consultation with Civil Society Representatives and Citizens on Ireland's Participation in the Open Government Partnership	Funding of €25,735.25 was provided to Transparency International Ireland in 2013 following a competitive tender process to support a public consultation with civil society and the preparation of a report of their recommendations and proposals for potential inclusion in Ireland's Open Government Partnership National Action Plan.	Published on 2 October 2013	Transparency International, Ireland
Capacity & Capability Review of the Estate Portfolio function of the Office of Public Works (excluding Heritage Services)	€130,000.00	Report has been received by the Office of Public Works and circulated to staff	Concerto Partners LLP
Open Data project:- Best Practice Handbook- Data Audit Report- Roadmap for Open Data- Evaluation Framework- Open Data Publication Handbook	€19,188	July 2014	Insight Centre for Data Analytics, NUI Galway
Development of Training & Organisation Development	€22,900	July 2014(date is approximate, relates to draft Report)	Baker Tilly Ryan Glennon. Trinity House, Charleston Road, Ranelagh, Dublin 6
Value for Money Report of Dublin Castle's Conference Facilities	€4,674	Qtr 3, 2014	Newmarket Consulting
Fund Structuring Services Agreement for Social Housing and Energy Efficiency in Ireland	€26,767	5 November 2014	European Investment Bank

Name of External Report	Costs	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Name of External Consultant
Baseline Report Single Pension Scheme	€24,900	9 December 2014	Mr Seamus O'Dwyer
Civil Service Disciplinary Code Review (action identified under Civil Service Renewal Plan)	€23,985	June 2015	Clarion Consulting
Debt Management Final Report	€135,514	July 2015	BearingPoint
Comparative Report on European National Identification Numbers	€37,500	Publication pending the completion of the work of the PPSN review Group	Hans Graux of time.lex CVBA, Brussels, Belgium
Provision of legal expertise to assist and advise the Department in the preparation of Guidance to Public Bodies under section 21(3) of the protected Disclosures Act 2014	€12,500	Provision of legal expertise only. Not for publication.	Lauren Kierans BL
Analysis of Business Processes for European Structural and Investment Funds and Development of a Detailed Specification for EU Structural Funds 2014-2020	€46,371	Publication pending the completion of the work of the Dovetail Group	Dovetail
Options for the next National Lottery licence	€615	Not published internal report only	Davy Corporate Finance
Recommendations to DPER for Clare River (Claregalway) Flood Relief Scheme	€23,917	November 2015	JBA Consulting

Name of External Report	Costs	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Name of External Consultant
Business case to deliver a new shared service model to deliver learning and development for the Civil Service external expert advice sought to assess the costs, benefits, risks and implications associated to the components elements of the new model	€106,063	Report is not published yet	Knowledge Pool as part of CAPITA Consulting
Building Strategic HR in the Civil Service	€8,000	Internal report	McGrath Associates
PeoplePoint: Optimal Resourcing Review reflecting present and future organisational requirements	€49,200	Internal report	Equita Consulting

I understand the Office of Public Works will contact you directly regarding this matter.

Departmental Staff

180. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of special advisers on his staff and their yearly salary, from 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43684/15]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): My Department was officially launched in July 2011. I currently have 2 special advisers in my Department. Their details are set out in the following table.

Name	Title	Salary July - Dec 2011	Salary 2012	Salary 2013	Salary 2014	Salary 2015
Anne Byrne	Special Advisor	69,447	86,059	86,320	84,706	84,706
Ronan O'Brien	Special Advisor	114,000	114,000	110,440	106,880	106,880

Ground Rents Payments

181. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the ground rents payable by the State, by named property, by name of landlord, by amount payable,

in 2015 and in 2016, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43715/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): The following table schedules the ground rents payable to landlords on properties managed by the Office of Public Works. The OPW is not in a position to supply details on ground rents that may be payable by other Government Departments or Agencies on behalf of the State.

PROPERTY NAME	GROUND RENT PER ANNUM	LANDLORD
Cork SWO - Hanover Street	€361.88	EXECUTORS OF PER-ROTT ESTATE
Dun Laoghaire Money Advice Service	€35.18	LORD LONGFORD & VISCOUNT DE VESCI
Dun Laoghaire Money Advice Service	€35.18	BEAUCHAMPS SOLICITOR
Parnell Sq 24-28 Coláiste Mhuire	€76.18	M F SYMES
Gyleen MES	€5.08	MICHAEL SWEENEY
Bridewell (Cork) GS + MQ	€117.21	EXECUTORS OF FRANKS ESTATE
Bridewell (Cork) GS + MQ	€17.75	EXECUTORS OF FRANKS ESTATE
Glasnevin Meteorological Office	€31.74	MRS ANN MC GILLIGAN
19 Royal Irish Arcade, Dawson St.	€7.35	DR E C TURTON
Cathal Brugha Barracks	€419.36	SWEETMAN ESTATE
Cobh Fort + Hospital	€18.75	WILLIAM WHEELER
Kilmacrennan GS	€5.08	EARL OF LEITRIM
14 - 15 O'Connell Street Upper	€176.98	M.D. PENNEFATHER
Tralee SWO - Godfrey Place	€76.18	THOMAS J O'BRIEN & ROBERT J O'BRIEN
Youghal Former Military Barracks	€7.07	THOMAS FARRELL ESTATE
13-14 Burgh Quay	€177.76	IRISH PRESS PLC
Birr GS	€76.18	CAPT T B HACKETT
Bundoran GS + MQ	€25.39	TRUSTEES OF THE WILL OF SIMON SHEIL
Carlow Social Protection Office	€6.98	CARLOW TOWN COUNCIL
Cobh Custom House	€4.39	COL W P H RUSH-BROOKE
Cork C&E Parnell Place	€66.03	MRS GILLIAN LEONARD
4-5 Kildare Street Library	€14.44	DUKE OF LEINSTER
Limerick Custom House Hunt Mus	€26.96	JAMES DUNDON
Merrion Row 7 - 9	€87.03	FIRST MANAGEMENT
Merrion Square 6A (Fenian St)	€31.74	THE TRUSTEES GEORGE SIMPSON HOSPITAL

Questions - Written Answers

PROPERTY NAME	GROUND RENT PER ANNUM	LANDLORD
New Ross Government Office	€25.39	GOVERNOR & COMPANY OF BANK OF IRELAND
Government Buildings	€4.49	DUKE OF LEINSTER
Government Buildings	€3.52	DUKE OF LEINSTER
50-51 St Stephens Green	€258.14	MRS W C KENNEDY & MRS H D WOOD
Swanlinbar GS+Cust Post + RAX	€25.39	BRIDGET MCGOLDRICK
1-2 Thomas Lane	€72.38	TADGH GLEESON
Tralee Music School	€3.31	EXECUTORS OF FINNERTY ESTATE
Waterford OPW Office	€12.70	BAYLY ESTATES
Waterford Government Office, Catherine St	€13.97	BAYLY ESTATES
Damastown Warehouse	€12.70	FINGAL CO COUNCIL
Portlaoise Decentralisation Site	€128.00	IDA IRELAND
Cathal Brugha Barracks	€275.73	KILRUDDERY FARMS
Cathal Brugha Barracks	€25.39	KILRUDDERY FARMS
Mouth of Boyne Former Coastguard Station	€125.28	WADDINGTON ESTATE
Drogheda Government Offices	€29.29	TRUSTEES OF LEIGHS CHARITY
31 Fitzwilliam Place	€19.68	EARL OF PEMBROKE
Cavan Government Office, Town Hall Street	€19.05	P D D STONE
Limerick Government Office, Sarsfield House	€140.64	DUNDON CALLANAN SOLICITORS
Waterford Post Office	€13.97	JOHN J COLBERT SOLR
Iveagh House, 78-81 St Stephens Green	€0.55	GOVERNORS OF KING CHARLES II FREE HOSPITAL
Castlebridge GS + MQ	€0.76	IRISH LAND COMMISSION
Castleconnell GS + RAX	€0.01	
Castleisland GS+MQ+RAX	€14.98	
St Luke's Former GS	€12.70	SIR PATRICK BARRY MC
Seven Heads MES	€0.63	EILEEN NYHAN
Ballycotton MES	€0.32	COL M J C LONGFIELD
Cumberland St SWO	€6.98	
Arklow Former Coastguard Station & Cottage	€19.05	EARL OF WICKLOW
Bannow Former Coastguard Station	€12.70	MRS GLADYS P BOYCE
Bray GS	€44.44	JOHN D'OYLEY BATTLEY

PROPERTY NAME	GROUND RENT PER ANNUM	LANDLORD
Castletownconyers GS + MQ	€6.35	CHARLES E GRAHAM-CONYERS
Celbridge GS + RAX	€6.35	EASTERN HEALTH BOARD
Clonaslee GS + Residence + RAX	€7.62	GOVERNOR & COMPANY OF BANK OF IRELAND
Corofin GS + MQ	€1.90	PATRICK RAFTERY
Dundalk SWO - Barrack Street	€6.09	MAUD HILL
Dunshaughlin GS + RAX	€31.74	MRS M SUPPLE
Galway Scoil Fhursa	€8.89	MRS MOIRA G WALTER
Glin GS + MQ	€15.24	DESMOND & LLOYD FITZGERALD
Iveagh House, 78-81 St Stephens Green	€165.07	THE BURSAR - THE KINGS HOSPITAL
Kilcormac GS + RAX	€3.17	REPRESENTATIVES OF A A STONEY
Killybegs GS	€3.17	ROBERT DAVID CECIL BUSTARD
Limerick Custom House, Hunt Museum	€62.51	REPRESENTATIVES OF ADMIRAL WHYTE
Limerick Sarsfield Barracks	€2.67	EXECUTORS OF M F BOURKE
Marlborough St Ed HQ	€76.18	JAMES BUCKLEY
Marlborough St Ed HQ	€63.55	JAMES BUCKLEY
Mountrath GS + MQ + RAX	€3.81	MRS EVELYN P TELFORD
Muine Bheag GS + MQ + RAX	€7.62	MS LUCY KEARNEY DECD
Nenagh GS	€31.74	EXECUTORS OF TOLER ESTATE
Parnell Sq 24-28 Coláiste Mhuire	€79.70	REPRESENTATIVES OF CAPT G F WILSON
Parnell Sq 24-28 Coláiste Mhuire	€88.88	TICHER LIMITED
Cumberland St SWO	€38.09	THOMAS C BURKE
Rathmines GS	€38.09	BRUIN COMPANY
Rosslare Pier GS+Ailsa+Met	€29.14	E J M SANDWITH
National Museum	€16.99	CARTER & STUBBS
Thurles GS	€44.44	TRUSTEES OF ST PATRICK'S COLLEGE
Tramore MES	€3.17	RT HON HUGH ST LEGER
Trim Model School	€12.70	TRIM U D C
Moneygall GS + MQ	€3.81	MRS G M R GOODBODY
Kilmore Quay MES	€5.08	EXECUTORS OF CAPT H A BRUEN

PROPERTY NAME	GROUND RENT PER ANNUM	LANDLORD
Lifford Customs Site	€15.87	CHARLES & DANIEL MC-CAULEY
Newcastlewest Revenue	€19.05	MARY & NELLIE WALKER

Departmental Legal Costs

182. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the cost to his Department and those organisations under the aegis of his Department for the procurement of legal services in the State from 2011 to date, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43725/15]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In response to the Deputy's question the following table outlines the total amount spent on legal services in my Department and those under my aegis since 2011.

Organisation	Total from 2011 to date
Public Expenditure and Reform	€573,956
Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)	€44,959
Public Appointments Service (PAS)	€753
Institute of Public Administration	€24,541
The State Laboratory	€22,465
The Office of the Ombudsman	€1,817,000

I understand the Office of Public Works will contact you directly regarding this matter.

State Properties

183. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on the recent structural problems that have been discovered at the Department of Social Protection's offices at Buncrana in County Donegal, his plans to address these; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43726/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): The Office of Public Works recently carried out works to repair the boundary wall adjoining the access roadway to the car park and also repairs to the access roadway itself at the Government Offices in Buncrana. The repairs were due to some wall cracking and localised settlement in the ground.

Works are now complete since the 4th December 2015.

There are no further works planned at this time.

Public Sector Staff Retirements

184. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views that there would be cost implications for the Exchequer in ending age-related compulsory

retirement in the public sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43742/15]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The most recent consideration of the issue of an age related compulsory retirement date for public servants was in the context of the enactment of the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012. This legislation provided for the commencement of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme. This was a significant reform and targeted very substantial long-run savings of about one third of pension outgo, for new-hire workers across the entire public service, with foreseen savings mainly deriving from career-average (not final-salary) pension accrual, inflation (not pay) linkage of benefits, and higher minimum pension age. Accordingly any increase in the minimum pension age can deliver reduced pension costs to the Exchequer. However, while the Scheme linked normal pension age with the age of qualification for the State Contributory Pension (effectively 68 years for most new joiners), the Scheme currently includes a maximum retirement age of 70. The Scheme also recognises that for certain roles, such as members of the fire brigade, prison service, the Permanent Defence Force or An Garda Síochána, the maximum retirement age may be lower.

For public servants who are members of pre-existing pension schemes other than the Single Pension Scheme, responsibility for conditions in respect of occupational pension and any maximum or compulsory retirement ages in particular areas of the public service are in general a matter for the relevant employer, pension administrator or Government Department in the first instance. I understand that public servants, in general, who began employment in a public service body prior to 1 April 2004 normally have a maximum retirement age of 65 under their terms and conditions of employment. However, similar to the Single Pension Scheme, the maximum retirement age can be lower for certain grades. Any consideration of changes in existing age related compulsory retirement date(s) for public servants would need to have regard to the operational and other requirements of the relevant services across the public service, existing terms and conditions including pension provision and entitlements of the public servants concerned, workforce planning issues and impacts on the Exchequer.

Public Sector Pensions

185. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will counteract the apparent inequity in the current agreement to reduce public service pension reductions for the approximately 25,000 retired civil servants who have an income of greater than €34,132 per year. [44000/15]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): My proposals to Government earlier this year in respect of the amelioration of the Public Service Pension Reduction (PSPR) burden on pensioners, and which now form part of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) Act 2015, deliver on my commitment to ease the burden of the PSPR as early as economic and fiscal circumstances allowed me to do so, with a focus on benefitting impacted lower-income pensions proportionately more.

The proposed ameliorative measures for public service pensions in the 2015 Act will deliver the part-restoration of the PSPR cuts in three stages effective from 1 January 2016, 1 January 2017 and 1 January 2018. When fully rolled-out from 1 January 2018, this means that all public service pensions in payment with pre-PSPR values of up to €34,132 will be fully exempt from PSPR, while those pensioners not fully removed from the reach of PSPR will, in general, benefit by €1,680 per year. Accordingly, all PSPR impacted pensioners including those on pensions in excess of €34,132 will benefit from the measures but those on lower income pensions will benefit proportionately more. The cost of these changes is estimated at about €90 million

on a full-year basis from 2018.

I believe that the current PSPR ameliorative measures represent a fair and sound basis on which, in the improved but still constrained fiscal space, public service pension reductions may be restored in a phased, moderate and progressive fashion, with those on lower PSPR impacted pensions benefitting to a greater extent.

Under section 12 of the FEMPI Act 2013, I am required to review the necessity of FEMPI legislation annually and cause a written report of my findings to be laid before each House of the Oireachtas. In that context, economic progress and fiscal consolidation in the years ahead will determine the scope and timing of the possible further scale-back or elimination of the financial emergency measures, including the PSPR.

Public Service Contracts

186. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform for an update on the work of the social clauses project group. [44020/15]

188. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the date on which the Office of Government Procurement will report on the implementation of social clauses, as committed to by him on establishing the social clauses project group. [44022/15]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 186 and 188 together.

The Government sees significant merit in developing a targeted community clause framework. To this end I established a Social Clauses Project Group in 2014, led by the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) to proactively look at public contracts where social clauses could be deployed to contribute to employment or training opportunities for long term unemployed. The objectives of this project group are:

- the identification of suitable policy priorities to be addressed through the insertion of social clauses in public contracts;
- the provision of guidance in relation to suitable candidate project types and spend areas;
- identification of suitable contract clauses developed in conjunction with the Chief State Solicitor's Office; and,
- the design of a monitoring and reporting framework which can be applied to future projects where social clauses are to be used.

It is important to adopt a targeted approach to the use of community benefit clauses on contracts where employers are likely to be hiring additional workers to deliver the contract. This is likely to mitigate the risk of displacing workers already in employment while offering the opportunity of assisting with labour activation measures for the long-term unemployed.

Two examples of this approach currently in progress are the Grangegorman Development and Devolved Schools Build Programme. In relation to the latter, a clause has been included in the Public Works contracts which require that

- 10% of the aggregate time worked on site to have been undertaken by individuals who have been registered on a national unemployment register within the EU for a continuous period of at least 12 months immediately prior to their employment on the project.

- 2.5% of the aggregate time worked on site to have been undertaken by individuals who are employed under a registered scheme of apprenticeship or other similar national, accredited training or educational work placement arrangement.

Experience of this pilot have been positive. It is important to learn from such practical experience of where community benefit clauses are utilised. This is a complex area. It is important to develop a robust structure that will assist the contracting authority to develop the correct clause and to provide the support from the appropriate agency to aid the company in implementing the clause. I have instructed the OGP to report on this issue and to issue practical guidance designed to assist Contracting Authorities to carry out this important role in a consistent manner. I expect both the report and guidance to issue shortly.

Departmental Contracts Data

187. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of occasions to date that a social clause has been attached to a public contract, and the project to which each has been attached to, in tabular form. [44021/15]

189. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to provide the text of each of the social clauses attached to a public contract to date. [44023/15]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 187 and 189 together.

The consideration of social clauses is a matter for each contracting authority as they are best placed to gauge to appropriate clause for each contract. There are thousands of contracting authorities in the State and they are individually responsible for retaining the tender documentation for each procurement procedure that they carry out. Therefore the information requested by the Deputy in relation to the use of social clauses and the wording of each social clause is not available as such information is not collected centrally.

As part of the reform of the public procurement function the Office of Government Procurement has initiated measures to make it easier for contracting authorities to carry out public procurement in a consistent manner. One such measure was the introduction of standard procurement template documents that are used throughout the public service. These template documents make it easier for suppliers particularly SMEs to take advantage of public procurement opportunities. In relation to Social Clauses these template documents already provide for the inclusion of clauses in a number of wider policy areas that would include the following:

- Taxation and Social insurance payments
- Employment legislation
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005
- Waste management
- Human Rights
- Environmental legislation

Government recognises the valuable contribution that a vibrant construction sector makes to the economic and social well-being of the State and has introduced a range of measures as set out in Construction 2020 A Strategy for a Renewed Construction Sector. In order to ensure that

these stimulus packages generate the maximum return in relation to job creation social clauses are included in the various contracts that have been, and will be, awarded under the PPP element of the €2.25bn package announced in July 2012. The relevant clause requires:

- At least 10% of the working hours necessary to complete the projects are undertaken by those recruited from the live register who have been unemployed for more than 12 months; and
- At least 2.5% of the working hours necessary to complete the projects are undertaken by individuals who are engaged in an approved registered apprenticeship, training or educational work placement scheme.

Overall compliance in relation to the pilot clause has been good. The Department of Social Protection and their local Intreo offices are working closely with the appointed contractors to support the pilot initiative and there has been strong positive engagement from the contractors involved in each of the projects.

Whilst Government is convinced of the merit in using social clauses in particular circumstances, it is important that contracting authorities are not compelled to use them on every contract particularly where their deployment may disproportionately impact on SME's bidding for public contracts.

Question No. 188 answered with Question No. 186.

Question No. 189 answered with Question No. 187.

Flood Prevention Measures

190. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of a project (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44070/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): The Office of Public Works (OPW) very recently received from Clare County Council (CCC) a copy of the feasibility study report prepared by the engineering consultants engaged by CCC to examine the flooding issues at the location mentioned. The OPW will be responding to CCC in due course when it has completed a full review of the feasibility study report.

Flood Prevention Measures

191. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if and when the necessary funding will be approved for drainage and flood prevention works associated with the Morrell River in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44084/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): Kildare County Council (KCC), in consultation with the Office of Public Works (OPW), engaged Consulting Engineers to carry out a Full Feasibility Study, Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA), and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the Lower Morrell River and the surrounding River Catchment in an effort to resolve the outstanding localised flooding issues in the Straffan area. A Steering Group which comprises representatives of KCC, OPW and the consultants, was set up to advance the project.

KCC and their consultants submitted a Draft Options Report/Feasibility Study to OPW outlining possible flood relief measures for the Lower Morrell River Catchment in 2014. Following consideration of the draft report by the OPW, it was agreed by the Steering Group that the consultants would carry out a more detailed review of the proposed scheme with further analysis of the various options considered to assess the benefits of the current works proposals as they have evolved. The review would also investigate if there are additional or alternative and more cost effective measures that can be put in place to alleviate flooding in the area. Any changes identified by the review process would need to be incorporated into the Cost Benefit Analysis and Environmental Impact Statement before the scheme can be advanced.

I am advised by my Officials that the consultants have completed the review process and KCC has submitted their findings to the OPW for consideration. It is envisaged that OPW and KCC will meet early in 2016 with a view to finalising the Feasibility Report. Once the Feasibility Report has been finalised, and provided the scheme is still economically and environmentally viable, KCC and the OPW will decide on how best to advance the proposed works. The OPW has included provision for the cost of the proposed works in its financial profiles in the period up to 2018.

State Properties

192. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the status of refurbishing the near empty building of Carrisbrook House, given that it is almost totally vacant and of national and historical importance, given the site's role in the 1916 Rising, if he will make this site available to the local authority as housing for persons in emergency accommodation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44165/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Carrisbrook House is a privately owned building, developed in the late 1960's. The head lease on Carrisbrook House has been held by IDA Ireland since September 2013 following the completion of the assignment of properties from Forfás to IDA Ireland. Prior to this the lease passed through a number of State Agencies since 1969 when An Chomhairle Oiliuna (AnCo) first took out a 65 year lease on the building.

The Israeli Embassy is currently the only occupant of the premises, on a sub-lease which expires in 2025.

Over the past number of years every effort has been made by Forfás and IDA Ireland to lease the remainder of the building to a public or private sector client. However, there has been no interest in the building due to a number of factors including the state of repair of the building, and the fact that IDA Ireland cannot offer a prospective client vacant possession.

The Agency has assured me that they are addressing these issues, and as such are not in a position to consider making this site available to the Local Authority.

Enterprise Support Schemes

193. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the ten projects selected for the €500,000 competitive start fund to encourage enterprise and the diaspora to set up here, when the successful applicants will start these enterprises and in what location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43564/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Targeting start-ups and early stage companies that have the capability to succeed in global markets, the objective of this call was to attract international entrepreneurs and members of the Irish diaspora to start, scale and succeed from Ireland, ultimately creating jobs in Ireland. A call for applications to the Competitive Start Fund from International Entrepreneurs was launched on 26 August 2015. 87 applications were received by the closing date of 9 September 2015. The applications came from both Irish nationals living abroad and non-nationals from a wide variety of countries including Albania, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Australia, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Israel, India, Italy, Macedonia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Russia, Switzerland, Turkey, and Ukraine.

Following the call the twenty highest scoring projects were invited to pitch to a panel of external industry experts and EI representatives.

Ten projects were selected and each has been offered €50k investment in return for a 10% equity stake. Enterprise Ireland will be finalising investment agreements in the coming months, including the location of any investment.

A list of the successful projects will be available on the Enterprise Ireland website at the appropriate time and this will also identify the location of the companies concerned. To disclose the names of the companies in advance of this would be breaching commercial confidentiality. At this point, I understand that not all of the project promoters have identified where within the State they are planning to locate their companies.

Ministerial Meetings

194. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of meetings requested by private external lobby groups and the number of meetings held in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43602/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy will appreciate, as Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, many representative groups and, sometimes, groups or entities representing individuals, companies, sectors or groups will seek meetings with me to discuss policy options on a wide range of issues impacting my portfolio.

The Deputy will be aware that the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 commenced on 1 September 2015. The Act provides that the Standards in Public Office Commission will establish and maintain an online register of lobbying under which any individual or organisation carrying out lobbying activities is required to register and to make an online return of their lobbying activities.

Since 1 September 2015, records show the following data:

Meetings	Number
Number of meeting requests to Minister received from “private external lobby groups”:	4
Number of meetings held that were requested by “private external lobby groups”:	10

Departmental Expenditure

195. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his Department's photography costs since he came into office, inclusive of costs incurred from use of the ministerial allowance, by year in tabular form; the occasions for which photographers were booked; the photographers used; the costs associated with each occasion; the policy in place regarding the booking of photographers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43634/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I can advise the Deputy that the total photography costs incurred by my Department and its Offices since 9 March, 2011 are €21,244. The list of occasions for which photographers were booked, the photographers used and the breakdown of costs are detailed in the following table. By way of comparison, in the previous five year period, the equivalent photography costs were €34,085.

No expenditure for photography was incurred from Ministerial allowances.

2011

Occasion for which Photographer booked	Name of Photographer	Breakdown of costs associated with each event
Small Business Advisory Group Launch	Mac Innes Photography	€409
Irish Ambassadors for Female Entrepreneurship	Mac Innes Photography	€223
One Millionth Document Filed Online at the Companies Registration Office	Jason Clarke Photography	€484
Ministerial image shot for Repeat use	Mac Innes Photography	€245
Launch of the Final Report of the Sales Law Review Group	Mac Innes Photography	€252
Launch of the Report of "The Voice of Small Business"	Mac Innes Photography	€284
Junior Inventor Awards	Hot Shotz Photographers	€120
Total		€2,017

2012

Occasion for which Photographer booked	Name of Photographer	Breakdown of costs associated with each event
Launch of Action Plan for Jobs 2012	Mac Innes Photography	€438
Action Plan for Jobs Forum, Limerick	Press 22	€312
Action Plan for Jobs Roadshow, Cork	B.L. Mac Gill Photography	€200
Launch of Research Prioritisation Report	Jason Clarke Photography	€492

Questions - Written Answers

Occasion for which Photographer booked	Name of Photographer	Breakdown of costs associated with each event
Action Plan for Jobs Roadshow, Waterford	Gerry O'Carroll Photography	€298
Capital Investment Announcement	Mac Innes Photography	€284
Launch of IP Protocol	Fennell Photography	€301
Launch of Business Regulation Portal	Fennell Photography	€319
Establishment of Clustering Development Team	Fennell Photography	€331
Launch of "Managing out of the Crisis" Guide	Fennell Photography	€257
Publication of Micro Enterprise Loan Fund Bill	Fennell Photography	€283
Launch of €90 Million Microfinance Scheme	Fennell Photography	€321
Launch of Green Economy Policy Statement	Fennell Photography	€264
Total		€4,100

2013

Occasion for which Photographer booked	Name of Photographer	Breakdown of costs associated with each event
Launch of Action Plan for Jobs Q4 Results	Fennell Photography	€264
Launch of Action Plan for Jobs 2013	Fennell Photography	€318
Meeting with Chinese Ambassador	Fennell Photography	€308
Launch of New Work Permit Legislation	Fennell Photography	€264
Launch of Manufacturing Report	Fennell Photography	€342
Unveiling of new Local Enterprise Office, Swords and announcement of details of improved new service for micro and small enterprises	Fennell Photography	€326
Announcement of membership of the Entrepreneurship Forum	Fennell Photography	€369
Launch of Action Plan for Jobs Q2 Results	Fennell Photography	€273
Launch of Copyright Review Report	Fennell Photography	€251

Occasion for which Photographer booked	Name of Photographer	Breakdown of costs associated with each event
Appointment of Chairman of US-Ireland Partnership	Fennell Photography	€232
IDA Announcement	Fennell Photography	€270
Conference for EU High Level Group for Innovation	Fennell Photography	€290
Informal meeting of EU High Level Employment Committee in Dublin Castle	Maxwell Photography	€579
Group Photograph of Labour Court Members	Tommy Clancy Photography	€369
Total		€4,455

2014

Occasion for which Photographer booked	Name of Photographer	Breakdown of costs associated with each event
Launch of Entrepreneurship Forum report	Fennell Photography	€291
Taking Care of Business 2014	Fennell Photography	€291
Action Plan for Jobs 2014 Launch	Fennell Photography	€321
Launch of National Corporate Social Responsibility Plan	Fennell Photography	€137
Publication of OECD report on the Action Plan for Jobs	Fennell Photography	€229
Launch of young entrepreneur competition	Fennell Photography	€397
Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership Conference	Fennell Photography	€457
Domestic Workers Group	Fennell Photography	€321
EU SME Week	Fennell Photography	€203
Launch of the Horizon 2020 Strategic Research Proposals Group	Fennell Photography	€460
Retirement of labour Court member	Tom Clancy Photography	€369
Signing of MOU between NERA and the HSA	Karl McDonagh	€57
Senior Management Forum	UCD	€400
Taking Care of Business Launch	Fennell Photography	€275
CD Copy of Taking Care of Business	Mac Innes Photography	€203

Questions - Written Answers

Occasion for which Photographer booked	Name of Photographer	Breakdown of costs associated with each event
Preparation of stock photo image for new Registrar of Companies for inclusion in CRO publications	Fennell Photography	€123
Total		€4,534

2015

Occasion for which Photographer booked	Name of Photographer	Breakdown of costs associated with each event
Launch of Action Plan for Jobs 2015	Fennell Photography	€312
Launch of Action Plan for Jobs Regional	Fennell Photography	€489
Launch of EGFSN Report	Fennell Photography	€291
EI Trade Mission & St Patrick's day schedules	Fennell Photography	€138
Launch of APJ.ie website	Maxwell Photography	€431
Launch of Low Pay Commission	Maxwell Photography	€448
Launch of Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership Impact in Ireland study	Fennell Photography	€336
Launch of Prompt Payments Code of Conduct	Maxwell Photography	€344
Photocall with Dr. Francis Gurry, Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organisation	Fennell Photography	€291
Launch of Start UP Refunds for Entrepreneurs (SURE)	Fennell Photography	€306
Launch of CSR Hub Website	Fennell Photography	€352
Launch of Manufacturing Brochure	Fennell Photography	€137
Living Wage Forum	Maxwell Photography	€413
Launch of Enterprise 2025 Strategy	Fennell Photography	€381
Launch of EGFSN Report on Skills in the Hospitality Sector	Fennell Photography	€336
Photographer for CSR Website Launch	Fennell Photography	€99
Distribution of Photos of CSR Website Launch	Fennell Photography	€261

Occasion for which Photographer booked	Name of Photographer	Breakdown of costs associated with each event
Launch of Workplace Relations Commission	Fennell Photography	€291
Launch of LPC Recommendations on the NMW – 21/7/15	Maxwell Photography	€482
Total		€6,138

The Department uses external photographers sparingly and, with a view to keeping costs to a minimum, regularly uses its own facilities and staff to take photographs in-house. My Department also avails of the panel of photography firms, selected following a procurement process undertaken by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which is available for use by all Departments.

Public Relations Contracts Data

196. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his Department's use of external public relations firms since he came into office by year in tabular form; the uses of these firms and the policy regarding employing them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43650/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department uses external public relations providers having regard to its business needs for specialist communications advice and technical materials assistance. In engaging such providers, the Department is mindful of the need to secure value for money and, accordingly, strives to keep costs to the minimum. The names and business addresses of the providers of public relations services used by my Department and the Offices of my Department and the details of the services supplied by each since 9 March, 2011 to date are as follows:

Providers of Public Relations Services

Year		
2011	Barberry Limited trading as Keating & Associates, 19 Fitzwilliam Place, Dublin 2.	To provide NERA with Communications Services (including PR; Media Monitoring; advising on the design, content and production of reports & brochures and assisting with website content).
2012	Barberry Limited trading as Keating & Associates, 19 Fitzwilliam Place, Dublin 2.	To provide NERA with Communications Services (including PR; Media Monitoring; advising on the design, content and production of reports & brochures and assisting with website content).

Questions - Written Answers

Year		
2013	Barberry Limited trading as Keating & Associates, 19 Fitzwilliam Place, Dublin 2.	To provide NERA with Communications Services (including PR; Media Monitoring; advising on the design, content and production of reports & brochures and assisting with website content).
2013	MRPA Kinman Communications trading as MKC Communications Limited, The Archway, 4A Lower Pembroke Street, Dublin 2.	To provide the Department with Press and Media Relations Services for the Irish Presidency of the EU. (This was a once off exercise/expenditure due to Presidency events.)
2014	Barberry Ltd T/A Keating & Associates 19 Fitzwilliam Place Dublin 2	To provide NERA with Communications Services (including PR; Media Monitoring; advising on the design, content and production of reports & brochures).
2015	Atomic Advertising Ltd 15A Bishop Street Dublin 8	To provide brand development work for the launch of the Low Pay Commission
2015	Jays Printing Unit 7 Abbey Business Park Grange Drive - Baldoye Industrial Estate Dublin 13	To provide roll-up banners for the launch of the Low Pay Commission
2015	Jays Printing Unit 7 Abbey Business Park Grange Drive - Baldoye Industrial Estate Dublin 13	To provide a rigid sign for the launch of the CSR Hub website
2015	Atomic Advertising Ltd 15A Bishop Street Dublin 8	To provide the Department with a one year advertising campaign, radio and digital, to raise awareness of a range of Government provided enterprise supports
2015	Atomic Advertising Ltd 15A Bishop Street Dublin 8	To create a dual language logo for the Low Pay Commission

Year		
2015	Barberry Ltd T/A Keating & Associates 19 Fitzwilliam Place Dublin 2	To provide NERA (and from 1 October 2015, the Workplace Relations Commission) with Communications Services (including PR; Media Monitoring; advising on the design, content and production of reports & brochures).

Public Relations Contracts Data

197. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the reports he commissioned from external consultants since March 2011, by year, title, cost, date published and company in tabular form. [43666/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The names of external reports commissioned by my Department and Offices of my Department, details of consultants employed and the expenditure on each for the years 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 is as set out as follows. The data in respect of 2014 includes the research and analysis programme, which was undertaken by Forfás up to the date of its integration into my Department in August 2014, and for which my Department held the 2014 budget. The Forfás element of work in 2014 - which historically had its own budget line - represented close to 80% of the 2014 costs outlined in the following table. This research and analysis has subsequently been carried out in the Strategic Policy Division in my Department.

1 January– 2 December 2015

Name of external Consultant/Organisation	Report Title	Status - Date Published/Ongoing	Cost of Report** - €
University of Limerick	Study on the prevalence of zero hour and low hour contracts and their impact on employees	Published 3 November 2015	96,670.00
Planet 21 Communications Ltd.	Strategic Review of Network	Internal ICT network assessment – not for publication	9,932.25
Ward Solutions	ICT security review	Internal ICT security assessments – not for publication	43,572.75
Version 1 Software	Oracle eBusiness Suite Release 12 Upgrade Assessment	Internal ICT system assessment – not for publication	8,079.92
Copenhagen Economics	TTIP Impact in Ireland	Published on 27 March 2015	84,896.04

Questions - Written Answers

Name of external Consultant/Organisation	Report Title	Status - Date Published/Ongoing	Cost of Report** - €
Insight Statistical Consulting	Annual Business Survey of Economic Impact (ABSEI) 2014 - Strategic Policy Division	Ongoing	13,699.13
Technopolis	Enterprise demand survey and analysis for report on Strengthening Ireland's Market-Focussed Research Centre Capacity-Strategic Policy Division	Technical input to development of successor to SSTI - Complete	30,750.00
Mazars LLP	Not in public domain.	This report forms part of the evidence in a criminal prosecution by the DPP and will be detailed in court when the case is heard.	177,545.80
Mason Hayes Curran	Tables of Destinations and Origins to Companies Act 2014	15 June 2015	123,000.00
Crowley's DFK	Audit of funds transfer as part of Forfás restructuring	Operational report not for publication	7,000.00
Capita Business Services Ltd	Review of allegations against Enterprise Ireland	Not for publication based on legal advice received	9,809.25

January – December 2014

Name of external Consultant/Organisation	Report Title	Status - Date Published/Ongoing	Cost of Report** - €
Technopolis	Ireland's Future Infrastructure Needs	Published 8th December 2015	47,203.17
Ward Solutions	ICT security reviews	Internal ICT security assessments – not for publication	35,178.00
Rits	Mobile Device Policy Assessment	Internal ICT security assessments – not for publication	2,236.00
Version 1	Oracle eBusiness Suite R12 Upgrade Assessment	Internal ICT assessment – not for publication	4,174.13

Name of external Consultant/Organisation	Report Title	Status - Date Published/Ongoing	Cost of Report** - €
Copenhagen Economics	TTIP Impact in Ireland	Ongoing (expected publication in early 2015)	167,788.00
Clarion Consulting Limited	Employment Permits Administration Section Business Process Improvement Project Report	Completed	52,275.00
CIRCA Group Europe Limited	Review of Ireland's membership of international research organisations	Completed	61,131.00
CM International	Assessment of Public Funded RD&I Supports for Innovation in Services and Business Processes- Strategic Policy Division	Input to Forfás report on Services Innovation published April 2014	6,000.00
Harvard University, Kennedy School of Government	Ireland's Competitiveness Scorecard 2014- Strategic Policy Division	Input on economic complexity to competitiveness analysis.	2,600.00
Insight Statistical Consulting/Fitzpatrick Associates	Evaluation of IDA Training Grants- Strategic Policy Division	Input to programme of evaluations - publication Q1 2015	19,188.00
DCU/Fitzsimons Consulting	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2014 (GEM) – Strategic Policy Division	Ongoing - GEM 2014 report will be published	20,000.00
Insight Statistical Consulting	Annual Employment Survey 2014 (AES)- Strategic Policy Division	Published	5,882.60
Indecon Economic Consultants	Analysis of direct & indirect economic impacts on an export-led growth enterprise policy- Strategic Policy Division	Complete – input to Enterprise 2025	14,482.00

Questions - Written Answers

Name of external Consultant/Organisation	Report Title	Status - Date Published/Ongoing	Cost of Report** - €
IDC	Harnessing Big Data for innovation led growth: an assessment of Ireland's progress and further policy requirements- Strategic Policy Division	Complete – publication Q2 2015	56,690.00
CM International	Optimising Policy Intervention to Strengthen the Impacts of Enterprise RD&I in Ireland – Strategic Policy Division	Complete – input to development of successor to SSTI analysis Publish 8th December 2015	36,469.00
Fitzpatrick Associates	Econometric analysis of effectiveness & impacts of agency supports – Strategic Policy Division	Input to DJEI Evaluations of agency programmes – Complete. Publication Q2 2015	14,391.00
Insight Statistical Consulting	Annual Business Survey of Economic Impact (ABSEI) 2013 and 2014 - Strategic Policy Division	Ongoing	44,034.00
PWC	Role of Intellectual Property – Strategic Policy Division	Input to competitiveness analysis	15,612.00
PWC	Review of Insurance Costs – Strategic Policy Division	Input to Costs of Doing Business 2015 and published 2015	34,440.00
PWC	Review of Public Procurement – Strategic Policy Division	Input to competitiveness analysis	28,911.00
Technopolis	Strengthening Ireland's Market-Focussed Research Centre Capacity – Strategic Policy Division	Complete – input to development of successor to SSTI analysis	84,255.00
Tom Martin & Associates	Higher Education Engagement by EGFSN – Strategic Policy Division	Ongoing	11,931.00

Name of external Consultant/Organisation	Report Title	Status - Date Published/Ongoing	Cost of Report** - €
AECOM	Assessing the Demand for Skills in the Freight Transport, Distribution and Logistics Sector in Ireland over the period 2014-2020- Strategic Policy Division	Input to EGFSN review - publication Q1 2015	78,702.00 National training fund contribution €60,601
DKM RPS	Water Services & Environmental waste Issues & Priorities for Enterprise – Strategic Policy Division	Ongoing - input to Forfás/DJEI submissions to regulator and competitiveness reports	50,353.00
Technopolis	A Mapping of Smart Ageing activity in Ireland and an assessment of the potential smart ageing opportunity areas – Strategic Policy Division	Input to DJEI analysis – published Q2 2015	89,605.00
Cambridge IP	An Analysis of Intellectual Property Activity in Ireland based on the existing data Phase 1 – Strategic Policy Division	Input to DJEI analysis - publication Q1 2015	40,966.38
Technopolis	A Study on enhancing the Intellectual Property activities in the firm base in Ireland – Strategic Policy Division	Input to DJEI analysis – publication Q2 2015	49,138.00
E&Y	Analysis of Sectorial Ecosystems - Input to Enterprise Policy 2025 – Strategic Policy Division	Complete – input to Enterprise 2025	61,461.00
RSM McClure Waters	Study of the Current and Future skills requirements of the Marine/Maritime Economy to 2020- Strategic Policy Division	Input to EGFSN review - publication Q1 2015	82,502.25

Questions - Written Answers

Name of external Consultant/Organisation	Report Title	Status - Date Published/Ongoing	Cost of Report** - €
Indecon Economic Consultants	Hospitality Sector - Hotels, Tourism & Catering – Strategic Policy Division	Ongoing Input to EGFSN Review	78,289.50 (39,145.00 paid in 2014, balance payable 2015) National Training Fund Contribution €60,282.92

January – December 2013

Name of external Consultant/Organisation	Report Title	Status - Completed/Ongoing	Cost of Report** - €
Ward Solutions	ICT security reviews	Internal ICT security assessments – not for publication	24,627.00
HM Ventures	Innovative pathways to jobs and growth –Entrepreneurship, Access to Finance and Internationalisation of SMEs	Published	7,500.00
Fitzpatrick Associates	Export Licensing Administration Process Review	Complete	47,417.00
Tom Martin & Associates/TMA	Youth UnemploymentA review of wage costs and other factors which may affect the employment of young people in Ireland.	Presented to the Troika in line with the terms of the Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policy which is a component of the Memorandum of Understanding, September 2013, as part of which the Irish Government undertook to present a report in December 2013.	5,547.30
Janet Hughes	Labour Court Review of Joint labour Committees	Published	17,835.00
RSM McClure Waters	The evaluation of the Workplace Relations Pilot Early Resolution Service	Published	35,498.00

Name of external Consultant/Organisation	Report Title	Status - Completed/Ongoing	Cost of Report** - €
First Choice Financial Services Ltd and AJS Financial Advice Ltd	Credit Guarantee Scheme "Findings and Recommendations"	Published	24,600.00

January – December 2012

Name of external Consultant/Organisation	Report Title	Status - Completed/Ongoing	Cost of Report** - €
Ward Solutions	Security reviews of ICT systems	Internal ICT security assessments – not for publication	39,095.00
Version 1	ICT systems review – Patents Office Ptolemy System	Internal technology review – not for publication	29,667.00
Achilles Procurement Services Ltd.	Recommended Procurement Strategy for a Customer Relationship Management System (CRMS) from the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court	Published	2,560.00
Deloitte	Feasibility Study: Making Ireland an International Centre for Intellectual Property	Ongoing	102,872.62

March – December 2011

Name of external Consultant/Organisation	Report Title	Status - Completed/Ongoing	Cost of Report** - €
Rits	IT Security assessment of new hosting site in Revenue Hosting Centre	Internal ICT security assessment – not for publication	7,093.00
Maxima Ireland	Computer Server Virtualisation Strategy Review	Internal technology review – not for publication	8,276.00
UCD (Dr Frank Walsh)	Review of ERO and REA Wage Setting Mechanisms	Published May 2011	15,000.00

Name of external Consultant/Organisation	Report Title	Status - Completed/Ongoing	Cost of Report** - €
Greater Heights Ltd	Learning Need Analysis (NERA Staff)	Published	15,645.00
Capital for Enterprise Ltd.	Design of Temporary Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme	Published	59,565.00
Ward Solutions	ICT security review	Internal ICT security assessments – not for publication	43,572.75
Version 1 Software	Oracle eBusiness Suite Release 12 Upgrade Assessment	Internal ICT security assessments – not for publication	8,079.92

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

198. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of special advisers on his staff and their yearly salary from 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43682/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I have two Special Advisors appointed by me as Minister for Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation. The table below sets out the annual salary details from 2011 to 2015:

Title	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015 Current salary
Special Adviser (Policy)	€127,000	€127,000	€118,840	€118,840	€118,840
Press Adviser (Press)	€80,051	€83,337	€86,604	€84,706	€87,258

IDA Supports

199. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will direct the Industrial Development Agency Ireland to designate County Kerry as a digital marketing initiative highlighting the specific positive attributes of the county, to attract inward investment similar to the investment in County Cork's recent successful initiative; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43718/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): IDA Ireland markets Kerry as part of its South West region, along with Cork. There are 12 IDA Ireland client companies, employing 1,874 people in the county. Companies supported by IDA Ireland in Kerry added 361 additional new jobs between 2011–2014 compared to 502 job losses in the period 2008 – 2010. It should be noted that 70% of new IDA jobs come from existing client companies, not from new investments. As part of its efforts to market Ireland and its different business locations, IDA Ireland continues to explore marketing opportunities based on the key criteria used by companies to assess different locations. In relation to County Kerry, IDA Ireland is actively exploring the potential of different digital marketing initiatives. The agency is also keen to work in partnership with other stakeholders in the delivery of effective marketing

of Kerry as a location for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). In this regard, a number of stakeholders, not limited to IDA Ireland have an active role to play in making this happen.

Marketing of any regional area, including Kerry, for FDI is done through IDA Ireland's network of overseas offices. IDA Ireland actively incentivises and encourages investors to consider a range of potential locations in Ireland although the ultimate locations selected are always decided by the companies themselves.

IDA Ireland launched its new five-year strategy entitled *Winning – Foreign Direct Investment 2015-2019* in April of this year. The strategy has a strong focus on regional development, setting forth aims and strategies to achieve a significant increase in investment going into regional locations. To support that aim, IDA Ireland is rolling out a €150million capital investment programme to help attract more multinational jobs into each region over a 5-year period. This programme will include investments over the coming years in building advanced technology buildings and office facilities in a number of regional locations to provide state-of-the-art property solutions for clients. Tralee is to be the site of one such advanced technology building.

Finally, a further boost to the county is the reinstatement of Regional Aid for Co. Kerry under the new Regional Aid Guidelines, which came into force on 1 July, 2014. The RAGs enable the State to grant State Aid, at enhanced rates, to businesses in order to support new investment and new employment in productive projects in Ireland's most disadvantaged regions. The funding for this comes from the Exchequer. This means that the full range of Regional Aid assistance options are available in Kerry.

Employment Rights

200. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views that there would be cost implications for the Exchequer from ending age-related compulsory retirement in the private sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43743/15]

201. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views on the impact of ending age-related compulsory retirement in the private sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43744/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Gerald Nash): I propose to take Questions Nos. 200 and 201 together.

Apart from public sector employees, where certain statutory retirement ages may apply, there is no statutory retirement age for employees in Irish legislation. A contract of employment will generally contain a retirement age but this is a matter of contract between the parties.

The upper age limit for bringing claims under the Unfair Dismissals Acts 1977 to 2007 was removed by a provision in the Equality Act 2004. It is now the case that a person of any age, when dismissed, may take a case under the Unfair Dismissals Acts unless she or he has reached the "normal retiring age for employees of the same employer in similar employment", if one exists. In such circumstances, the burden of proof is on the employer to prove the normal retiring age. Furthermore, the upper age limit of 66 years for receipt of statutory redundancy payments was removed by the Protection of Employment (Exceptional Collective Redundancies and Related Matters) Act 2007.

As the issue that arises around compulsory retirement at a given age is whether this entails discrimination on age grounds, the more usual avenue of redress for employees compulsorily retired is to take a claim, under the Employment Equality Acts, to the Workplace Relations

Commission.

Responsibility for employment equality legislation rests with my colleague, the Minister for Justice and Equality, Frances Fitzgerald T.D. As the Deputy is aware, Minister Fitzgerald is currently bringing the Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill through the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Bill amends Section 34(4) of the Employment Equality Acts to bring it fully into line with Framework Directive 2000/78/EC and the interpretation of that Directive by the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU). The CJEU rulings provide that it is not unlawful for an employer to fix a compulsory retirement age for employees provided it can be objectively and reasonably justified by a legitimate aim, including legitimate employment policy, labour market and vocational training objectives, and if the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary.

Issues around retirement age generally are very complex and require a Whole-of Government approach. In addition to the issues set out above they also raises significant issues in respect of pensions policy and the State Pension Age which come within the remit of the Minister for Social Protection. Retirement age issues have been brought into sharp focus by the ending of the State Pension (Transition) and the standardising of the State pension age at 66. In this regard, I understand that the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is currently conducting a preliminary analysis of the issues involved, and the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform intends to bring a Memorandum to Government in due course.

Enterprise Ireland Funding

202. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which he and the relevant statutory bodies under the aegis of his Department continue to meet the requirements of a firm (details supplied) in County Kildare, with particular reference to the need to ensure that all relevant supports continue to be made available, as required; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43754/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Firstly, I should point out that individual investment decisions are day to day operational matters for Enterprise Ireland. Such activities are commercially sensitive and confidential. However I am informed by Enterprise Ireland that they are in ongoing contact with the company concerned. The Agency continues to provide supports to the company and the full suite of appropriate Enterprise Ireland supports will remain available to the company going forward.

Therefore, I would advise that the company concerned continues to liaise with Enterprise Ireland and I hope that the outcome will be beneficial for the company.

Local Enterprise Offices

203. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his plans to ensure that the delivery of training sessions (details supplied) by local enterprise offices is orientated towards citizens who seek to develop entrepreneurial skills and to set up and develop businesses. [43760/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The various training courses, mentoring and advisory services offered by the Local Enterprise Offices are targeted at people who wish to start-up or expand their own business. In 2014, the latest full year for which data is available, the LEOs delivered 1714 training programmes for clients,

including 233 Start Your Own Business programmes. As a result of grant and other supports, including training, some 4000 jobs were created in new or expanded client businesses in 2014. There is an MOU between the LEOs and the Dept of Social Protection in support of social welfare recipients who want to start a business and to ensure that such people can avail of the variety of State supports available.

The specific issue raised by the Deputy in relation to participation on training courses such as Start Your Own Business being a prerequisite for access/attainment of Social Welfare Programmes is a matter, in the first instance, for my colleague the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton T.D. I understand that when taking up back-to-work schemes, the self-employment project must be approved as viable and sustainable.

I also understand that a review group in relation to the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance has been established - and is being chaired - by the Department of Social Protection. My Department will be represented on the Group.

Enterprise Data

204. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the annual targets his Department, Enterprise Ireland and the local enterprise office network have set for the increase in online trading by micro-businesses and small indigenous businesses for the period 2012 to 2016; and if these targets are being met. [43771/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Trading Online Voucher Scheme was launched nationally on 1 July 2014 and is a key initiative under the enterprise strand of the National Digital Strategy and the Action Plan for Jobs. The Scheme is administered by the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) on behalf of the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, which has responsibility for setting appropriate annual targets under the scheme for the LEOs.

Trading Online Vouchers are activating small businesses from across a wide range of sectors including, retail, manufacturing, professional services, food, craft/design, tourism and leisure. By November 2015, some 1,500 businesses had completed, or were in the process of completing, their trading online projects. In addition, it is estimated that more than double that number of businesses have benefitted from advice and peer-to-peer support through their participation in the information sessions delivered by the LEOs. The roll out of vouchers to reach the initial target of 2,000 continues nationwide. The Government is committed to rolling out the scheme to more interested businesses, and to this end, the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources has allocated funding of €3 million to deliver an additional 1,000 vouchers in 2016.

In relation to Enterprise Ireland, while the agency does not have a corporate target in relation to increasing online trading by small indigenous businesses, it works with its client base to help them incorporate the opportunities presented through online trading into their business activities. Enterprise Ireland's Internet Marketing Unit is focused on helping export-focused clients across all sectors to exploit the Internet as a route to market and to assist them in developing a strategy that will shape how they do business online.

IDA Expenditure

205. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in the

context of the extra £12 million sanctioned for the Industrial Development Agency Ireland property programme, the amount that will be invested in a site (details supplied) in County Mayo, the amount invested to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43799/15]

206. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if locations (details supplied) in County Mayo and in County Meath were considered by the Industrial Development Agency Ireland as sites for the new-build projects under the regional property programme, if so, the reason they were not proceeded with at this time, if not, the reason for same, given their employment profile; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43800/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 205 and 206 together.

Regional development is fundamental to IDA Ireland's new strategy for the next five years, titled 'Winning – Foreign Direct Investment 2015-2019', which was launched earlier this year. For the first time, ambitious investment targets have been set for each region, with a strong focus on securing a significant uplift in the number of investments. Central to this is a driving ambition for employment growth throughout all regions over the lifetime of this strategy.

As part of IDA Ireland's commitment to achieve a significant uplift in the amount of FDI projects going into regions, the strategy outlines key actions aimed at achieving that, including a €150m property investment plan, spread out over five years, which will support the achievement of the organisation's regional goals. The funding which includes the €12 million referred to by the Deputy will be used to upgrade Ireland's business and technology parks, make investments in a number of strategic utility-intensive sites and build new advanced technology buildings in a number of regional locations. About 30% of the property investment plan will be allocated to the construction of nine advance facilities.

These sites were decided on by IDA Ireland based on a number of criteria including population density, cluster of activities of other companies in the area and third level educational institutions. It is important to note that all investment must be targeted to potential investment wins and associated job creation opportunities.

IDA Ireland has decided to concentrate the investment programme in particular in locations where the private sector has been reluctant to build capacity suitable premises for FDI. In that context, the Government announced earlier this year that three locations, Sligo, Tralee and Castlebar, located in Co. Mayo would be the key focus for the 2015 investment programme.

In this respect, planning permission was sought and has been obtained for facilities in Sligo and Castlebar. The procurement process is underway to appoint contractors to construct these facilities and it is anticipated that this process will be complete and contractors will be on-site by year end. It is planned to submit a planning application during December 2015 to construct a facility in Tralee. IDA Ireland plans in 2016 to follow a similar process to deliver facilities in Galway, Dundalk and Limerick and in Athlone, Carlow and Waterford in 2017.

The Agency has approximately 11 hectares of land on the Sligo Road, Ballina, Co. Mayo, which are zoned and concept master planned with planning permission obtained for core park infrastructure development. These lands are included in the Agency's database of available lands for marketing to FDI client companies or EI client companies as appropriate.

In addition, IDA Ireland has approximately 27 hectares of land on the Navan Business Park available for marketing to FDI client companies or EI clients as appropriate.

Departmental Agencies Staff Recruitment

207. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will approve funding for the appointment of three additional full-time accountants for the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43845/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department secured sanction for the recruitment of five additional accountants for the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement in October 2014. Funding for those accountants was allocated to the Office for 2015 and again for 2016. An advertisement seeking applications for the Accountant's posts was placed by the Public Appointment Service on the 27 November 2015 with a closing date of the 17 December for receipt of applications.

Action Plan for Jobs

208. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if the €250 million fund for the Action Plan for Jobs will fund all the regional action plans, or if each regional action plan will be granted €250 million separately; if a specific amount of funding will be ring-fenced for each county, or if funding will be distributed on the basis of job creation proposals, essentially through a tendering process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43953/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): In launching the Action Plan for Jobs Regional initiative earlier this year, the Government announced that funding of up to €250 million will be made available over the next five years to support the Regional Action Plan process across all 8 regions. IDA Ireland is investing in a €150m Regional Property Programme over the five year period to ensure that there is sufficient availability of utility intensive Strategic Sites, quality Business Parks and Advance Building Solutions to attract investment to the Regions. So far this year, Advance Technology Buildings have been completed in both Waterford and Athlone and the construction of buildings in Sligo, Castlebar and Tralee is at an advanced stage of procurement. Next year, IDA Ireland will continue this programme of advance builds with projects in Galway, Dundalk and Limerick. Investment in IDA Ireland's portfolio of Business and Technology Parks around the country is also underway.

A further sum of up to €100 million will be made available through Enterprise Ireland over the next five years to support innovative and collaborative approaches to support job creation across the regions.

The Enterprise Ireland funds will be distributed through three new competitive calls:

- A €5m Community Enterprise Initiative, to stimulate and support enterprise and job creation throughout the country at local, community and regional level. This competitive call has closed and applications are currently being assessed.

- A €5m fund open to groups of Local Enterprise Offices who come together to bid for funding for projects to support job-creation initiatives in their areas. This competitive call has closed and applications are currently being assessed.

- A third, broader, competitive regional call, will support significant projects or initiatives to improve or leverage identified enterprise capability in the regions. An expression of interest phase for this call has concluded and is informing the development of the competitive call, to

be launched shortly.

In the case of all three funding calls, a collaborative approach, tangible jobs impact, enterprise start-up and scaling are amongst the criteria against which applications will be measured. It is not intended to ring-fence funding at county level.

The Regional Action Plans will cover the three-year period 2015-2017 to allow for the process to take hold and develop, and to capture a more medium-term ambition for the regions. However, the Regional Action Plans will also be flexible and dynamic to allow additional actions and ideas to be added as they emerge over the period of the Plan.

The success of the regional Action Plans will lie in the delivery of the actions on schedule. The process will be underpinned by robust reporting arrangements, with twice yearly updates to be published in each region setting out the progress on each of the actions due for delivery. Implementation of each Plan will be overseen by a Regional Implementation Committee, established within each region, which will involve the key stakeholders in the region. Given that strong business representation is also required to drive the enterprise and jobs focus of the Plan, I am appointing locally-based Enterprise Champions in each region to participate on the Implementation Committee.

Company Returns

209. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he is aware of the situation facing Pairc An Gluinín Management Company Limited in County Kerry, which was set up to temporarily manage the estate until such time as the county council took it over, and which now faces fines from the Companies Registration Office for failure to make annual returns; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44011/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Since late filing fees were introduced in 2001 there has been a significant increase in compliance by Irish companies with their annual filing obligations. Whereas prior to 2001, only 13% of companies filed their annual returns on time, currently over 90% of companies file on time. I am informed that all companies are advised of their responsibilities under the Companies Acts at the time of incorporation, including their statutory obligations regarding the filing of annual returns and the fact that failure to file annual returns on time results in late penalties, loss of audit exemption and potentially prosecution.

The Companies Registration Office (CRO) provides information on its website about these requirements and also issues reminder letters to companies in advance of their Annual Return Date to remind them of their obligations to file annual returns.

As part of its work programme for 2010/2011 the Company Law Review Group (CLRG) examined the penalties that apply to companies that do not submit their company annual returns by the statutory deadline. These are known as late filing penalties and include monetary fines and loss of audit exemption for two years. The purpose of the review was to assess the proportionality of those penalties.

The CLRG concluded that no change should be made to the late filing penalties regime but it did make a recommendation that where a company seeks a waiver from the payment of late filing fees, the grant of that should not be within the powers of the CRO, but rather should be determined by a court of competent jurisdiction, preferably the District Court. The recommendation was given effect in Section 343 (7) of the Companies Act 2014 which was commenced on the 1 June 2015.

IDA Supports

210. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the status of the Industrial Development Agency Ireland's office in Letterkenny in County Donegal. [44140/15]

211. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of site visits in County Donegal organised by the Industrial Development Agency Ireland for potential investors, for each of the years 2007 to 2014. [44141/15]

212. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the numbers of new Industrial Development Agency Ireland supported companies that have located in County Donegal and the numbers of jobs created for each of the years 2011 to date. [44142/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 210 to 212, inclusive, together.

IDA Ireland's North-West regional office in Letterkenny is situated in the Colab building in the Institute of Technology. The office is manned by two permanent IDA Ireland staff; one dedicated regional official and one official from IDA Ireland's Engineering and Industrial Technology Division. The office is jointly shared with Enterprise Ireland. Donegal also has the additional resources of IDA Ireland regional staff in Sligo including a full-time manager focussed on the North-West region.

IDA Ireland is satisfied that its foot print in the North-West of the country is sufficient to meet the requirements for Foreign Direct Investment in Donegal. Marketing of any regional area including Donegal for Foreign Direct Investment occurs through IDA Ireland's network of overseas offices. IDA Ireland actively incentivises and encourages investors to consider a range of potential locations in Ireland. The agency markets Letterkenny as a gateway location for the region. The ultimate locations selected are always decided by the clients and not IDA Ireland.

There were 6 IDA Ireland-sponsored site visits to Donegal in 2014 and in 2015 there were 3 up to the end of September. It should be noted that 70% of new IDA Ireland jobs come from existing client companies, not from new investments. The numbers of IDA Ireland-sponsored site visits for the years 2007 to 2015 inclusive are set out in Table A attached.

IDA Ireland markets Donegal as part of its North-West Region, which also comprises Leitrim and Sligo. The main FDI activity clusters that have emerged in the North-West are in the life sciences and engineering sectors, particularly in the manufacture of medical devices and automotive components. There are also a small number of large employers in the financial services sector, particularly in Letterkenny and a growing pharma sector in Sligo.

The number of jobs in IDA Ireland client companies in county Donegal, as per the 2014 Annual Employment Survey, rose from 1,854 in 2010 to 2,612 in 2014. I attach the breakdown in Table B. The figures for this year will not be available until the 2015 Annual Employment Survey is published early next year. There are 41 multinational companies in total based in the North-West, employing 5,294 across the Region. Given the global economic operating environment in recent years, the existing client base has performed well in not only retaining their presence in Donegal, but expanding the number of employees. The most recent example of this was the announcement in July of this year by Pramerica of the expansion of its facility in Donegal by 330 jobs.

Achieving a balanced regional dispersal of employment is challenging. IDA Ireland's new five year strategy *Winning – Foreign Direct Investment 2015-2019* contains a strong focus on regional development, setting forth aims and strategies to achieve a significant increase in investment going into regional locations. To support that aim, IDA Ireland is rolling out a €150million capital investment programme to help attract more multinational jobs into each region over a 5-year period. This programme will include investments over the coming years in building advanced technology buildings and office facilities in a number of regional locations to provide state-of-the-art property solutions for clients.

In addition to attracting Foreign Direct Investment to Donegal, I am very committed to encouraging start-ups and nurturing small, high technology companies, with potential for growth. There are 3,302 people directly employed in Enterprise Ireland client companies in Donegal. Enterprise Ireland has supported, through various programmes, 101 start-up entrepreneurs in Donegal in addition to a further 196 supported by the Local Enterprise Office in Donegal. A strong indigenous sector is also key to ensuring all the necessary supports are in place for potential FDI investors.

My Department published its North-East/North-West Regional Action Plan last month as part of the wider Actions Plan for Jobs programme. This regional plan seeks to maximise the strengths and assets of the region to support enterprise growth and job creation.

Table A

IDA Ireland-sponsored Site Visits to Donegal 2009 to end Q3 2015

Year	Number of Site Visits
2007	3
2008	3
2009	3
2010	4
2011	2
2012	1
2013	7
2014	6
2015 (up to end Q3)	3

Table B

IDA Ireland Client Company Jobs in Donegal 2010-2014

Year	No. Companies	Total Jobs
2010	13	1,854
2011	13	2,106
2012	14	2,228
2013	14	2,387
2014	14	2,612

Departmental Legal Costs

213. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the

total cost to his Department, and those under his aegis, for the procurement of legal services in the State from 2011 to 2015 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44576/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The following table shows the total cost to my Department, for the procurement of legal services from 2011 to 2 December 2015:

Date	Amount
1 January – 2 December 2015	€298,743.72
1 January – 31 December 2014	€27,336.75
1 January – 31 December 2013	€394,082.38
1 January – 31 December 2012	€612,643.88
1 January – 31 December 2011	€578,994.01

My Department seeks, where possible, to minimise legal costs and has adopted a number of measures to achieve this. The Department/offices avail of the services of the Chief State Solicitor's office and the Attorney General's office in terms of the provision of legal advice and in terms of representation of the Department/offices in Court cases. The services of legal cost accountants are availed of where fees demanded appear to be high.

The issue of procurement of legal services by Agencies under my remit is a day-to-day matter for the individual Agencies concerned, for which I have no direct function.

I have asked all Agencies under the aegis of my Department to advise me of any procurement of legal services for the dates concerned, and I will communicate that information to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

214. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the level of payment under the 2015 area aid scheme due to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal, if the person will receive the full payment, if not, the reason for the deduction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43511/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Schemes was received from the person named on 18 May, 2015. The processing of the Basic Payment Scheme application has been and completed and payment has issued. Processing of the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme application has recently been finalised and payment will issue shortly, directly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Dairy Equipment Scheme Applications

215. **Deputy Noel Coonan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when an application under the dairy equipment scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary, the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43512/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Interest in

TAMS to date has exceeded expectations and clearly many Irish farmers are looking once again at the benefits of investing in their enterprises and expanding production. Under the Young Farmer Capital Investment Scheme a total of 520 applications have been received with over 200 of these applying for dairy investments while over a thousand applications have been submitted for the Dairy Equipment Scheme.

All applications received are being examined and approvals will commence when all of the required checks have been undertaken. This is a complex process and as all applications for TAMS 2 must be made under a tranche-based approach, we are required to evaluate, rank and assess all applications received together. Applications cannot be approved individually or on a rolling basis as they are submitted.

It is anticipated that approvals will commence shortly and will continue throughout December and into the New Year. Every effort is being made to facilitate approvals in cases where milking equipment is urgently required.

TAMS Applications

216. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a decision has been made on an application for a grant for a milking parlour by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43513/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Interest in TAMS to date has exceeded expectations and clearly many Irish farmers are looking once again at the benefits of investing in their enterprises and expanding production. Under the Young Farmer Capital Investment Scheme a total of 520 applications have been received with over 200 of these applying for dairy investments while over a thousand applications have been submitted for the Dairy Equipment Scheme.

All applications received are being examined and approvals will commence when all of the required checks have been undertaken. This is a complex process and as all applications for TAMS 2 must be made under a tranche-based approach, we are required to evaluate, rank and assess all applications received together. Applications cannot be approved individually or on a rolling basis as they are submitted.

It is anticipated that approvals will commence shortly and will continue throughout December and into the New Year. Every effort is being made to facilitate approvals in cases where milking equipment is urgently required.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

217. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive a payment under the agri-environment options scheme. [43516/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named commenced his AEOS 3 contract on 1 May 2013 and has been paid in full for the 2013 and 2014 scheme years.

Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue.

It is expected that AEOS payments for the 2015 scheme year will commence shortly for those that have successfully come through the administrative checks and where there are no outstanding issues for those who have had on-the-spot inspections in 2015.

Basic Payment Scheme Applications

218. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment under the basic payment scheme and the areas of natural constraint scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43518/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme application on 8 April 2015. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases Remote Sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a Remote Sensing eligibility inspection. This inspection is currently being processed with the intention of issuing any payments due under the Direct Payments Schemes as soon as possible. In the event that any queries arise officials in my Department will be in contact with the person named.

The person named submitted a Force Majeure application under the 2015 Basic payment scheme. This application did not include the required documentation to fully process the case and a query letter issued to the person named on the 9 November 2015. Upon receipt of the information requested in this letter processing of the force majeure application will be finalised and a decision letter will issue accordingly.

Basic Payment Scheme Applications

219. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43520/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) Schemes was received from the person named on 21 May, 2015. Under the 2015 ANC Scheme, eligible applicants are required to occupy and farm at their own risk a minimum of 3 hectares of eligible forage land. Unfortunately the person named has not met the above requirements and thus cannot be considered for payment.

Processing of the Basic Payment Scheme application has been finalised with payment due to issue shortly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Applications

220. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal will receive a payment for 2015 under the headage scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43523/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme was received from the person named on 10 May, 2015. Processing of the application is currently in progress. On completion of this process, the application will be further reviewed with a view to payment issuing directly to the nominated bank account of the person named at the earliest possible date.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme

221. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine why a person (details supplied) in County Louth has been issued with a debt repayment order, why the person was in breach of the terms and conditions of the agri-environment options scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43524/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named was approved for participation in the 2010 Agri Environment Options Scheme (AEOS 1) with effect from 1 November 2010, and has received payments in respect of the scheme years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014.

Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue.

In this case, the cross check with the 2014 Single Payment system revealed that three of the AEOS parcels on this person's contract had not been declared on their Single Payment Scheme application for 2014. Under the Terms and Conditions of the scheme, all undertakings under AEOS must be continued for a minimum period of five years. As this did not happen for the parcels in question, they were no longer eligible for payment under the scheme and payments made on these parcels for previous years had to be recouped. The person named was informed in writing of this decision in a letter dated 14 November 2014 and he was also informed that he should contact the Single Farm Payment Section if he believed the parcels were omitted in error from his SPS application.

My Department then proceeded to recoup the payments already made on these parcels and a further letter issued to the person named on 11 February 2015, informing them that a debt had been raised and advising them that interest would accrue until such time as the debt was paid in full.

Some recoupment has been made to date and will continue from future Department payments until such time as the debt has been paid in full. A quarterly debt statement was issued to the person named directly from Accounts Section in Cavan on 3 November 2015.

TAMS Eligibility

222. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 559 of 4 February 2014, the status of eligibility of conversion of old buildings such as the conversion of an existing silage pit and shed, the extension of an existing shed and the installation of slotted units and cubicles with an underground slurry tank; if the building will qualify for the new grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43533/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In general the

retrofitting and refurbishment of existing farm buildings is not being grant aided under TAMS II. The conversion of an existing silage pit and shed is not allowed. However an extension on to an existing animal house is allowed and the provision of new slatted units and cubicles with underground slurry tank is eligible under the scheme. Further details are available on my Department's website www.agriculture.gov.ie.

Single Payment Scheme Eligibility

223. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine why a person (details supplied) in County Offaly did not receive a single payment in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43539/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In order to comply with EU requirements, the 2012 Single Farm Payment/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme application of the person named was selected for a ground eligibility inspection. The inspection identified discrepancies between the areas declared and the area found resulting in an over-declaration in area of greater than 20%. Based on the terms and conditions of the schemes this resulted in no payments being due under the 2012 Direct Payment Schemes. The person named was notified of this decision on 22 November 2012.

The person named sought a review of this decision and the outcome was to uphold the original inspection decision. The person named was notified of this outcome on 14 May 2013. The person named submitted an appeal to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office and an oral hearing was held. The outcome of the appeal process was to disallow the appeal and the person named was notified of this decision by the Agriculture Appeals Office on 14 May 2014. Further correspondence was received by that office on 5 November 2015, the issues raised are currently being examined and a reply will issue shortly directly to the person named.

Aquaculture Development

224. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 243 and 244 of 10 November 2015, given that the basic factual questions asked in each case were not addressed and given the limited reply, if his Department remains publicly accountable for the administration of fisheries and aquaculture. [43546/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My response to Questions No. 243 and 244 of 10 November 2015, concerning both monies paid to aquaculture enterprises and persons employed in aquaculture enterprises respectively, provided the Deputy with the figures concerned for the period of office of this Government. In light of the Deputy's further question, I have asked both Bord Iascaigh Mhara and Údarás na Gaeltachta to compile the historic data requested concerning the period of office of previous Governments and to forward it directly to the Deputy at the earliest possible date.

Aquaculture Licences

225. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 242 of 10 November 2015, why he is not implementing the explicit commitment in Food Wise 2025 to commission an independent review of his aquaculture licensing system which would report by early 2016; if he is willing to accept an independent

review of the aquaculture licensing system, and if he will implement the other commitments in Food Wise 2025. [43547/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My response to Question No. 242 of 10 November 2015 clearly stated that my Department will implement the recommendations of Food Wise 2025 within the timeframe of that Report.

My Department is presently making arrangements to publish a National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development. I consulted with stakeholders on a draft of the Plan earlier this year. Action number 22 of that Plan commits my Department to a review and revision of the aquaculture licence process, including the applicable legal framework. I expect that Review to get underway early in the new year and to report in the first half of 2016.

Aquaculture Development

226. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 246, 248, and 249 of 10 November 2015, if he will indicate the accreditation and audit body or bodies certifying the organic status of salmon farms run by Marine Harvest Ireland from 2014 to date. [43548/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The control/certification body for organic salmon produced by Marine Harvest Ireland during the period referred to by the Deputy is SAI Global Trust Cert. Ltd.

This information is available on my Department's website via the following link:

<http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/farmingsectors/organicfarming/Organic-Operators16102015.pdf>

Equine Industry

227. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the designated inspection role of Horse Sport Ireland in respect of sports and draught horses; the costs involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43559/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Horse Sport Ireland (HSI) has been approved by my Department to maintain studbooks for the Irish Sport Horse and Irish Draught breeds. Breeding programmes are operated by HSI according to Breeding Objectives for both these breeds.

The Irish Sport Horse Studbook Breeding Objective is to produce a performance horse that is sound, athletic with good paces and suitable temperament and capable of winning at the highest international level in FEI disciplines.

The Irish Draught Horse Studbook Breeding Objective is to breed Irish Draught Horses with conformation, movement and temperament that conform to the breed standard, which will make good quality, sound and versatile horses .

Irish Sport Horse and Irish Draught Horse Studbook inspections have been carried out annually with the purpose of identifying quality stallion and mares that adhere to the studbook breeding objectives.

An inspection has consisted of veterinary aspects and linear profiling. Linear profiling is used to assess conformation, movement and athleticism. A series of veterinary traits are assessed by a veterinary surgeon. A number of composite scores are used to classify the stallions and mares.

However HSI have informed me that this inspection process is currently under review.

Inspections have been held at regional centres throughout the country in spring and autumn and conducted by teams of inspectors appointed by Horse Sport Ireland. HSI have advised that the total cost of inspections for stallions and mares for 2014 is €200,000 approximately. This includes cost for inspector training, employment costs and overheads allocated, this figure is net figure inclusive of inspection income.

TAMS Applications

228. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a grant for a person (details supplied) in County Kerry under the targeted agricultural modernisation scheme 3; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43576/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Interest in TAMS to date has exceeded expectations and clearly many Irish farmers are looking once again at the benefits of investing in their enterprises and expanding production. Under the Young Farmer Capital Investment Scheme a total of 520 applications have been received with over 200 of these applying for dairy investments while over a thousand applications have been submitted for the Dairy Equipment Scheme.

All applications received are being examined and approvals will commence when all of the required checks have been undertaken. This is a complex process and as all applications for TAMS 2 must be made under a tranche-based approach, we are required to evaluate, rank and assess all applications received together. Applications cannot be approved individually or on a rolling basis as they are submitted.

It is anticipated that approvals will commence shortly and will continue throughout December and into the New Year. Every effort is being made to facilitate approvals in cases where milking equipment is urgently required. The applicant in question has passed the first stage of approvals and will be contacted by the local office shortly.

Basic Payment Scheme Applications

229. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a single payment for a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43578/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Basic Payment Scheme application to my Department on 5 May, 2015. This application has been fully processed and payment has now issued to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Basic Payment Scheme Applications

230. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment under the basic payment scheme and the areas of natural constraint scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43590/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Basic Payment Scheme/Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) Scheme application on 11 May, 2015. Processing of the application under both schemes has been fully processed. Payment in respect of the Basic Payment Scheme has issued, and payment in relation to the ANC Scheme will issue shortly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Departmental Meetings

231. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of meetings requested by private external lobby groups and the number of meetings held in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43592/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As you will appreciate, in view of the range of my remit as Minister I receive representations, including requests for meetings from a broad range of sources, including members of the Oireachtas, local and voluntary groups, private individuals, companies and representative associations.

While my Office does not maintain a register of all such requests for meetings or invitations received, I can advise that since January 2014, I have attended some 65 meetings with private external lobby groups. This figure would not include informal unscheduled meetings that might arise from time to time.

You will be aware that the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 has recently been enacted by the Oireachtas. The Act provides that the Standards in Public Office Commission (the Standards Commission) will establish and maintain an online register of lobbying and oversee compliance with the legislative provisions. The purpose of the register is to make information available to the public on the identity of those communicating with designated public officials. Persons lobbying are required to register with the Standards Commission and are also required to submit returns on their lobbying activities.

Departmental Expenditure

232. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his Department's photography costs since he came into office, inclusive of costs incurred from use of the ministerial allowance by year in tabular form; the occasions for which photographers were booked; the photographers used; the costs associated with each occasion; the policy in place regarding the booking of photographers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43624/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The information requested by the Deputy is available in the Ministers' Information Centre on my Department's website at <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/>. When possible, the Department avails of internal photography skills.

Consultancy Contracts Data

233. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his Department's use of external public relations firms since he came into office by year in tabular form; the uses of these firms and the policy regarding employing them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43640/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department does not employ External Public Relations firms. Public Relations advice is provided by my Department's Press Office.

Public Relations Contracts Data

234. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reports he commissioned from external consultants since March 2011, by year, title, cost, date published and company in tabular form. [43656/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The information requested by the Deputy is provided in the following tables. Some of the reports outlined are mandatory in the context of EU obligations.

2011: March- December

Company	Title of Report	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Costs €
University College Dublin	Evaluation of the EU School Fruit Scheme/Food Dude Programme in Ireland 2011 - Commission Regulation 288 of 2009	10 January 2012	4,500
University College Dublin	EU School Fruit Scheme/Food Dude Programme in Ireland – A review of evaluations completed to date - Commission Regulation 288 of 2009	6 February 2012	6,388
Drima Marketing Ltd	Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire (JSFO) 2010 Joint Wood Energy Enquiry (JWEE) 2010 Market Report for Ireland for the Timber Committee 2010	Completed May 2011 January 2012 Completed Sept 2011	12,792
Rockwell Automation	Hazard and Operability Study	13 December 2011	3,740
Fitzpatrick Associates	Interim Evaluation, of 2007-2013 SDP	3 June 2011	39,325

Questions - Written Answers

Company	Title of Report	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Costs €
Brendan Riordan, Research Economist	The Net Contribution of the Agri-Food Sector to the Inflow of Funds into Ireland: a New Estimate	23 July 2012	6,000
Accenture	An analysis of an internal review of procurement.	Not for publication.	Work done on a pro-bono basis
Accenture	An examination of the opportunities and capacity for further shared services between the Department and its non-commercial state agencies.	Not for publication.	Work done on a pro-bono basis
Accenture	A review of the Department's role in regulating meat plants	Not for publication.	Work done on a pro-bono basis
KPMG	An examination of the administration of the Single Payment Scheme.	13 October 2011	Work done on a pro-bono basis
Fitzmaurice Tingle Ltd.	Refrigeration Consultancy on 6 Fishery Harbour Centre Sites	Not for external Publication	3,505
Brian Scott	Port Security Assessment Castletownbere Fishery Harbour Centre	Not for external Publication	4,680
Deloitte Ireland	To examine recommendations of the Report of the Review Group on State Assets and Liabilities as applicable to be this Department to value the assets referred to and to make a series of recommendations. For internal Departmental information	Not for publication	Work done on a pro-bono basis
Michael Dowling	Beef 2020 Activation Group: Growing the Beef Sector	June 2011 – for input into FH 2020 Committee	10,000

Company	Title of Report	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Costs €
Stiofán Nutty	Report on the Development of Ireland's Organic Industry and an Organic and an Irish Organic Trade Board.	For internal Departmental information Not for publication	29,040
Briggs Environmental Services	Oil Spill Contingency Plans	Not for external Publication	4,424
Deloitte Ireland	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine – Annual Accounts Certification. Required by EU Legislation.	Not for publication.	509,830

2012: January- December

Company	Title of Report	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Costs €
Drima Marketing Ltd	Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire (JSFO) 2011 Joint Wood Energy Enquiry (JWEE) 2011 Market Report for Ireland for the Timber Committee 2011)	Completed May 2012, 3 July 2012 Completed Sept 2012	12,792
Irish Equine Centre	Demographic study on the unwanted horse population in Ireland	March 2012	10,000
Indecon	Review of certain aspects of the Irish Horse Racing Industry	20 July 2012	59,225
CMG Crime Management Ltd	ISPS Port Security Plan Castletownbere Fishery Harbour Centre	Not for external Publication	3,198
Philip Farrelly & Co. Ltd	Food Harvest 2020 – Environmental Analysis Report	January 2014	229,610
Team BDS	Lean Review of the Meat Inspection Service	16 December 2013	98,597

Questions - Written Answers

Company	Title of Report	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Costs €
Compass Informatics Ltd	Independent specialist review of all Geographical Information based computer systems in the Department, carried out as part of the effective and efficient administration of the Department's EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) based payment schemes.	Not for external publication.	16,254
Deloitte Ireland	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine – Annual Accounts Certification. Requirement of EU Legislation.	Not for publication	514,169

2013: January- December

Company	Title of Report	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Costs €
Norfolk Marine	Survey works report to Killybegs Fishery Harbour Centre	Not for external Publication	10,828
Brian Scott	Port Facility Review, Killybegs	Not for external Publication	1,200
Drima Marketing Ltd	Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire (JSFO) 2012 Joint Wood Energy Enquiry (JWEE) 2012 Market Report for Ireland for the UN-ECE Timber Committee 2012)	Completed May 2013 July 2013 Completed in October 2013	11,400
Fitzpatrick Associates Economic Consultants	Ex Ante Evaluation, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment of the 2014 – 2020 Rural Development Programme	July 2015	48,401

Company	Title of Report	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Costs €
Judith A Annett Countryside Consultancy	Irish Deer Management Policy Vision	Has not been published, was circulated to stakeholders	2,500
Forest Solutions	NPV and IRR analysis for New afforestation scheme	Was not specifically published but formed part of the deliberative and consultative process on the new Forestry programme	1,968
Deloitte Ireland	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Annual Accounts Certification. Requirement of EU legislation	Not for publication	468,277

2014: January- December

Company	Title of Report	Date or expected Date of Publication	Cost
Indecon	Review of certain matters relating to Bord na gCon	7 July 2014	60,885
Deloitte	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine -Annual Accounts Certification as required by EU legislation	Not for publication	452,699
RSM McClure Waters	Ex Ante Evaluation, SEA and AA of Seafood Development Programme 2014-2020	24 June 2015	64,083
NTA Monitor Ltd	Independent assessments of the Department's IT security measures and security review of the Department's infrastructure. Required for EU accreditation purposes.	Not for external publication.	18,382

Questions - Written Answers

Company	Title of Report	Date or expected Date of Publication	Cost
Drima Marketing Ltd	Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire (JSFO) 2013 Joint Wood Energy Enquiry (JWEE) 2013 Market Report for Ireland for the Timber Committee 2013	Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire- completed and submitted to the EUROSTAT/ FAO Joint Wood Energy Enquiry (JWEE) 2013 published as part of COFORD Woodflow 2013 UNECE report - was completed for submission to the UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest industry.	11,780
RSM McClure Waters (Consulting)	Ex Ante Evaluation Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment of 2014-2020 Forestry	Published in 2014 as part of the consultative process on the new Forestry programme	97,508
Forest Solutions	NPV and IRR analysis for new forestry for Fibre scheme	Was not specifically published but formed part of the deliberative and consultative process on the new Forestry programme	2,214
Forest Solutions	Cost Benefit Analysis- Forest Roads Programme 2014-2020	Was not specifically published but formed part of the deliberative and consultative process on the new Forestry programme	2,952
Freshwater Bivalve Investigations Freshwater Bivalve Investigations	Site Assessment of the River Lickey Site Assessment of the River Lickey	Not for publication Not for publication	5,040 2,769
Occupational Physiotherapy Solutions	To conduct an ergonomic assessment of tasks in Cork Blood Testing Laboratory. Internal use only.	Not for publication	1,347
Crime Management Services Ltd	ISPS Port Security Assessment: Castle-townbere FHC	Not for external Publication	4,735
Crime Management Services Ltd	ISPS Port Security Assessment: Killybegs FHC	Not for external Publication	4,735

Company	Title of Report	Date or expected Date of Publication	Cost
Fitzpatrick Associates	RDP 2014-2020 Ex Ante. Evaluation Strategic Environmental Assessment & Appropriate Assessment	2015	48,401

2015: January to Date

Company	Title of Report	Date or expected Date of Publication	Cost € To date
Philip Farrelly & Co	Agri-Food Strategy 2025. Environmental Analysis Report (Provisional Title)	December 2015	89,790
Deloitte	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Annual Accounts Certification as required by EU legislation	Not for publication	137,111
BDO	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Annual Accounts Certification.	Not for publication. Report is a requirement of EU Legislation.	179,035
NTA Monitor Ltd	Independent assessments of the Department's IT security measures and security review of the Department's infrastructure. Required for EU accreditation purposes	Not for external publication.	16,279
Fitzpatrick Associates	RDP 2014-2020 Ex Ante. Evaluation Strategic Environmental Assessment & Appropriate Assessment	July 2015	50,130
Drima Marketing Ltd	Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire (JSFO) 2014 Joint Wood Energy Enquiry (JWEE) 2014 Market Report for Ireland for the Timber Committee 2013	Completed May 2015 Joint Wood Energy Enquiry (JWEE) 2014- published as part of COFORD Woodflow note. Completed Sept/Oct 2015	12,398

Questions - Written Answers

Company	Title of Report	Date or expected Date of Publication	Cost € To date
Bearing Point	Technical code review of the Animal Health and Welfare System	Q1 2016 Not for external publication.	216,198
Deloitte	Technical code review of the Integrated Fisheries System	Q1 2016 Not for external publication.	79,827
NTA Monitor Ltd	Independent assessments of the Department's IT security measures and security review of the Department's infrastructure. Required for EU accreditation purposes	Not for external publication.	35,611
Capt. Alan Coghlan	Draft Report on the use of Tugs and Associated Pilotage at Killybegs Fishery Harbour Centre	Not for publication	4,800
CMG Crime Management Ltd	ISPS Port Security Plan: Killybegs FHC	Not for external Publication	4,245
CMG Crime Management Ltd	Port Security Plan: Killybegs FHC	Not for external Publication	4,362
Martin Heraghty	Confidential Report to Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Commercial Mushroom Producers (CMP) participation as a Producer Organisation in the Fruit and Vegetable Producer Organisation Scheme	21 September 2015	2,000
Dr. Claire Sansford, Independent Plant Health Consultant, York, UK.	Revised assessment of the risk of spread of <i>Hymenoscyphus fraxineus</i> on untreated wood of ash (<i>Fraxinus</i> spp., particularly <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>).	4 September 2015 (no immediate plans to publish)	18,691

Company	Title of Report	Date or expected Date of Publication	Cost € To date
McCarthy Keville O'Sullivan	Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) of Freshwater Pearl Mussel Plan for Ireland	27 May 2016	54,710
ADAS UK LTD	An Evaluation of the Green Low-Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme (GLAS)	2021	1,500,000

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

235. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of special advisers on his staff and their yearly salary from 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43672/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Details in relation to Special Advisers appointed by me since taking office are set out in the following table. In respect of two of the appointments, the salary cap was exceeded, given the substantially higher salaries earned in the private sector. The salary increases were approved by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

Name	Dates	2011	2012	2013	2014	Salary €
		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Fergal Leamy	11/4/2011 to 9/9/2011	130,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ross Mac-Mathúna	16/1/2012 to 7/8/2014 1 July 2013*	N/A	€110,000	€110,000 €103,200	€103,200	N/A
Aine Kilroy	18/04/2011 to date 1 July 2013*	€80,051	€83,337	€86,604 €84,706	€84,706	€87,258
Catriona Fitzpatrick	07/08/2014 to date	N/A	N/A	N/A	€75,647	€78,670

* Salary reduced in line with Haddington Road Agreement

Scéimeanna Talmhaíochta

236. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara cen uair a dhéanfar íocaíocht faoi Scéim na Limistéar faoi Shriantacht Nádúrtha le feirmeoir i gContae na Gaillimhe (sonraí tugtha); cén fáth go bhfuil moill leis an íocaíocht seo; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [43704/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Fuarthas iar-ratas faoi Scéim na Limistéar Srianta Nádúrtha 2015 ón duine a ainmnítear an 8 Bealtaine 2015.

Tugadh próiseáil an iarratais seo chun críche le déanaí agus eiseofar íocaíocht go luath, go díreach do chuntas bainc ainmnithe an duine a ainmnítear.

Basic Payment Scheme Eligibility

237. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an application under the single payment scheme by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43713/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department received a Private Contract Clause application from the person named. This application has been processed and payment will issue under the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme in the coming days. The person named has also submitted a Review of Entitlements application to have the number and/or value of his Basic Payment Scheme entitlements reviewed. This review will be carried out shortly and the person named will be notified in writing thereafter.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

238. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when the remaining 30% balance will be paid under the 2015 basic payment scheme and the greening payment scheme to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43716/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Basic Payment and Greening Schemes was received from the person named on 28 May 2015. This application has been processed and both the advance (70%) and balancing (27%) payments have issued to the nominated bank account of the person named. A final balancing payment representing 3% of the overall payment is due to issue in 2016 following the finalisation of the allocation of entitlements under the Basic Payment Scheme.

Basic Payment Scheme Eligibility

239. **Deputy Áine Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive a payment under the single payment scheme. [43774/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named purchased entitlements during the 2014 scheme year but he did not submit a Single Payment Scheme application in 2013, therefore he did not establish an automatic right to receive new entitlements under the Basic Payment Scheme in 2015. My Department will contact the person named to obtain further information to establish what options are available to him to activate his entitlements under the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme.

Young Farmer Capital Investment Scheme Eligibility

240. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a person (details supplied) in County Clare under the young farmers capital investment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43776/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The applicant in this case has been farming for longer than five years and is not eligible for grant aid under the Young Farmer Capital Investment Scheme. He has been advised of the position. However he can apply under the other TAMS II Schemes and be eligible for grant aid at the standard rate of 40%. Younger farmers who are ineligible under the Young Farmer Capital Investment Scheme receive priority under the other TAMS II Schemes.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

241. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43777/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted an Areas of Natural Constraint application to my Department on 26 May, 2015. This application has been fully processed and payments issued on 21 October 2015 to the nominated bank account of the person named. My Department also received a Transfer of Entitlement Allocation Right application from the person named. At the time the application was received, the application form was incomplete and it was necessary for the form to be returned to the person named for completion. An official from my Department has been in contact with the person named in recent days in relation to this application as the completed form was never returned to my Department. This form has now been returned and the application has been processed. Payment under the Basic Payment Scheme will issue in the coming days.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

242. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43778/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Basic Payment Scheme application to my Department on 26 May, 2015. This application has been fully processed, and payment has issued directly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Fisheries Protection

243. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will bring to the attention of the European Commission how unfair and detrimental its proposal to ban bass fishing entirely in the first six months of 2016 will be to local tourism (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43785/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The most recent scientific advice for seabass suggests that the stock is in rapid decline and that fishing mortality levels for this stock are four times higher than the level that would ensure Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY). In January 2015, the EU Commission introduced emergency measures to reduce the fishing mortality in commercial fisheries (pelagic trawling) of this stock. The EU has since adopted a new Regulation that introduces a comprehensive prohibition on commercial fishing for seabass by all EU Member States fishing vessels in the Irish and Celtic

Seas. This underpins the conservation actions already taken by Ireland for over 20 years with regard to this vulnerable stock. The EU has also increased the minimum landing size for seabass and again Ireland supported this measure.

Ireland welcomes further conservation measures for this stock but we have a concern that the proposal as it stands, while aimed at protecting the stock, may inadvertently harm the highly regulated recreational angling sector in Ireland. The current proposal would ban all angling activity for seabass for the first six months of the year and a one fish per day rule for the rest of the year. Currently Ireland operates a 2 fish per day rule and the rest of the EU applies a 3 fish per day rule. I fully support the one fish per day limit suggested, however as I agree with the Deputy on the potential harm to our tourism sector, I do not support a complete ban on angling for the first six months of the year. Irish anglers are not the reason that seabass is continuing to decline and Ireland has been at the forefront of conservation measures for this stock for decades. It would in my view be unfair to take such a severe approach to the recreational sector in Ireland given their ongoing efforts to protect the stock. Consequently, I will endeavour, at December Council, to persuade the Commission that a catch and release recreational fishery be permitted to continue during the first six months of the year.

GLAS Payments

244. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the schedule for payments under the green low-carbon agri-environment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43818/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): GLAS applicants approved under Tranche 1 who have a GLAS contract start date of 1 October 2015 are entitled to a 2015 part-year payment in respect of 2015 eligible actions and covering the three month period 1 October 2015-31 December 2015. It is intended that these 2015 part-year payments will commence later this month. From 2016 onwards GLAS payments will be made on an annual basis as contracts complete the required checks.

Young Farmers Scheme Eligibility

245. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue under the young farmers scheme to a person (details supplied) in County Mayo, the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43819/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department has no record of having received an application under the Young Farmers Scheme from the person named. Department records indicate that the person named commenced his agricultural activity in 2008. Under EU Regulations governing the Young Farmers scheme an eligible applicant must have commenced their farming activity since 1 January 2010. On this basis the person named does not meet the eligibility criteria under the Young Farmers Scheme.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Eligibility

246. **Deputy Noel Coonan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment under the disadvantaged areas scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43829/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme was received from the person named on 14 May, 2015. Processing of the application is currently in progress. On completion of this process, the application will be further reviewed with a view to payment issuing directly to the nominated bank account of the person named at the earliest possible date.

Rural Development Programme

247. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he authorised the National Parks and Wildlife Service to negotiate on the proposed new locally led agri-environment schemes, when the scheme for the Shannon Callows will become operational; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43833/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The proposed new Locally-led Measure is an initiative of my Department which is being discussed at present with the European Commission, following which I hope to see it added to the Irish Rural Development Programme by way of formal amendment. The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) are advising on different aspects of the new measure but I should point out that they are not part of my Department and nor have I 'authorised' them to negotiate in any way on behalf of my Department in relation to the locally-led schemes initiative. The first of these schemes to be rolled out will be the Burren Programme, for which applications have already been sought, and work is progressing on other schemes which will be included under the Locally-Led umbrella later in 2016 and 2017. Freshwater pearl mussel catchments, hen harrier habitats and peat uplands have all been identified as candidates for support. Other candidates will emerge from a competitive process which will be announced in 2016, and a scheme for the Shannon Callows may well emerge from that process.

Young Farmers Scheme Eligibility

248. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when an older young farmers top-up will be approved for payment and when payment will be made to a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43841/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted applications for the National Reserve and the Young Farmers Scheme to my Department. Processing of National Reserve and Young Farmers Scheme applications is at an advanced stage and payments to successful applicants will commence in the week beginning 14 December 2015.

Rural Development Programme

249. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the process for grant-aid for tillage facilities to be included in the targeted agricultural modernisation scheme II; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43850/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The introduction of a specific scheme of investments for Tillage farmers is included in a formal amendment to the Rural Development Programme proposed by my Department. The detail of this proposal

is currently under negotiation with the European Commission. The Terms and Conditions of the Scheme will be finalised on receipt of the approval from the Commission and arrangements made for online applications. Grant aid is already available to assist tillage farmers under the existing TAMS II schemes with regard to, for example, the construction of nutrient storage facilities and storage facilities for other farmyard manures, soiled water and related facilities as well as farm-safety investments such as sliding/rolling doors and farmyard lighting.

Rural Development Programme

250. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine what tillage facilities under the targeted agricultural modernisation scheme II will be eligible for arable under this scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43851/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The introduction of a specific scheme of investments for Tillage farmers is included in a formal amendment to the Rural Development Programme proposed by my Department. The detail of this proposal is currently under negotiation with the European Commission. The Terms and Conditions of the Scheme will be finalised on receipt of the approval from the Commission and arrangements made for online applications. The investment items that have been considered for approval by the Commission include precision farming equipment, grain stores and grain storage equipment, low disturbance tillage equipment and rainwater harvesting and storage. Grant aid is already available to assist tillage farmers under the existing TAMS II schemes in respect of, for example, the construction of nutrient storage facilities and storage facilities for other farmyard manures, soiled water and related facilities as well as farm-safety investments such as sliding/rolling doors and farmyard lighting.

Rural Development Programme

251. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when arable farmers will be able to apply for grant aid for tillage facilities under targeted agricultural modernisation scheme II, the moneys that have been allocated to this scheme, when grant aid will be paid out; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43852/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The introduction of a specific scheme of investments for Tillage farmers is included in a formal amendment to the Rural Development Programme proposed by my Department. The detail of this proposal is currently under negotiation with the European Commission. The Terms and Conditions of the Scheme will be finalised on receipt of the approval from the Commission and arrangements will be made for online applications as soon as possible thereafter. Grant aid is already available to assist tillage farmers under the existing TAMS II schemes in respect of, for example, the construction of nutrient storage facilities and storage facilities for other farmyard manures, soiled water and related facilities as well as farm-safety investments such as sliding/rolling doors and farmyard lighting.

Forestry Grants

252. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of trees which were levelled in the storm of February 2014, if a replanting grant is available, the parameters involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43858/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am aware of the difficulties that have been created for many forest owners as a result of the storms of 2014. The frequency and ferocity of these storm events, compounded by waterlogged soils on many forest sites, led to extensive damage on both private and State owned forest lands. While estimates indicate that less than 1% of the national forest area (approximately 8,000 hectares) has been blown down, the damage has been extensive at a local level, especially in the south and parts of the midlands where substantial quantities of timber have been blown down. Financial support for a replanting grant for privately owned forests affected by the winter storms of 2013/2014 is currently being considered by the Department. A final decision on this matter can be expected shortly.

Basic Payment Scheme Eligibility

253. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Clare will receive farm payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43860/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraints Schemes was received from the person named on 20 April, 2015. Processing of the application under both schemes is currently in progress. On completion of this process, the application will be further reviewed with a view to payment issuing directly to the nominated bank account of the person named at the earliest possible date.

Wildlife Conservation

254. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a proper compensation scheme is needed for landowners who farm in line with restrictions due to Hen Harrier designation, if he will assess and implement such a scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43911/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I have made possession of Hen Harrier land a Tier One Priority Environmental Asset under GLAS, guaranteeing that any farmer with an identified habitat will secure priority access to the scheme. The payment rate for Hen Harrier is €370 per hectare. This payment applies to all lands notified to my Department by the National Parks & Wildlife Service as Hen Harrier Lands, whether these are formally designated or otherwise identified as important for the preservation of the bird. Under the Birds Directive, Ireland is obliged to protect the Hen Harrier wherever it occurs and for this reason I was anxious to ensure that farmers could be properly supported for additional effort and income foregone, and that this would not be restricted to designated Natura sites. I have also provided that farmers with Hen Harrier habitat will automatically qualify for GLAS Plus, offering an increased payment of up to €7,000 per annum provided they manage sufficient area of habitat. For farmers who manage very large tracts of hen harrier habitat, I have already announced my intention to introduce a special scheme under the proposed new Locally Led measure of the Rural Development Programme. This will be drawn up and negotiated with the EU Commission in the first half of next year.

Wildlife Conservation

255. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will amend the stipulation of €370 per hectare up to a maximum of 18.92 hectares under the green low agri-carbon scheme to introduce an equivalent Hen Harrier rate supplement per hectare in excess of 18.9 hectares; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43913/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I have made possession of Hen Harrier land a Tier One Priority Environmental Asset under GLAS, guaranteeing that any farmer with an identified habitat will secure priority access to the scheme. The payment rate for Hen Harrier is €370 per hectare. This payment applies to all lands notified to my Department by the National Parks & Wildlife Service as Hen Harrier Lands, whether these are formally designated or otherwise identified as important for the preservation of the bird. Under the Birds Directive, Ireland is obliged to protect the Hen Harrier wherever it occurs and for this reason I was anxious to ensure that farmers could be properly supported for additional effort and income foregone, and that this would not be restricted to designated Natura sites. I have also provided that farmers with Hen Harrier habitat will automatically qualify for GLAS Plus, offering an increased payment of up to €7,000 per annum provided they manage sufficient area of habitat. For farmers who manage very large tracts of hen harrier habitat, including those with more than 18.92 hectares, I have already announced my intention to introduce a special scheme under the proposed new Locally Led measure of the Rural Development Programme. This will be drawn up and negotiated with the EU Commission in the first half of next year.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

256. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payments will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43928/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme was received in my Department from the person named on 13 July, 2015. This application was received outside the prescribed period for the submission of valid applications. Under the relevant EU Regulations, a 100% late penalty is applied to the application in this case. An official from my Department will be in contact with the person named to advise him of the appeal process in such instances.

Harbours and Piers Funding

257. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the funding provided to each harbour in County Cork including fishery harbour centres and council owned infrastructure, for each of the years 2011 to date, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43962/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department owns, manages and maintains the six Fishery Harbour Centres located at Howth, Dunmore East, Castletownbere, an Daingean, Ros an Mhíl and Killybegs. It also has responsibility for North Harbour Cape Clear, and a limited number of piers, lights and beacons in accordance with the 1902 ex-congested Districts Board Piers, Lights and Beacons Act. The 2011-2014 tables below outline my Department's expenditure on each of the harbours in County Cork. The 2015 table provides details of the funding allocated for 2015. As part of the Government's overall response to the damage caused by the storms of 2013 and 2014 my Department funded coastal Local Authorities in 2014 to repair piers and harbours and eligible marine infrastructure,

owned by them which were damaged by the storms

I have also allocated €1.4m in 2015 to enable Local Authorities complete storm damage projects approved in 2014, which were unfinished in 2014, due to time and other constraints.

Funding provided to each of the Harbours in County Cork 2011-2015

Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2011	
Location/Project	Department Expenditure €
Castletownbere Fishery Harbour Centre	2,832,389
Blackrock	56,751
Ballycotton breakwater	112,500
Travaud, Travara, Traanimod (Castletownbere)	67,875
Cork Harbour	93,750
Fountainstown	104,170
Keelbeg, Union Hall	98,625
Cape Clear	15,119
Total	3,381,179
Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2012	
Location/Project	Department Expenditure €
Castletownbere Fishery Harbour Centre	855,504
Blackrock	112,500
Cork Harbour Access	55,904
Allin Quay	40,672
Carrigaline-Crosshaven	37,500
Pallas/Schull	5,535
Keelbeg Pier	20,137
Gearhies	18,689
Schull	23,295
Cape Clear	164,894
Total	1,334,630
Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2013	
Location/Project	Department Expenditure €
Castletownbere Fishery Harbour Centre	949,975
Pallas/Schull Repair	51,000
Carrigaline-Crosshaven	55,117
Courtmac sherry/Ballin	13,658
Travara Pier, Castletownbere	20,078
Dunworley	36,696
Coolmaine	19,847
McDonald Quay, Youghal	54,759
Kilcatherine, Castletownbere	24,080
Dromard, Castletownbere	2,723
Baltimore Pier	37,500
Cape Clear	548,891

Questions - Written Answers

Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2013	
Total	1,814,324

Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2014	
Location/Project	Department Expenditure €
Castletownbere Fishery Harbour Centre	371,651
Baltimore Pier replace Cush Buoy (Storm Damage)	29,590
Cleanderry Repairs to Slipway (Storm Damage)	20,777
Courtmacsherry Harbour Aids to Navigation (Storm Damage)	4,096
Deelish (Storm Damage)	27,000
Dursey (Storm Damage)	7,233
Glandore (Storm Damage)	180,000
Letter, Kilcrohane (Storm Damage)	27,000
McDonald's Quay, Youghal (Storm Damage)	46,666
Pallas, Ardgroom (Storm Damage)	34,300
Barleycove (Storm Damage)	31,638
Travarra Pier (Storm Damage)	12,131
Cape Clear (Storm Damage)	3,014,552
Durrus Pier	19,772
Ballycotton	€112,500
Passage	€75,000
Baltimore	€67,500
Glengarriff Pier	€14,250
Total	4,095,656

Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2015	
Location/Project	Department Allocation €
Castletownbere Fishery Harbour Centre	1,300,591
Fountainstown	112,500
Dock Pier, Sherkin Island	15,000
Hare Island	15,000
Nealon's Quay, Youghal	95,250
Loughanebeg Pier, Cahermore, Castletownbere	37,500
Roaringwater Pier, Church Cross, Skibberreen	22,500
Carrigillihy Slipway, Union Hall	51,000
Rosscarbery Pier	33,750
Castletownshend, Durrus and Ring (Clon) Piers	11,250
Ballydonegan Pier Allihies	48,750
Spike Island, Cork Harbour	112,500
Ballinwillig Slipway, Garryvoe	26,250

Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2015	
Gortnakilla Pier, Bantry	18,750
Lahenagh Slipway, Clonakilty	42,000
Travaud Pier, Castletownbere	18,750
Sandycove Slipway	18,750
Cape Clear	2,510,000
Baltimore (Storm Damage)	6,410
Total	4,496,501

GLAS Data

258. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers who have been accepted into tranche one of the GLAS; the average annual payment approved and the number of farmers with a start date of 1 October and 1 January 2016, by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43979/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am pleased to say that in October 24, 430 approval letters issued to farmers confirming their acceptance into the scheme. The commencement dates of contracts are set out in tabular form on a county by county basis:

County	1 October 2015 Start Date	1 January 2016 Start Date
Carlow	256	16
Cavan	841	42
Clare	1,518	41
Cork	1,961	130
Donegal	1,736	146
Dublin	55	2
Galway	2,734	241
Kerry	1,624	67
Kildare	242	9
Kilkenny	374	48
Laois	352	7
Leitrim	908	64
Limerick	926	85
Longford	473	22
Louth	137	8
Mayo	2,322	173
Meath	399	29
Monaghan	533	27
Offaly	437	15
Roscommon	1,359	106
Sligo	859	43
Tipperary	1,028	61
Waterford	303	26
Westmeath	572	55
Wexford	657	60

County	1 October 2015 Start Date	1 January 2016 Start Date
Wicklow	292	9
	22,898	1,532

An additional 1,600 applications have been approved recently, a county breakdown is not yet available for these cases .

The information sought on the average annual payment will not be available until the pre-payment validations and calculations are completed.

Beef Data Programme

259. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers who have submitted samples by herd size in intervals of ten, 0 to ten, 11 to 20, and so forth, by county, under the beef genomics scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43980/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department is in the process of compiling the requested data, which will be sent under separate cover as soon as possible.

GLAS Data

260. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers who have been approved for tier one, two and three and by county for the GLAS; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43981/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In October some 24,430 approval letters began issuing to farmers confirming their acceptance into the scheme. The number of farmers who received approval to the scheme under Tier 1 is 10,185, Tier 2 is 5,888 and Tier 3 is 8,357. A county by county breakdown of the numbers in each Tier is not yet available. A further 1,600 have recently been approved but a county and tier breakdown for these applications is not yet available.

GLAS Applications

261. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of completed applications received to date by tier under tranche two of the green low-carbon agri-environment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43982/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Approximately 4,000 applications have been submitted under Tranche 2 of GLAS, while some 16,700 applications have been registered on the GLAS system. It is not possible until applications are fully processed to give definitive numbers for each Tier.

Beef Data Programme

262. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when pay-

ment will issue to a person (details Supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43991/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted an application under the 2015 Beef Data and Genomics Programme but subsequently withdrew the application. Therefore, there are no payments due to the person named under this Programme. An application under the 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint schemes was received by my department on 8 March, 2015. This application has been fully processed and payments under both schemes will issue shortly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme

263. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will issue commencement and approval notices prior to January 2016 under the second targeted agricultural modernisation scheme to facilitate new entrants in installing new equipment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44009/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Interest in TAMS to date has exceeded expectations and clearly many Irish farmers are looking once again at the benefits of investing in their enterprises and expanding production. Under the Young Farmer Capital Investment Scheme a total of 520 applications have been received with over 200 of these applying for dairy investments while over a thousand applications have been submitted for the Dairy Equipment Scheme. All applications received are being examined and approvals will commence when all of the required checks have been undertaken. This is a complex process and as all applications for TAMS 2 must be made under a tranche-based approach, we are required to evaluate, rank and assess all applications received together. Applications cannot be approved individually or on a rolling basis as they are submitted.

It is anticipated that approvals will commence shortly and will continue throughout December and into the New Year. Every effort is being made to facilitate approvals in cases where milking equipment is urgently required.

Live Exports

264. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of bovine imports for the years 2011 to date, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44012/15]

266. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of live bovine exports for the years 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44014/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 264 and 266 together.

The numbers of bovine exports and imports as requested by the Deputy are set out in the following table. The main destinations for live bovines in 2015 were UK, NL, Italy and France.

Year	Live Bovine Exports	Live Bovine imports
2015 to date	173,514	15,166

Year	Live Bovine Exports	Live Bovine imports
2014	239,993	11,490
2013	212,369	14,024
2012	162,038	23,465
2011	215,780	22,381

Suckler Welfare Scheme Data

265. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of herds in the suckler cow scheme for the years 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44013/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): A total of 26,321 farmers are currently participating in the new Beef Data and Genomics Programme which forms part of the Rural Development Programme 2015-2020. The following table outlines the number of applicants who actively participated in the Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme in 2011 and 2012 and the Beef Data Programmes in the years 2013 and 2014 :

Year	Scheme	No of participants
2011	SWS	33,100
2012	SWS	29,503
2013	BDP	26,699
2014	BDP	32,369

Question No. 266 answered with Question No. 264

Bovine Disease Controls

267. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of tests for bovine brucellosis for the years 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44015/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The number of tests for the years in question are contained in the following table.

Year	Total
2015 to Date	636,336
2014	1,503,246
2013	1,696,978
2012	1,928,895
2011	2,328,268

This amounts to 8,093,723 in total.

Ireland achieved Officially Brucellosis Free Status in 2009 and my Department has been gradually scaling down testing since then. In addition, there has been no case of Brucellosis on the entire island of Ireland since March 2012 and, as the Deputy might recall, I, along with the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development in Northern Ireland, Ms Michelle O'Neill, announced the ending of pre-movement Brucellosis testing on both sides of the Border with ef-

fect from 28 September 2015. This means that routine on-farm brucellosis testing is no longer required in the State. *This is a major landmark in the history of disease eradication in Ireland and illustrates what can be achieved when all concerned cooperate in delivering an effective eradication programme. My Department has estimated that, compared to the position prior to the scaling down of testing in 2009, the saving to farmers in terms of testing costs amounts to about €15m per annum.*

However, it is vital that we identify and prevent any outbreak of this disease and, in this regard, my Department will continue to conduct surveillance testing on cows slaughtered at meat plants. It is also important that, notwithstanding the removal of the legislative requirement to test, farmers should ensure that they have appropriate and proportionate bio-security arrangements in place with regard to animals introduced into their herds in order to protect the health of their own herd and indeed that of their neighbours from infectious and contagious disease.

Departmental Expenditure

268. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the cost of food safety, public health, animal health and welfare and plant health for each of the years from 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44017/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The information requested by the Deputy is contained in the following table.

Subhead B: Food Safety, Animal Health & Welfare, Plant Health Expenditure 2011 to End November 2015

-	-	Total 2011	Total 2012	Total 2013	Total 2014	2015 to End November
B.1	Administrative Pay	105,868	100,362	96,752	92,197	83,173
B.2	Administrative Non-Pay	29,455	26,746	25,867	28,082	24,498
B.3	Programmes	121,304	111,317	90,304	79,419	61,223
	Current	120,756	111,317	90,304	79,419	61,179
	Capital	548	0	0	0	44
B.3.1	Meat Control Laboratory	400	860	699	840	448
B.3.2	TVIs Meat Inspection	19,081	17,634	17,607	18,039	16,472
B.3.3	Vet. Testing & Research	4,134	4,478	4,253	4,090	3,805
B.3.4	TB & Bruc. Eradication	39,794	38,093	31,732	35,253	25,606

Questions - Written Answers

-	-	Total 2011	Total 2012	Total 2013	Total 2014	2015 to End No- vember
B.3.5	National Beef As- surance Current	6,342	6,341	5,872	5,667	5,074
B.3.6	Scrapie	1,058	381	456	326	238
B.3.7	Oth. Ani- mals Dis. Measures	1,511	1,312	1,749	1,791	1,326
B.3.8.1	An. Wel. Control of Horses Current	2,705	2,199	3,054	2,248	807
B.3.8.2	An. Wel. Control of Horses Capital	0	0	0	0	44
B.3.9	Other Animal Welfare	1,277	1,408	2,160	2,085	240
B.3.10	BSE Comp. & Related Costs	3,364	1,984	620	82	263
B.3.11	BSE Test- ing	3,226	1,373	1,191	681	665
B.3.12	Fallen Animals Scheme	5,667	5,778	7,049	5,012	4,717
B.3.13	Render Store Dest. Of MBM	100	20	17	31	23
B.3.14	FMD Gen- eral Costs	0	0	0	0	0
B.3.15	Feed Stuff Analysis	187	182	157	196	147
B.3.16	Pesticide / Plant Protect	970	996	1,007	886	842
B.3.17	Suckler Cow / Anml. Welfare	30,845	28,198	10,290	1,063	29
B.3.18	Poultry & Eggs	67	56	54	75	48

-	-	Total 2011	Total 2012	Total 2013	Total 2014	2015 to End November
B.3.19	An. Hlt. Insp. Milk Certs	25	23	12	16	7
B.3.20	Other	0	0	2,324	582	-7
B.3.21	Dairy Science Laboratories	0	0	0	458	429
B.3.18*	Animal Welfare -Pig Welfare Current	548	0	0	0	0
	Total	256,627	238,425	212,923	199,698	168,894

*B.3.18 Animal Welfare – Pig Welfare Capital discontinued in 2012

The information on the table corresponds to expenditure under Programme B “ Food Safety, Animal Health & Welfare and Plant Health” and the strategies underpinning this programme include

- Implementing food and feed safety monitoring, inspection and control programmes at primary, producer and processing levels
- Providing an efficient laboratory services for animal, plant and food products
- Promoting and enforcing enhanced animal /product identification to support food safety and animal health and welfare
- Intensify the various animal and fish disease control/eradication programmes in order to make significant progress towards eradication
- Promoting animal welfare standards and secure compliance with these regulations.
- Operating an effective plant health service to minimise threats from harmful plant and forestry pests and diseases.

The decline in expenditure over recent years is largely attributable to lower animal disease incidence, closure of the Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme and more cost-effective and efficient delivery of schemes and services.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

269. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue under the 2015 areas of natural constraint scheme and the basic payment scheme to a person (details supplied) in County Galway, the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44018/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Schemes was received by my Department from the person named on 30 April, 2015. This application has been fully pro-

cessed and payments under both schemes will issue shortly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Farm Household Incomes

270. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the average family income for dairy, cattle, sheep and tillage farmers for each of the years 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44073/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The following table shows average family farm income from Teagasc's National Farm Survey for the years 2011 to 2014, by system of farming.

	Dairying	Cattle Rearing	Cattle Other	Sheep	Tillage	Mixed Livestock	All farms
% of farms represented	20%	23%	30%	16%	8%	3%	100%
2011	68,570	10,453	14,573	16,805	35,296	34,902	24,461
2012	49,290	12,186	17,896	18,243	37,151	46,119	25,479
2013	62,994	9,541	15,667	11,731	28,797	50,793	25,437
2014	67,598	10,369	13,321	15,065	28,995	56,183	26,642

Source: Teagasc, National Farm Survey

At the recent Teagasc, Annual Review and Outlook 2016 conference Teagasc estimated that average family farm income would fall by 9% in 2015 and rise by 5% in 2016.

The data illustrates that there is a gap between the incomes on dairy farms and those on drystock farms, with tillage farms in between. It should be borne in mind that almost all dairy farms are classified by Teagasc as full-time farms in terms of the labour input required, whereas most drystock farms are classified as part-time in terms of labour input required. In 2014, on 30% of all farms the farm holder had an off-farm job, and on 51% of farms either the holder and/or spouse had an off-farm job. Overall, it is estimated that on 75% of farms, either the farmer and/or spouse had another source of off-farm income, be it from employment, pensions or other social assistance.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

271. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a payment will be made under the basic payment scheme and the greening scheme to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry. [44076/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named has not submitted an application for the 2015 Basic Payment and Greening Scheme. An official from my Department has been in direct correspondence with the Deputy's office to advise him of the appeals procedure.

Fishing Industry

272. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in the same way that there is a need for transparency in the Irish Farmers Association, if such transparency is also needed in the fishing industry, particularly in the context of the large amounts of money involved in quotas of fish which are a natural resource; the safeguards in place for dealing with lobbyists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44103/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In Ireland fish quotas are a public resource and managed on that basis. Demersal species are managed by way of Fisheries Management Notice under Section 12 of the Sea Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006. The periodic allocations for demersal (whitefish and prawn) stocks, usually monthly, are made, following consultation with the industry. A notice is placed in the Irish Independent and the detailed arrangements are published on the Department's website.

Each month I receive recommendations from industry representatives at the Quota Management Advisory Committee in relation to the monthly allocations to fishing vessels of demersal stocks. The Whitefish Quota Management Advisory Committee involving fishing industry representatives meets each month and, as far as possible, I take account of the recommendations for monthly regimes for particular stocks. Additional meetings are organised as required to discuss specific issues in particular fisheries that may arise, including in relation to pelagic stocks. The Committee is comprised of representatives from the four Fish Producer Organisations, National Inshore Fishery Forum, Fishing Co-Operatives, the Irish Fish Producers and Exporters Association and meetings are attended by the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority and officials from my Department.

In 2014, 40 separate demersal fish stocks were managed in consultation with the fishing industry and sea food processing representatives and 57 Fisheries Management Notices were published. This process is fully transparent in respect of fishing opportunities for vessels.

In respect of pelagic stocks, fisheries are managed in accordance with specific policies for each stock. These policies have been developed over time and amendments are subject to consultation with industry representatives and in the case of significant change a full public consultation. In relation to full public consultations, I made available any submissions, along with my decision and the policies are published on the Departments Website at <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/fisheries/seafoodpolicy/forms/>

The pelagic fisheries are opened and closed taking account of, where appropriate, uptake level and industry recommendations. The allocation of fishing opportunities are managed by way of Authorisations and quota notifications issued under Section 13 of the Sea Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006 to qualifying vessels. In some fisheries allocations for smaller vessels or for a by-catch are managed by way of Fisheries Management Notice.

GLAS Administration

273. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if applicants under the green low-carbon agri-environment scheme had their points miscalculated due to a fault in the software his Department provided to farm advisers (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44151/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department provided a 'ready-reckoner' calculator to facilitate advisors in calculating the score of GLAS clients when preparing applications on the online system. I can confirm that there was no fault in the software provided by the Department and that the software has operated suc-

cessfully for all other advisors. However, rounding issues did emerge in a very small number of cases when my Department was subsequently calculating scores internally at approval stage. These cases were all very quickly identified and corrected.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

274. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for the delay in payment to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal under the area based payment scheme and the single payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44156/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme application on 14 May 2015. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases Remote Sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue. The application of the person named was selected for a Remote Sensing eligibility inspection. This inspection has now been completed and the results are currently being finalised with the intention of issuing any payments due under the Direct Payments Schemes as soon as possible. In the event that any queries arise officials in my Department will be in contact with the person named.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

275. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Roscommon will receive farm payments; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44159/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Schemes was received from the person named on 26 May, 2015. Processing of the application under both schemes has been finalised, and payment has issued directly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

276. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Roscommon; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44160/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme application on 9 April 2015. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases Remote Sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue. The application of the person named was selected for a Remote Sensing eligibility inspection. This inspection has now been completed and the results are currently being finalised with the intention of issuing any payments due under the Direct Payments Schemes as soon as possible. In the event that any queries arise officials in my Department will be in contact with the person named.

Animal Disease Controls

277. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to introduce mandatory testing for separation syndrome in Connemara ponies to protect the breed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44222/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Hoof Wall Separation Disease (HWSD) is caused by a genetic defect that appears to occur only in the Connemara pony breed and the carrier frequency has been estimated to be about 14.8%. For a foal to be affected by the disease both sire and dam must be carriers. The Connemara Pony Breeders Society has been approved by my Department to maintain the Studbook for Connemara Ponies and in this regard operate a breeding programme for the breed.

A research project is being carried out by the Connemara Pony Breeders Society, in conjunction with Weatherbys to randomly select Connemara ponies to test for the presence of the HWSD gene. My Department has allocated funding to the Connemara Pony Breeders Society under the Equine Infrastructures Scheme 2015 to facilitate this project.

The results from this project will enable the Society to plan for the future and implement a strategy to manage this genetic defect. In 2016 the CPBS plans to test all colts being presented for classification in the Studbook to identify potential carriers.

Grazing Rights

278. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if heather can be overgrazed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44224/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Heather can be overgrazed. All farmers must comply with the cross compliance requirements under the relevant GAEC and the Natura provisions. Overgrazing can lead to soil erosion and or the destruction of habitats both of which can lead to penalties under cross compliance.

Direct Payment Scheme Eligibility

279. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views that heather will reach maturity with a sustainable stocking rate in place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44225/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In order to be eligible a land parcel must be maintained in a state suitable for grazing or cultivation. Areas not in this state must be deducted as ineligible. Agricultural areas with heather can be eligible provided they are maintained in a grazable state. It is open to the farmer to decide how this is achieved.

Direct Payment Scheme Eligibility

280. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views that controlled burning of heather is an agricultural activity in the same way that topping in a lowland situation is; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44226/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Agricultural activity is defined under Article 4.1.(c) of EU 1307/2017 as follows:

Article 4.1 of Delegated Regulation 639/2014 gives Member States two options as to how to give effect to Article 4.1.(c) of 1307/2013. Ireland chose option (b) of this article which states:

In the context of the Regulations above, controlled burning may be considered in certain limited circumstances as set out in the Guide to Land Eligibility.

Direct Payment Scheme Eligibility

281. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if controlled burning is an agricultural method that can be used to manage heather, given his Department's A Guide to Land Eligibility Direct Payment Schemes 2015, and to the top photo on page 9 in particular which shows heather that is eligible but where management is needed to ensure it remains eligible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44227/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The applicant is required to maintain land as shown in the photograph referred to in an eligible state suitable for grazing or cultivation. It is a matter for the farmer to choose which option he or she wishes to employ to achieve this objective. Should the applicant so wish, he/she can consult a FÁS Adviser on an appropriate course of action to take to maintain it in an eligible state.

Direct Payment Scheme Eligibility

282. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the management tools his Department advises to make an area eligible for payment, given his Department's A Guide to Land Eligibility Direct Payment Schemes 2015 and the lower photograph on page 9 in particular which shows heather that is ineligible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44228/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The photo as referenced shows ineligible heather. The Department recommend that the applicant seeks professional advice as regards the management of such areas. The Department maintains a database of all approved FÁS (Farm Advisory System) Advisers, who can provide advice on an appropriate remedial course of action.

Direct Payment Scheme Eligibility

283. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the nature of the direct contact his Department had with the European Commission in negotiating the A Guide to Land Eligibility Direct Payment Schemes 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44229/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The implementation of the Direct Payment Schemes under the new CAP saw some changes to the requirements governing the eligibility of land and other related matters. Officials from my Department worked closely with the EU Commission in March/April of this year with a view to establishing a set of requirements which are clear and workable from the point of view of individual farm-

ers as well as other stakeholders. I was also mindful of the need to ensure that the implementing provisions were the most appropriate in the context of farming in Ireland and providing as much flexibility as possible to farmers. In order to benefit from payment under the Direct Aid Schemes, land must be eligible and must also be in a state fit for grazing or cultivation.

In the context of compiling a guidance booklet for issue to farmers, officials from my Department sought a meeting and met with officials from the European Commission on 9 April 2015. The purpose of this meeting was to seek clarification regarding Ireland's interpretation of the EU Regulations governing land eligibility. In Ireland, it was decided that the most appropriate mechanism to provide for this is to define the characteristics to be met by an agricultural area in order to be deemed maintained in a state suitable for grazing or cultivation. In the first instance, it should be remembered that it is the responsibility of each Member State to implement EU regulations in respect of the eligibility of land.

Departmental Reports

284. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Defence when he received a report (details supplied), why it has not been published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43579/15]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Simon Coveney): In December 2014, I appointed former High Court Judge, Mr. Roderick Murphy, to conduct an independent review of the investigation of the death of Private Hugh Doherty and the disappearance of Private Kevin Joyce (Caomhán Seoighe) on 27 April 1981 while serving as members of the Irish Battalion with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

Privates Doherty and Joyce were serving with UNIFIL in 1981 when, on 27 April 1981, an observation post at Dayr Ntar manned by them came under attack. Private Doherty was later found dead from gunshot wounds and Private Joyce was missing. The attackers are unknown. Over the years, extensive diplomatic and military efforts to locate Private Joyce have proved fruitless. To date, no information has been elicited to lead to the recovery of Private Joyce's remains. In late June 2015, Mr. Roderick Murphy presented his report to me. Following a review of his report a number of clarifications were raised with Mr Murphy which are currently being addressed. I also sought legal advice from the Attorney General in relation to the publication of the report. The matter is nearing a conclusion and I intend to publish the report, once all legal and other issues arising from the report have been addressed.

Ministerial Meetings

285. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Defence the number of meetings requested by private external lobby groups and the number of meetings held in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43596/15]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Simon Coveney): I have received no requests for meetings from private external lobby groups in my capacity as Minister for Defence.

Departmental Expenditure

286. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Defence his Department's photography costs since he came into office, inclusive of costs incurred from use of the ministerial allow-

ance, by year, in tabular form; the occasions for which photographers were booked; the photographers used; the costs associated with each occasion; the policy in place regarding the booking of photographers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43628/15]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Simon Coveney): The total costs for photography paid by the Department in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 to date is set out in the following table.

Date	Company	Cost
25/3/2011	Maxwell Photography	€393.25 (Including VAT)
9/11/2011	Maxwell Photography	€849.42 (Including VAT)
21/11/2012	Fennell Photography	€116.85 (including VAT)
10/07/2013	Maxwell Photography	€17.22 (including VAT)
21/11/2014	Maxwell Photography	€713.40(including VAT)

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, following an EU-level advertised procurement process, has established a Framework Agreement comprising five firms for the provision of photography services. The Framework was established in February 2012 and is open for use by all Government Departments and Offices. My Department avails of this Framework Agreement for photography needs.

Public Relations Contracts Data

287. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Defence his Department's use of external public relations firms since he came into office by year in tabular form; the uses of these firms and the policy regarding employing them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43644/15]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department has not incurred any expenditure on external public relations since March 2011.

Public Relations Contracts Data

288. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Defence the reports he commissioned from external consultants since March 2011, by year, title, cost, date published and company, in tabular form. [43660/15]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Simon Coveney): The information requested by the Deputy in relation to external consultant reports commissioned by my Department since March 2011 is set out in the following table.

Report	Cost	Company	Publication Date
An independent review of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) fatalities in 1989	€51,660	Mr. Frank Callinan, S.C.	19th September 2011

Report	Cost	Company	Publication Date
Review of the Air Corps' Safety Management System	€20,000	Jacques Michaud	14 November 2013
Third Report of the Independent Monitoring Group (IMG)	€22,500	Dr. Eileen Doyle	3 September 2014
Consultancy report to assess the impact of an upgrade of Departments financial application software.	€24,870.60	Fujitsu Ltd	30 January 2015
Review of the Civil Defence Branch	€7,200	Mr. Jim Blighe	N/A

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

289. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Defence the number of special advisers on his staff and their yearly salary from 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43676/15]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Simon Coveney): I have not appointed any special advisers in my role as Minister for Defence. Similarly no special advisers were appointed by my predecessor, Mr. Alan Shatter, T.D.

Departmental Properties

290. **Deputy Gabrielle McFadden** asked the Minister for Defence his views on a proposal (details supplied) to use Columb Barracks as a headquarters for Westmeath Civil Defence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43997/15]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Simon Coveney): Following the closure of Columb Barracks, my Department wrote to Government Departments and other Public Bodies inviting them to express any interest in the property, with a view to its disposal by the Department. No such interest was expressed at that time. My officials also met with local representatives and officials from Westmeath County Council to discuss the future of the Barracks.

As the Deputy is aware, a number of local organisations are currently using the Barracks. These include the Westmeath GAA County Board, the Irish United Nations Veterans Association (IUNVA), the Order of Malta and the Midland Youth Services. The former barracks is also currently used by An Garda Síochána and the Customs Service for training purposes and it is intended that these arrangements will remain in place. Leases with these and other local community groups are currently being progressed in my Department. In addition, numerous requests from other community groups wishing to avail of accommodation within the Barracks have also been received. Regarding accommodation for Westmeath Civil Defence HQ, initial contact was made with my Officials to discuss the possibility of them relocating to Columb Barracks. The position, however, is that the provision of accommodation for Civil Defence Units is, in the first instance, a matter for the relevant local authority. I would, of course, be happy to consider a proposal from the Council in this regard. Indeed, given the number of local organisations interested in using the facility, I believe that it may be useful to engage with the Council

regarding the long-term development of the Barracks.

The Department of Justice and Equality, who is the lead Department for the Refugee Accommodation Programme, is also working with my Officials to establish whether any of the buildings falling within the remit of the Department of Defence, including Columb Barracks, are suitable for the purposes of temporary accommodation.

As the Deputy can appreciate, proposals involving the long-term retention of Mullingar Barracks by my Department, which includes administering multiple leases and fulfilling the many responsibilities of a landlord, will put a significant administrative and financial burden on my Department. I will be happy to discuss with any interested group, including the Local Authority, any proposals they may have for the possible purchase and future development of the site for the benefit of the local community.

Departmental Legal Costs

291. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Defence the total cost to his Department, and those under his aegis, for the procurement of legal services in the State from 2011 to 2015 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44570/15]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Chief State Solicitor's Office, Attorney General's Office and the State Claims Agency deal with all legal matters on behalf of my Department. The main requirement for legal services in my Department is in the context of litigation, usually in the form of administrative law and personal injury proceedings. The Chief State Solicitor's Office and the State Claims Agency manage and provide legal representation in relation to all cases taken against the Minister for Defence.

The Chief State Solicitor's Office is responsible for the costs of the State's legal teams in cases that it manages on behalf of the Department. External legal costs incurred by the State Claims Agency arising from the defence of any claims managed by the Agency for the Department are refunded to the Agency by the Department. In addition, the Department may pay plaintiffs' legal costs as part of awards and settlements. The following table lists the total legal costs incurred in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and to the end of November 2015 in relation to such services.

Year	Legal costs
2011	€2,161,956
2012	€1,199,689
2013	€1,441,165
2014	€1,363,282
2015 to end Nov 2015	€1,395,090

While it possibly falls outside of the terms of the question, for completeness, I would like to advise that, in 2011 expenditure of €9,075 was incurred in respect of legal advice provided in 2010 to the Selection Committee established under section 184K of the Defence Acts 1954-2007 for the purpose of identifying officers of the Permanent Defence Force suitable for appointment as a Military Judge.

Courts Service

292. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount of financial resources allocated to the courts, excluding resources for legal aid and public prosecution services; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43722/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, the day to day management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service which is independent in exercising its functions and I am responsible for ensuring that the Service is adequately funded.

The Courts Service Vote for 2015 is €107.965 million which is an increase of €2.0 million on the corresponding 2014 allocation. I am also pleased that in the Estimates for 2016 the Courts Service allocation will further increase to €108.672 million which, when non-recurring payroll costs are excluded, is an effective increase of approximately €1.75 million. This increased allocation and additional staffing will support the delivery of an effective Courts system and give them further scope in relation to non-pay costs.

On the capital side, the allocation of €9.7 million for 2015 is in line with that of 2014, which had included an additional €2.0 million for capital works associated with the establishment of the new Court of Appeal. I am pleased that the existing capital allocation of €9.7 million remains in place for 2016 and future years. Furthermore, capital funding for major developments in the courts was announced as part of the Government's Capital Infrastructure and Investment Plan for 2016-2021. This included a new Public-Private Partnership to deliver a state-of-the-art Family Law and Children's Courts building, together with additional Court rooms for the Supreme Court and other Courts offices, on the Hammond Lane site in Dublin. The capital envelope also includes €10 million for courthouse refurbishment in later years of the plan. I can assure the Deputy that I am conscious of the value of providing for an excellent court system including the provision of substantial resources to the Courts Service to enable it to maintain and improve its services.

Legal Aid Service Expenditure

293. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount of financial resources allocated for legal aid services for each of the years 2011 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43723/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Deputy will be aware that the provision of legal aid falls within two separate categories, that is, civil legal aid and criminal legal aid. Details in respect of each category are outlined below.

Criminal Legal Aid

The Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) Act 1962 provides that free legal aid may be granted, in certain circumstances, for the defence of persons of insufficient means. Under the Act, the grant of legal aid entitles the applicant to the services of a solicitor and, in certain circumstances, up to two counsel, in the preparation and conduct of their defence or appeal. The granting of aid is a matter for the court.

Total expenditure on criminal legal aid for the years requested by the Deputy is detailed below.

Year	Total Amount of Expenditure (€ million)
2011	56.1

Year	Total Amount of Expenditure (€ million)
2012	50.5
2013	50.9
2014	49.9
2015 (Jan - Nov)	44.8

These figures include the cost of medical witnesses expenses, technical reports, medical reports, translation and interpretation and other office charges.

Civil Legal Aid

The Legal Aid Board is tasked with providing civil legal aid in the State. Exchequer funding is provided by way of a grant-in-aid to the Board. Resources allocated to the Board include funding for the provision of the Family Mediation Service, for which the Legal Aid Board assumed responsibility in late 2011.

Total expenditure on civil legal aid for the years requested by the Deputy is detailed below.

Year	Total Amount of Expenditure (€ million)
2011	30.4
2012	33.0
2013	33.8
2014	32.6
2015	32.5

Legal Services Regulation

294. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the measures she is taking to address the fact that Ireland is ranked by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development as the eight most expensive country in which to enforce a business contract; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43724/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Legal Services Regulation Bill, which is scheduled to complete its passage through the Houses of the Oireachtas this week, gives legislative expression to the commitment in the programme for Government to “establish independent regulation of the legal professions to improve access and competition, make legal costs more transparent and ensure adequate procedures for addressing consumer complaints”. Having been a sectoral objective under the EU/IMF/ECB ‘Troika’ Programme, the Bill is now the subject of a Country Specific Recommendation under the EU Semester Process as well as an objective of the Action Plan for Jobs, the Medium Term Economic Strategy 2014-2020 and the National Reform Plan.

The Legal Services Regulation Act will constitute a key component of the Government’s strategy to bring greater transparency to legal costs and to reduce their burden on consumers and enterprise - including by reference to the competitiveness indicators raised by the Deputy, which would appear to be those also cited by the National Competitiveness Council in its 2015 Report on the Costs of Doing Business in Ireland. That Report notes that despite reductions in legal costs during 2013, Ireland remains an expensive location to enforce a business contract (ranked 9th in the OECD, not 8th as the Deputy suggests) and is a place where it takes a significant amount of time to enforce a contract (the 6th longest in the OECD). The legal services data used for the Report is based on a group of 16 respondents to the relevant CSO survey and

96 separate price observations.

The more transparent legal costs regime being introduced by the Legal Services Regulation Bill, in tandem with the use of more efficient alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, is intended to bring about significant improvements in Ireland's position in the medium term. The Bill makes extensive provision, in Part 10, for a new and enhanced legal costs regime that will bring greater transparency to how legal costs are charged by legal practitioners, along with a better balance between the interests of legal practitioners and those of their clients. Legal practitioners, whether solicitors or barristers, will be obliged to provide more detailed information about legal costs from the outset of their dealings with clients. This will be in the form of a Notice, written in clear language, which must be provided when a legal practitioner takes instructions. Among other things, the Notice must disclose the costs that are involved, or, where this is not known, the basis upon which such costs are to be calculated. A cooling-off period is to be allowed for the consideration of costs by the client. When there are any significant developments in a case which give rise to further costs, the Bill provides that a client must be duly updated and given the option of whether or not to proceed with the case in question. In addition, the Bill sets out that it will not be permissible for legal practitioners to set fees as a specified percentage or proportion of damages payable to a client from contentious business and that it will no longer be permissible for barristers to charge junior counsel fees as a specified percentage or proportion of Senior Counsel fees.

An aggrieved client also has the option of applying for the adjudication of disputed legal costs by the reformed and modernised Office of the Legal Costs Adjudicators, which is currently known as the Taxing-Master's Office. The Bill sets out, for the first time in legislation, a series of Legal Costs Principles. These are contained in Schedule One and enumerate the various matters that shall be taken into account in the adjudication of disputed legal costs. The Bill also provides for the establishment of a publicly accessible Register of Determinations which will disclose the outcomes and reasons for decisions made by the Legal Costs Adjudicators.

The Bill will also introduce a system for processing complaints about excessive costs, which will be the subject of attempts, firstly, by the new Authority at informal resolution, but then escalating to formal resolution where alternative dispute resolution means do not succeed. This will be the first time that complaints about all legal practitioners will be dealt with by an independent statutory public authority.

I might add the Bill sets out a clear path to new Legal Partnerships involving barrister/barrister partnerships and barrister/solicitor partnerships, which will allow for such partnerships to open for business, in competition with the more traditional lawyer structures, by late next year. The new Legal Services Regulatory Authority is also tasked with carrying out public consultations and reporting to me as Minister with further legislative recommendations over its first four years in areas such as removing existing client money and direct access restrictions relating to barristers; examining entry and training requirements for the legal profession; unification of the two legal professions; and the opening of the market to multi-disciplinary practices.

Overall, the Bill seeks to achieve greater flexibility in the legal-services market, more competition and improved access to justice and will pave the way for the introduction of new business structures for legal practitioners. These combined measures will enable those availing of legal services, be they private consumers or enterprise, to identify costs more clearly, including in competition with other possible legal service providers.

Services for People with Disabilities

295. **Deputy Gabrielle McFadden** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality The supports available to assist a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43996/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy Aodhán Ó Riordáin): On Friday 2 October, I published a Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities. The Strategy sets out a ten-year approach to ensuring that people with disabilities who are able to, and want to, work are supported and enabled to do so. The Strategy is a cross-government approach that brings together actions by different Departments and State agencies in a concerted effort to address the barriers and challenges that impact on employment of people with disabilities. In tandem with that, it seeks to ensure there will be joined-up services and supports at local level to support individuals on their journey into and in employment.

The Strategy's six strategic priorities are:

- Build skills, capacity and independence
- Provide bridges and supports into work
- Make work pay
- Promote job retention and re-entry to work
- Provide coordinated and seamless support
- Engage employers.

While I cannot comment on individual circumstances, I can confirm that the Strategy includes a range of practical measures to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities. For example, an employer help-line is being established by the National Disability Authority, there will be an increase in the public sector employment quota from 3% to 6% on a phased basis to 2024, and arrangements are being put in place for dedicated recruitment channels for people with disabilities. The implementation of the Strategy will be subject to regular monitoring, and there will be a review and renewal every three years.

Garda Resources

296. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if resources will be provided for two Garda Síochána patrol bicycles at a location (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43560/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I have asked the Garda authorities for the information requested and I will revert to the Deputy as soon as the information is to hand.

Garda Vetting Applications

297. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if she will expedite the Garda Síochána vetting process for a person (details supplied) in County Kerry, as the person's work opportunity will expire by 10 December 2015; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43565/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am informed by the

Garda Authorities that a vetting application in respect of the person to whom the Deputy refers was received by the Garda Central Vetting Unit on 12 November 2015. The application was processed and returned to the registered organisation on 25 November 2015. It would be advisable for the applicant to contact the registered organisation to ascertain the current position.

Garda Station Refurbishment

298. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if she will provide funding for the refurbishment of male and female toilet facilities at Coolock Garda Síochána station in Dublin 5; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43568/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The programme of replacement and refurbishment of Garda accommodation around the country is progressed by the Garda authorities working in close co-operation with the Office of Public Works (OPW), which has the responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation.

I am advised by the Commissioner that the male and female toilets at Coolock Garda Station were refurbished in 2014.

Garda Resources

299. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if she will provide funding for the purchase of extra helicopters or aircraft for the Garda air support unit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43569/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised by the Commissioner that the Garda Air Support Unit currently consists of a fixed wing Defender aircraft and two EC135T2 helicopters. Earlier this year I secured an additional €1.8 million in capital funding for the replacement and upgrade of equipment on the Defender aircraft. The question of the replacement of the Defender aircraft as it nears the end of its estimated lifetime in a number of years time is under consideration by An Garda Síochána and my Department.

Ministerial Meetings

300. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of meetings requested by private external lobby groups and the number of meetings held, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43603/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I wish to advise the Deputy that in the time available to do so it has not been possible to gather all the information requested. I will contact the Deputy directly when the information comes to hand.

Departmental Expenditure

301. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality her Department's photography costs since she came into office, inclusive of costs incurred from use of the ministerial allowance by year in tabular form; the occasions for which photographers were booked; the photographers used; the costs associated with each occasion; the policy in place regarding the booking of photographers; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43635/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The total photography costs paid for my Department from the date of my appointment as Minister on the 8th May 2014 to 30th Nov 2015 are €1,776.12.

I can inform the Deputy that photographic services are only used by my Department where necessary and consideration is always given to the costs involved when sourcing such services. A tender framework is in place and used to procure these services when required.

The list of occasions when photographers were engaged and the associated costs are as follows:

	Photographer	Cost
Appointment of Chief Executive Designate to Charities Regulatory Authority	Maxwell Photography Ltd	€123.00
First Board Meeting of the Charities Regulatory Authority	Maxwell Photography Ltd	€275.52
Promote safety on Fireworks Night	Maxwell Photography Ltd	€154.98
subtotal May to December 2014		€553.50
International Women's Day	Maxwell Photography Ltd	€120.54
Website and other Department publications	Maxwell Photography Ltd	€516.60
Website and other Department publications	Maxwell Photography Ltd	€585.48
subtotal January to November 2015		€1,222.62
Total		€1,776.12

Public Relations Contracts Data

302. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality her Department's use of external public relations firms since she came into office, by year in tabular form; the uses of these firms and the policy regarding employing them; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43651/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department has not incurred any costs in relation to the provision of public relations services from the date of my appointment on 8th May 2014 up to a current date.

It is my Department's policy to use in house resources as much as possible and to restrict the use of external groups to a minimum.

Consultancy Contracts Data

303. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reports she commissioned from external consultants since March 2011, by year, title, cost, date published and company, in tabular form. [43667/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I wish to advise the Deputy that in the time available to do so it has not been possible to gather all the information requested. I will contact the Deputy directly when the information comes to hand.

Ministerial Advisers Data

304. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of special advisers on her staff and their yearly salary, from 2011 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43683/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I was appointed as Minister for Justice and Equality in May 2014 and, from that date, three special advisers were employed, two of whom job shared and one other engaged on a full time basis. This was the equivalent of two posts paid at the Principal Officer standard scale (on a pro-rata basis). Since May of this year two advisers work on a full time work pattern. My predecessor, Alan Shatter T.D., made two special advisor appointments. These staff served between 2011 and 2014.

The following table sets out the relevant salary scales applicable.

	PPC (Full PRSI) Special Advisor Salary Scale	Non-PPC (Modified PSRI) Special Advisor Salary Scale
1 July 2013 (current rate)	€79,401 - €97,194	€75,647 - €92,550
1 January 2010	€84,132 - €103,472	€80,051 - €98,424

Court Procedures

305. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality how persons can obtain a digital recording of their court case; and the cost of same. [43720/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy will be aware the courts are, subject only to the Constitution and the law, independent in the exercise of their judicial functions, and the conduct of any case is a matter entirely for the presiding judge.

All Court records, including recordings of court proceedings, are under the control of the presiding Judge, as provided for in section 65(3) of the Court Officers Act, 1926. The procedures whereby parties or other persons wishing to have access to records of court proceedings, including audio recordings, are set out in the relevant Rules of the District Court, Circuit Court and Superior Courts (S.I. Numbers 99/2013, 100/2013 and 101/2013) that came into effect on 8 April 2013. The instruments also set out the terms on which such access may be granted. A party to a case may apply to the court to access the recording. However, the granting of access and the terms under which such access is granted is a matter for the court. In common with all court rules these instruments are available on the Courts Service website.

Where the presiding Judge authorises the release of the audio record, there is no cost to the applicant, but if the Judge authorises the release of a transcript of the record the applicant is required to pay the service provider for the transcript and the charge for that is based on the word count of the transcript.

Independent Review Mechanism

306. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of cases that were before the independent review mechanism, the number where further action was recommended, where no further action was recommended and where no response issued; the number of persons who were replied to, when the outstanding cases will be completed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43728/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Deputy is referring to the mechanism established for the independent review of certain allegations of Garda misconduct, or inadequacies in the investigation of certain allegations, which have been made to me as Minister for Justice and Equality, or the Taoiseach with a view to determining to what extent and in what manner further action may be required in each case. A panel consisting of two senior and five junior counsel was established for that purpose.

The Panel has provided recommendations to me in all 320 cases submitted to them and has therefore largely concluded its work. The issuing of notification letters to complainants commenced on 29 June. To date, 298 complainants have been notified of the outcome of the review of their cases. Letters will continue to issue to all complainants, until the process is completed which I expect will be very shortly as we are nearing the end of the process.

As I've stated before, I will make a comprehensive statement on all matters relating to the process once it is completed, including an overview of the outcomes of cases. I have also asked counsel to produce a general overview report on the issues and trends which featured in this process.

Crime Data

307. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prosecutions handed down for possession of illegal drugs in the BMW region from 2009 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43853/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Central Statistics Office (CSO), as the national statistical agency, is responsible for the publication of recorded crime statistics.

I have requested the CSO to provide the available information directly to the Deputy.

Prison Staff

308. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the Prison Service's protocols regarding the dismissal of a prison officer under medical care due to post-traumatic stress incurred in the line of duty; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43893/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am informed by the Director General of the Irish Prison Service that dismissals from the prison service are governed by the Civil Service Regulation Acts.

If the Deputy would like to provide further details of a particular case I will certainly endeavour to provide a comprehensive response. However, I can state that the Irish Prison Service receives advice on the health and welfare of staff members when and where necessary from the Civil Service Occupational Health Department (Chief Medical Officer), and are guided and informed by his recommendations in this regard.

Officers must be certified by the Civil Service Chief Medical Officer to retire on ill health grounds.

Prison Accommodation Provision

309. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality how many places are available in prisons here for people with a physical disability; if the Prison Service sought quotations in 2015 for the conversion of prison cells and the cost of converting suitable prison accommodation to make it suitable for persons with a physical disability; the yearly cost of retaining persons with a physical disability under house arrest; the number of persons with a disability who have been turned away from prisons in the past five years due to insufficient facilities, resulting in them serving their sentence in their home; the number of people currently serving prison sentences at home, the nature of the offences and the cost, by county; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43904/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I wish to advise the Deputy that there are places available in prisons for people with a physical disability. There are currently 16 adapted cells available throughout the prison estate with a further two coming on stream with the opening of the new Cork Prison in early 2016. In addition the original design of the Dochas Centre lends itself to disabled use with minor adjustments if required. Disabled cells put into new prison accommodation wings are priced as part of an overall refurbishment and as such do not have any unit cost recorded.

However prison is not a suitable environment for persons with certain medical conditions and/or certain severe disabilities.

The Irish Prison Service provide a Primary Care Service for all prisoners in their charge, and all efforts are made to meet the needs of all prisoners. When medical requirements or the severity of the disability are such that medical advice is that prison is not a suitable environment, alternatives such as release to an appropriate medical facility, or to another more suitably environment are considered. The statutory basis for transferring such persons to a non prison environment is the Criminal Justice Act 1960 as amended. That provision allows conditions to be imposed including conditions on where a person may be. Such persons may be subject to supervision or not, depending on the circumstances. A person who breaches a condition is deemed to be unlawfully at large. I am not in a position at present to give all the detailed information sought by the Deputy but I can say that on 7 December, there were 429 prisoners serving their sentence in the community, the majority of whom will be living at home. The majority of these would not have been released from prison due to a physical disability or medical condition.

Asylum Seeker Accommodation

310. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if 183 male asylum seekers are to be accommodated in Ballybunion in County Kerry; the timeframe for this; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43909/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): On 31 July 2015, RIA, the Reception and Integration Agency of my Department, advertised for Expressions of Interest from persons interested in providing accommodation for persons in the protection process.

On foot of this advertisement, RIA received numerous responses including one from a premises in the Ballybunion area. For a number of reasons this premises has proven to be unsuitable

and will not be utilised by RIA at this time.

Garda Resources

311. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if she will provide increased resources in County Longford and in County Westmeath for An Garda Síochána to deal with rural crime; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43944/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the distribution of resources, among the Garda Regions, Divisions, and Districts. Garda management keep this distribution under continuing review taking into account crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the best possible use is made of these resources.

I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that as of the 31 October 2015, the latest date for which figures are readily available, there were 291 members, 12 Reserves, 24 civilians assigned to the Roscommon/Longford Division with 245 members, 23 Reserves, 21 civilians allocated to the Westmeath Division.

I am further informed that there are 47 vehicles allocated to the Roscommon/Longford Division, 11 of which were allocated in 2015 and that there are 51 vehicles assigned to the Westmeath Division, 11 of which were also allocated in 2015.

This Government is committed to ensuring that An Garda Síochána has the capacity to provide effective, visible policing throughout the country. A crucial element of this strategy is to have ongoing seamless recruitment to renew An Garda Síochána. With this in mind Budget 2016 made provision for the recruitment of 600 new Gardaí next year bringing to 1,150 the number of new Gardaí that will be recruited since the reopening of the Garda College in Templemore in September 2014. So far 295 of those new recruits are fully attested 5 of which were assigned to the Westmeath Division and are on the ground in the community.

The 2016 Budget allocation of €1.5 billion for An Garda Síochána includes over €67 million in additional funding which will, in addition to the recruitment of new trainee Gardaí, also provide additional funding for Garda Surveillance, special operations and targeted, intelligence-led policing. This additional recruitment and budget allocation builds on the current high level of investment in Garda vehicles. We have invested over €34 million in new Garda vehicles since 2012 with over 640 new vehicles coming on stream in 2015, ranging from more Garda patrol cars to high-powered vehicles for armed units. The Government's Capital Plan 2016-2021 provides for a further €46 million of investment in vehicles as well as an additional €200 million for Information and Communications Technology which will allow An Garda Síochána to deploy the latest cutting edge technologies in the fight against crime. We are also investing in airborne surveillance. Taken together, this step-change in investment in policing will ensure that the Gardaí can be mobile, visible and responsive, on the roads and in the community. This Government is committed to ensuring that An Garda Síochána has the capacity to provide effective, visible policing throughout the country.

The recently announced Operation Thor builds on previous and current Garda operations to tackle crime, particularly burglaries the number of which, as we know, increase with the advent of the long winter nights, in both urban and rural communities nationwide. In excess of €5 million is being committed to support Operation Thor which entails a broad range of activities to tackle burglars, organised crime gangs and prolific offenders as well as working with communities to prevent crime. These activities include: additional high-visibility patrols in identified

burglary hot-spots; increased use of checkpoints to tackle the criminal gangs using the national road network; the use of new high powered vehicles by the armed Regional Response Units; efforts to disrupt the stolen goods market; programmes to help reduce re-offending by prolific offenders; a high-profile national crime prevention awareness campaign, and targeted crime prevention advice for local communities and enhanced supports for victims.

I am confident that this comprehensive operation by An Garda Síochána, supported by Government investment in Garda resources and personnel, will disrupt the activities of burglars, organised crime gangs and prolific offenders and will improve the safety of all our communities across the country.

Garda Strength

312. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality The number of members of An Garda Síochána serving in the Fermoy district of County Cork in each of the years 2010 to date; the level of urban and rural crime in this area; how she will address this crisis; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43961/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy will appreciate the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the distribution of personnel among the Garda Regions, Divisions, and Districts.

In regard to the deployment of Garda personnel, a distribution model is used which takes into account all relevant factors including population, crime trends and as the policing needs of each individual Division dictates. It is the responsibility of the Divisional Officer to allocate personnel within his/her Division.

I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that Fermoy District forms part of the Cork North Garda Division and that as of the 31 October 2015, the latest date for which figures are readily available, there were a total of 298 members assigned to the Division. Of these 85 members are attached to Fermoy District supported by 7 Garda Reserves and 7 civilians. The following table sets out the Garda strength in the Fermoy District on the 31 December 2010 - 2014 and on the 31 October 2015.

Fermoy District	Strength
31 December 2010	90
31 December 2011	86
31 December 2012	88
31 December 2013	86
31 December 2014	83
31 October 2015	85

This Government is committed to ensuring that An Garda Síochána has the capacity to provide effective, visible policing throughout the country. A crucial element of this strategy is to have ongoing seamless recruitment to renew An Garda Síochána. With this in mind Budget 2016 made provision for the recruitment of 600 new Gardaí next year bringing to 1,150 the number of new Gardaí that will be recruited since the reopening of the Garda College in Templemore in September 2014. So far 295 of those new recruits are fully attested are on the ground in the community nationwide.

The 2016 Budget allocation of €1.5 billion for An Garda Síochána includes over €67 million

in additional funding which will, in addition to the recruitment of new trainee Gardaí, also provide additional funding for Garda Surveillance, special operations and targeted, intelligence-led policing. This additional recruitment and budget allocation builds on the current high level of investment in Garda vehicles. We have invested over €34 million in new Garda vehicles since 2012 with over 640 new vehicles coming on stream in 2015, ranging from more Garda patrol cars to high-powered vehicles for armed units. The Government's Capital Plan 2016-2021 provides for a further €46 million of investment in vehicles as well as an additional €200 million for Information and Communications Technology which will allow An Garda Síochána to deploy the latest cutting edge technologies in the fight against crime. We are also investing in airborne surveillance. Taken together, this step-change in investment in policing will ensure that the Gardaí can be mobile, visible and responsive, on the roads and in the community.

The recently announced Operation Thor builds on previous and current Garda operations to tackle crime, particularly burglaries the number of which, as we know, increase with the advent of the long winter nights, in both urban and rural communities nationwide. In excess of €5 million is being committed to support Operation Thor which entails a broad range of activities to tackle burglars, organised crime gangs and prolific offenders as well as working with communities to prevent crime. These activities include: additional high-visibility patrols in identified burglary hot-spots; increased use of checkpoints to tackle the criminal gangs using the national road network; the use of new high powered vehicles by the armed Regional Response Units; efforts to disrupt the stolen goods market; programmes to help reduce re-offending by prolific offenders; a high-profile national crime prevention awareness campaign, and targeted crime prevention advice for local communities and enhanced supports for victims.

I am confident that this comprehensive operation by An Garda Síochána, supported by Government investment in Garda resources and personnel, will disrupt the activities of burglars, organised crime gangs and prolific offenders and will improve the safety of all our communities across the country.

Immigration Status

313. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status in determining an application for leave to remain in the State submitted in May 2012 by a person (details supplied) in Dublin 11; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43972/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the position remains the same as my reply to Parliamentary Question no. 84 of 23 September and no. 583 of 3 November 2015 that the person in question should be advised to contact the Residence Division, INIS regarding their current position. To date they have not done so.

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 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 Parliamentary Question 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.

Road Traffic Offences

314. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality why all fixed pen-

alty notices and the accompanying documentation are issued in Irish and English at the same time; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43976/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised that the format and content of Fixed Charge Notices and the accompanying documentation are set out by means of Statutory Instrument No. 333/2015 - Road Traffic (Fixed Charge Offences) (Prescribed Notice and Document) Regulations 2015. As the Deputy will appreciate, the Statutory Instrument in question, along with other road traffic legislation, falls within the responsibility of my colleague, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport.

Proposed Legislation

315. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the introduction of gaming legislation (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44027/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Gambling Control Bill will, when enacted, update all existing laws on the regulation of gambling, including betting and gaming (but excluding the National Lottery). It will provide for the licensing of all forms of on-line gambling.

The General Scheme of the Gambling Control Bill was published in July 2013. The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality provided its report on hearings in relation to the General Scheme in November 2013.

The Gambling Control Bill will confer responsibility for all regulatory matters on the Minister for Justice and Equality. The Minister's functions will include licensing, inspections and prosecutions, and it is envisaged that these functions will be carried out by a body located within my Department. The Scheme provides for a dedicated inspectorate to ensure compliance by licence holders with the terms of their licences and with the new legislation generally.

It is the intention to proceed with this legislation at the earliest feasible opportunity and I expect that substantial progress will be made on this in 2016.

Legislative Measures

316. **Deputy Derek Nolan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if all written submissions made to the justice committee on the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill 2015 were considered in full; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44091/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): A wide range of submissions were considered during the preparation and drafting of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill. These included submissions which I, and my Department, received directly as well as those received via Oireachtas Committees including the Joint Committee on Justice, Equality and Defence. If there are any further submissions which the Deputy would like considered, they can be forwarded to me. I also fully expect the proposals contained in the Bill to be substantially discussed during the course of its passage through the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Direct Provision Expenditure

317. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 105 of 1 December 2015, if she keeps a readily available breakdown of the amounts paid to companies contracted to run State-owned direct provision centres; the parliamentary and public oversight mechanisms in place to monitor these multi-million euro contracts; and her plans to remedy this situation. [44104/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I refer the Deputy to my response to Parliamentary Question 105.

The Annual Reports 2007-2014 of the Reception & Integration Agency (RIA) provide a breakdown of yearly expenditure into the broad headings of 'Commercial', 'State-owned', 'Self-catering', 'Additional Costs', 'Transport' and 'Miscellaneous'. These Annual Reports are published on RIA's website - www.ria.gov.ie

Payments in respect of these contracts - as is the case of all payments made by my Department - are subject to oversight by senior management in RIA, the Department's Internal Audit Unit and the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG).

A Prior Indicative Notice (PIN) for an open competitive tender competition for the management and provision of services at State-owned centres was published on 15 October 2015. That competition is expected to begin in the near future. RIA is currently working with the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) on this matter. It would not be appropriate to publish any additional information that could compromise the integrity of that tendering process.

Direct Provision Expenditure

318. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amounts paid to the operators of Knockalisheen direct provision centre, by operator and by individual contract, from its first use as a direct provision centre to the present. [44105/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Parliamentary Question No. 105 of 1 December 2015.

The information in relation to State-owned centres is not readily available. The Deputy will be aware that the Annual Reports of the Reception and Integration Agency from 2007 to 2013 provide a breakdown of yearly expenditure into the broad headings of 'Commercial', 'State-owned', 'Self-catering', 'Additional Costs', 'Transport' and 'Miscellaneous'. These Annual Reports are published on RIA's website - www.ria.gov.ie

Tenders for the management of these centres have been published in the e-Tenders website and the OJEU since 2004. RIA is scheduled to re-tender for these particular services shortly and is currently working with the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) on this matter. It would not be appropriate to publish any additional information that could compromise the integrity of that tendering process.

Garda Deployment

319. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality her plans to increase the number of gardaí attached to each Garda public order unit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44204/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy will ap-

preciate, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the distribution of personnel, among the Garda Regions, Divisions, and Districts. Garda management keep this distribution under continuing review taking into account crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the best possible use is made of these resources.

I have requested the information sought from the Garda Commissioner and will respond to the Deputy on receipt of same.

Bench Warrants

320. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of bench warrants outstanding in the Garda R district as of 30 November 2015; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44205/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am informed by the Garda authorities that, as of 3 December 2015, there are 1,590 Bench Warrants outstanding in the Coolock (R) Garda District. I am advised that as PULSE is a live database it is not possible to provide the number of outstanding warrants for a date in the past.

As the Deputy will appreciate, difficulties in relation to the execution of warrants are a long standing issue for many police forces around the world. In this regard, An Garda Síochána gives priority to the execution of warrants relating to serious crimes. A very welcome analysis of this issue was provided by the Garda Síochána Inspectorate in their report on Crime Investigation of November 2014. The Inspectorate Report acknowledges the difficulties often faced by Gardaí in pursuing the execution of warrants but it also points to deficiencies in the current systems, some of which are tied to the available technology for recording and monitoring information on warrants. In this regard the Government is providing a very important investment in new Garda technology, information systems and vehicles under the Capital Plan 2016-2021, amounting to €205m over the life of the Plan.

In addition, as part of the overall strategic transformation programme underway in An Garda Síochána, a Warrants Review Group has been working on means of better managing and enforcing warrants taking on board the Inspectorate's analysis. A number of improvements have been put in place, including greater use of clerical support staff which helps to free up Gardaí to concentrate on the execution as opposed to the administration of warrants. I am advised that the warrants issue is a recurring agenda item at Garda Senior Management Meetings, as well as regional performance and accountability meetings, to ensure that the situation is continually monitored.

Garda Investigations

321. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality her views on a matter (details supplied) regarding a Garda investigation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44214/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The particular case to which the Deputy refers is amongst those which was considered under the mechanism established for the independent review of certain allegations of Garda misconduct, or inadequacies in the investigation of certain allegations, which have been made to me as Minister for Justice and Equality, or the Taoiseach, or other public representatives with a view to determining to what extent and in what manner further action may be required in each case. A panel consisting of

two Senior and five Junior Counsel was established for the purpose, all selected on the basis of their experience of the criminal justice system.

The Panel has provided recommendations to me in all 320 cases submitted to them and has therefore largely concluded its work. To date, 298 complainants, including the case referred to by the Deputy, have been notified of the outcome of the review of their cases. Letters will continue to issue to all complainants, until the process is completed which I expect will be very shortly as we are nearing the end of the process.

I understand that some complainants may not be satisfied with the outcome of the review of their complaint. The crucial point, however, is that every case has been reviewed by independent counsel, who will have made an objective recommendation to me.

While it would not be appropriate for me to comment on individual cases, I will make a comprehensive statement on all matters relating to the process once it is completed, including an overview of the outcomes of cases. I have also asked counsel to produce a general overview report on the issues and trends which featured in this process.

Legislative Measures

322. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality her views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding the International Protection Bill 2015; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44215/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I thank the Deputy for raising the International Protection Bill 2015 which will be before both the Seanad and the Dáil this week. It is the Government's intention that the Bill be completed for enactment before the end of this year. The Scheme of the Bill, which was published by the Government last March, has also been considered for pre-legislative scrutiny by the Joint Oireachtas Committee of Justice, Defence and Equality, which issued an interim report in July.

The progress of the Bill before the Houses coincides in a very practical way with the progress being made in advancing the recommendations and findings of the Report of the Working Group on the Protection Process. The fundamental premise of the Working Group's deliberations was that the length of stay applicants have in Direct Provision is unacceptable. The Government, in addressing this matter, has introduced the International Protection Bill, called for by the Working Group, to have a new single application procedure which should ensure that delays are radically reduced, bringing certainty and timely decisions to those who qualify for international protection. In drafting the Bill, the Government was mindful of the specific recommendations of the Working Group which dealt with improvements in the protection process. This Bill properly reflects the intent of 26 of the Working Group recommendations and as such is the single biggest response by Government to date. The introduction of this Bill to bring Irish asylum application procedures in line with other European States as called for in the Report, is the single most important reform in this area.

Independent Review Mechanism

323. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality her views on a matter (details supplied) regarding the independent review mechanism into Garda malpractice; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44216/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The particular case to which the Deputy refers is amongst those considered under the mechanism established for the independent review of certain allegations of Garda misconduct, or inadequacies in the investigation of certain allegations, which have been made to me as Minister for Justice and Equality, or the Taoiseach, or other public representatives with a view to determining to what extent and in what manner further action may be required in each case. A panel consisting of two Senior and five Junior Counsel was established for the purpose, all selected on the basis of their experience of the criminal justice system.

The Panel has provided recommendations to me in all 320 cases submitted to them and has therefore largely concluded its work. I am mindful that all complainants are anxious to know the outcome of the review of their case and every effort is being made to conclude the process. In each case a submission will be prepared. Mr Justice Roderick Murphy will review the summary of the conclusion and the letter of notification drafted to ensure that they are a fair and accurate reflection of the recommendation.

The issuing of notification letters to complainants commenced on 29 June. To date, 298 complainants have been notified of the outcome of the review of their cases. Letters will continue to issue to all complainants, including the case referred to by the Deputy, until the process is completed.

I have previously assured Deputies that where further investigation is recommended by the review then that will occur. It is my intention, on the completion of the process, to make a comprehensive statement on all the actions I have decided to take in line with the recommendations of counsel. I understand that the general overview report from senior counsel of the panel is currently being finalised. Once I have had an opportunity to consider it, I intend to publish it.

Asylum Seeker Accommodation

324. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if it is good practice to have a consultation process with locals in place prior to introducing asylum seekers and refugees into an area, if consultation is required by legislation and the time period for the it to take place prior to the introduction of the asylum seekers and refugees. [44232/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): There is no legislative requirement setting out any consultation process that may be used by RIA prior to the establishment of accommodation centres for those in need of international protection.

On 31 July 2015 RIA published a call for expressions of interest from persons or companies wishing to provide accommodation and related services.

RIA have analysed the responses and have visited many of the centres on offer to assess their suitability for their needs and the needs of potential residents. For operational and commercially confidential reasons details of these visits and the discussions with the owners (who are potential contractors) are not disclosed to any other Department, agency or local community representatives.

Any potential centre is assessed from a number of perspectives including access to local amenities and the provision of services.

This model and approach has been operated by RIA since its establishment and has proven to be extremely successful in the establishment of accommodation centres to date. No person seeking accommodation has ever been left without the provision of that service. Communities

across the country have welcomed the establishment of these centres and have been engaged in the provision of local integration services to residents in those centres. I am confident that people in Ireland will continue to welcome into their communities those who are the most vulnerable and most in need of protection.

I am advised that it is the intention of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme to adopt broadly the same approach when establishing Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROCs).

Refugee Data

325. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if an analysis of an area is conducted on medical services, public transport, potential isolation and the percentage change in the population prior to the introduction of refugees and asylum seekers into that area and if due consideration should be given to such an analysis. [44233/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Reception & Integration Agency (RIA) is responsible for the accommodation of asylum seekers while their application for protection is being processed. RIA also procures suitable premises on behalf of the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration for the accommodation of refugees for approximately 8-10 weeks when they first arrive in the State and before they move to their permanent homes in locations throughout the State. Any potential centre is assessed from a number of perspectives including access to local amenities and the provision of services.

The numbers of persons making application for asylum has risen in recent years as shown in the following table:

Year	Applications	% increase on previous year
2013	946	- 10.5%
2014	1448	+ 53%

The current projections for applications in 2015 are approximately 3,330. This figure represents an increase of 130% on 2014 applications and over 252% increase on 2013.

RIA monitors its accommodation requirements on an ongoing basis and, to ensure best value for money, operates a 'just in time' system of contracting-in accommodation as required.

This model and approach has been operated by RIA since its establishment and has proven to be extremely successful in the establishment of accommodation centres to date. No person seeking accommodation has ever been left without the provision of that service. Communities across the country have welcomed the establishment of these centres and have been engaged in the provision of local integration services to residents in those centres. I am confident that people in Ireland will continue to welcome into their communities those who are the most vulnerable and most in need of protection.

It is my understanding that the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP), in establishing Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROCs) will also take account of a range of pertinent factors in determining the suitability or otherwise of a premises as a possible EROC. Under the relevant EU measures Ireland has agreed to relocate approximately 2,600 persons to Ireland over a two year period. The IRPP are cognisant of the fact that this particular cohort of persons are considered highly likely to obtain refugee status in a short period of time and will not be residing in EROCs for a lengthy period of time. Accordingly, some of the factors identified

by the Deputy are not as relevant for this group of persons. The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, together with colleagues in the City and County Managers Association, are considering how best to address the accommodation needs of this cohort once they obtain refugee status and are dispersed across the community, again taking account of a range of relevant factors. Their report is not yet finalised but they are expected to make a report in due course to the Taskforce established by the Government to oversee the IRPP.

Garda Strength

326. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of increasing the strength of An Garda Síochána to 15,000, 15,500 and 16,000; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44239/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am informed by the Garda authorities that payroll costs for new Garda recruits include a basic allowance of €184 per week plus a living allowance of €77.92. After 32 weeks of training, Garda recruits are attested and move on to the first point of the Garda pay scale €23,171 rising to a maximum of €45,793 per annum after 19 years. They may also qualify for other allowances depending on their assignments.

The number of members in An Garda Síochána as of 31 October was 12,866. Based on this figure, the year one cost of increasing the strength of the force to 15,000, 15,500 and 16,000 (assuming a commencement date of 1 January) is approximately €40 million, €49.5 million and €59 million respectively. It should be noted that these costs reflect the pre and post attestation payroll costs for the first year. These figures include Employer's PRSI but exclude any allowances which the recruits may qualify for following attestation. Moreover the annual cost will obviously increase as the members' move up the Garda pay scale each year.

I am further informed that the cost of training recruits is subsumed into the overall training costs of the Garda College and is not easily identifiable. The total cost of running the Garda College in 2014 was approximately €14m, which includes the salary costs of all College personnel.

Garda Strength

327. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of increasing the strength An Garda Síochána reserve to 2,500; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44240/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that the annual allowance payable to Reserve Gardaí as a contribution towards their expenses is set at €1,000 per annum. In addition, the uniform cost per Reserve Garda is in the region of €1,300. As such the cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve to 2,500 from the current figure of 978 attested Reserve Gardaí (plus a further 21 at various stages of training) is approximately €3.5 million.

Garda Station Closures

328. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda Síochána stations closed and sold from 2011 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44241/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The formulation of proposals in relation to the opening and closing of Garda Stations is a matter, in the first instance, for the Garda Commissioner in the context of annual policing plans, as provided for in section 22 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005.

The Garda District and Station Rationalisation Programme implemented in An Garda Síochána during 2012 and 2013 resulted in the closure of 39 Garda stations in 2012 and 100 Garda stations in 2013. I am advised by An Garda Síochána that under the Policing Plan 2015, one station in Co. Clare was closed earlier this year, however, another local station was reopened. The Garda Station at Lisseycasey was closed due to the expiry of its lease and its policing functions were transferred to the reopened Garda Station at Kilmihil, approximately 12km away. I am advised that Kilmihil Station was a new build and originally constructed as a purpose built Garda Station. Its reopening and use facilitated the Office of Public Works in not having to enter into another lease with the associated financial implications.

The Rationalisation Programme was based on a review of the Garda Station Network by Garda management which concluded in relation to certain stations, many of which were only open part-time and manned by a single Garda, that resources could be better deployed and more effectively used on the front line if those stations no longer had to be staffed and maintained. In reaching these conclusions, Garda management reviewed all aspects of the Garda Síochána policing model, including the deployment of personnel, the utilisation of modern technologies and the overall operation of Garda stations. The Programme supports the provision of a modern 21st century policing service for both urban and rural areas and allows front line Gardaí to be managed and deployed with greater mobility, greater flexibility, and in a more focused fashion, particularly with regard to various targeted police operations. As a result of the Programme, communities have benefitted from increased Garda visibility and increased patrolling hours which has enabled An Garda Síochána to deliver an improved policing service to the public.

The Garda Stations which have been closed were returned to, and are now under the control of, the Office of Public Works (OPW). The future use of such properties is a matter for the OPW as the owners of the properties.

Prisoner Data

329. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the average cost of the detention of a prisoner within the prison system; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44242/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Irish Prison Service calculates the average annual cost of an available staffed prison space for inclusion in the Annual Report. For 2014, the latest year for which a figure is available, the cost was €68,959.

Prisoner Data

330. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the average number of prisoners detained within the prison system in each year from 2010 to date in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44243/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table. Figures are taken from the Annual Reports for the Irish Prison Service.

Year	Daily average number of persons in custody
2015 (Up to and including 30th November 2015)	3,726
2014	3,916
2013	4,158
2012	4,318
2011	4,390
2010	4,290

As outlined in the Irish Prison Service Three Year Strategic Plan 2012 - 2015, it is intended to align the bed capacity of our prisons with the guidelines laid down by the Inspector of Prisons, in so far as this is compatible with public safety and the integrity of the criminal justice system. This has been completed for 9 out of the 14 prisons in the State. The number in custody on 7 December (3,777) represented 93% of the Inspector of Prisons recommended total of 3,977.

The Deputy will be aware that the average number of prisoners in custody in Ireland rose from 3,321 during 2007 to 4,318 during 2012, an increase of over 30%. Likewise the total number of committals to prison also rose sharply during the same period, from 11,934 in 2007 to 17,026 in 2012 – an increase of over 43%.

2013 saw the first significant decrease in prison numbers since 2007. There were 15,735 committals to prison in 2013 which was a decrease of 7.6% on the 2012 figure. The overall daily average number of prisoners in custody has also dropped in recent years. The average number in custody for 2014 was 3,916 a reduction of 10.8% on the 2011 average of 4,390.

The Deputy may wish to note that the number in custody reached a peak of 4,621 on 23rd February 2011. On 7 December 2015 there are 904 less prisoners in custody which represents a decrease of 19%.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Irish Prison Service employs a wide range of approaches in addressing prisoners offending behaviours. While it is important to note that the best indication of future offending are the age, gender, offence type and the criminal history of the individual, there are also dynamic factors that the prisons and other agencies can address. These include employment status, education level, family situation and drug and addiction issues. In addition there are more complex psychological factors that are associated with offending that can also be addressed by the prison system.

To address these issues the Irish Prison Service has rolled out Integrated Sentence Management (ISM) across all Prisons. This is a prisoner-centred, multidisciplinary approach to working with prisoners with provision for initial assessment, goal setting and periodic review to measure progress.

Prisoner rehabilitation involves significant multidimensional input by a diverse range of general and specialist services provided both by the Irish Prison Service and in-reaching statutory and non-statutory services. Amongst these are healthcare, psychiatric, psychological, educational, vocational, counselling, welfare and spiritual services. These services are important in addressing offending behaviour, drug and alcohol addiction, missed educational and vocational opportunities, anger management, and self management in the interest of encouraging positive personal development in prisoners, and preparing them for re-integration and resettlement on release from custody.

Since 2011, the Irish Prison Service has introduced a number of new schemes to specifically

aid prisoner reintegration and reduce re-offending. The Community Return Scheme is an initiative whereby carefully selected prisoners, serving sentences between 1 year and 8 years, can be granted reviewable temporary release coupled with a requirement to do community service work such as painting, gardening or graffiti removal in a supervised group setting. The type of work involved is intended to assist the community and the scheme is involved with a large number of charitable organisations and local community groups.

A recent report on the Community Return Scheme has showed that there were 232 persons released in the first year of the Scheme, from October 2011 to end September 2012. Of this group the report highlighted that as at the end of year 2013, 91% of those involved in the Scheme had not returned to custody.

In addition to Community Return, a Community Support Scheme has also been introduced to reduce recidivism rates of short term prisoners by arranging for additional support structures post release and by providing for a more structured form of temporary release.

The Central Statistics Office has published two recidivism studies, for 2007 and 2008, the latter of which shows an overall reduction in recidivism of 4.3% from the previous year. The latest recidivism study, for 2009, will be published on 14 December 2015. The publication of these recidivism studies and of future studies allows the Irish Prison Service access to a comprehensive bank of data in relation to the rate of recidivism among ex-prisoners. This will help to inform future policy on the management of offenders and will facilitate the formulation of new strategies aimed at reducing recidivism

The Deputy will also be aware that I have recently launched the Joint Agency Response to Crime initiative (JARC), which aims to implement a multi-agency approach to the management of crime, to prioritise certain prolific offenders and to develop specific initiatives which will address their behaviour and reduce crime thereby increasing community safety.

Prison Accommodation Provision

331. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the capacity of the Prison Service; how this has changed over the past four years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44244/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that figures in relation to the prisoner population and capacity levels are published on their website www.irishprisons.ie on a daily basis. The Deputy should be aware that the overall bed capacity of the Irish Prison System is 4,116. On 4 December, 2015 there were 3,770 prisoners in custody. This represents a occupancy rate of 92 per cent.

On 4 December, 2011 the overall bed capacity of the Irish Prison Service was 4,480 and there were 4,252 prisoners in custody, representing a occupancy rate of 95 per cent.

Great strides have been made and continue to be made, to reduce the numbers in custody, to improve and modernise prison conditions, to increase the number of single cell accommodation and to eliminate slopping out.

I am advised by my officials that the modernisation project at Mountjoy prison is ongoing and nearing completion. Mountjoy Prison currently has a single cell policy and all prisoners have in cell sanitation facilities. In relation to Cork Prison, a new prison was constructed to replace the existing facility and this will become operational in early 2016. Planning is also advancing regarding the replacement of A & B Division in Limerick Prison.

It is intended as outlined in the Irish Prison Service Three Year Strategic Plan, to align the capacity of our prisons with the guidelines laid down by the Inspector of Prisons in 2014, in so far as this is compatible with public safety and the integrity of the criminal justice system.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Irish Prison Service employs a wide range of approaches in addressing prisoners offending behaviours. While it is important to note that the best indication of future offending are the age, gender, offence type and the criminal history of the individual, there are also dynamic factors that the prisons and other agencies can address. These include employment status, education level, family situation and drug and addiction issues. In addition there are more complex psychological factors that are associated with offending that can also be addressed by the prison system.

To address these issues the Irish Prison Service has rolled out Integrated Sentence Management (ISM) across all Prisons. This is a prisoner-centred, multidisciplinary approach to working with prisoners with provision for initial assessment, goal setting and periodic review to measure progress.

Prisoner rehabilitation involves significant multidimensional input by a diverse range of general and specialist services provided both by the Irish Prison Service and in-reaching statutory and non-statutory services. Amongst these are healthcare, psychiatric, psychological, educational, vocational, counselling, welfare and spiritual services. These services are important in addressing offending behaviour, drug and alcohol addiction, missed educational and vocational opportunities, anger management, and self management in the interest of encouraging positive personal development in prisoners, and preparing them for re-integration and resettlement on release from custody.

Since 2011, the Irish Prison Service has introduced a number of new schemes to specifically aid prisoner reintegration and reduce re-offending. The Community Return Scheme is an initiative whereby carefully selected prisoners, serving sentences between 1 year and 8 years, can be granted reviewable temporary release coupled with a requirement to do community service work such as painting, gardening or graffiti removal in a supervised group setting. The type of work involved is intended to assist the community and the scheme is involved with a large number of charitable organisations and local community groups.

A recent report on the Community Return Scheme has showed that there were 232 persons released in the first year of the Scheme, from October 2011 to end September 2012. Of this group the report highlighted that as at the end of year 2013, 91% of those involved in the Scheme had not returned to custody.

In addition to Community Return, a Community Support Scheme has also been introduced to reduce recidivism rates of short term prisoners by arranging for additional support structures post release and by providing for a more structured form of temporary release.

The Central Statistics Office has published two recidivism studies, for 2007 and 2008, the latter of which shows an overall reduction in recidivism of 4.3% from the previous year. The latest recidivism study, for 2009, will be published on 14 December 2015. The publication of these recidivism studies and of future studies allows the Irish Prison Service access to a comprehensive bank of data in relation to the rate of recidivism among ex-prisoners. This will help to inform future policy on the management of offenders and will facilitate the formulation of new strategies aimed at reducing recidivism

The Deputy will also be aware that I have recently launched the Joint Agency Response to Crime initiative (JARC), which aims to implement a multi-agency approach to the management of crime, to prioritise certain prolific offenders and to develop specific initiatives which will

address their behaviour and reduce crime thereby increasing community safety.

Garda Equipment

332. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the information technology budget allocated to An Garda Síochána in 2015 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44245/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Under the Garda Síochána Act 2005 the Garda Commissioner is responsible for controlling the general management and administration of the Service within the context of agreed annual policing plans. This includes the procurement and maintenance of various technologies utilised to manage the Service, and support front-line Gardaí and intelligence-led operations against organised crime.

In that context, the total amount allocated to ICT Subheads in the 2015 Garda Vote was €65.7m. A further €7m was allocated recently to allow work to commence on 3 new phases of the Major Investigations System this year and to meet other additional hardware requirements. Under the Government Capital Plan 2016-2021, an additional €205m has been provided towards a major investment programme in new technology and systems for An Garda Síochána. In addition, I secured additional capital funding of €4m for 2016 to allow Ireland to participate in the Schengen Information System (SIS II), a centralised secure database used by European countries for maintaining information (alerts) related to border security and law enforcement. In light of the recent terrorist attacks in Paris, I am determined to press ahead with the necessary steps to allow Ireland to participate fully in the Schengen Information System (SIS II) as quickly as possible. This will bring the total capital expenditure on the Garda ICT over the lifetime of the Plan to in excess of €330m which will allow An Garda Síochána to deploy the latest cutting edge technologies in the fight against crime.

Departmental Legal Costs

333. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the total cost to her Department and those under her aegis for the procurement of legal services in the State from 2011 to 2015 in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44577/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I wish to inform the Deputy that the total cost to my Department, and bodies under my aegis, for legal services in the State from 2011 to 2015, is contained in the following table:

-	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015 (end Nov)
Total Costs	€71.2m	€61.4m	€59.9m	€60.4m	€57.4m

Youth Cafés Expenditure

334. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of funding for a project (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43540/15]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): In recent years capital funding has been made available to my Department for the development of youth café facilities.

In 2013 a capital allocation of €1.5m was made available by my Department for the provision of new youth cafes. Pobal assisted my Department with the administration of the scheme. Some 95 applications were received and 30 proposals for new youth cafes around the country were approved for funding.

I am advised that an application was received in respect of a youth café in Monasterevin from Kildare Youth Services. However, the application was unsuccessful on this occasion as it did not achieve a sufficiently high score for inclusion in the final list of projects approved for funding. An application from County Kildare Youth Hub in Kildare Town was successful and has received a capital grant of €50,000 towards the cost of developing a new youth café facility. The group is working with Pobal to complete the youth café project.

Youth Cafés offer young people a safe, alcohol and drug free space, for recreation, non-formal learning and youth activities and they make an important contribution to facilities for young people at local level. Recent research undertaken by my Department indicates that there are now more than 150 youth cafés throughout the country. In the main, these have been developed, over the years, by local communities with the support of different funding sources.

While additional capital funding of €2.25m has been provided to my Department in Budget 2016, this funding is allocated, in the main, for small scale capital works, such as re-fits and accessibility improvements in the voluntary youth services funded under schemes administered by my Department.

My Department does not have available to it in 2016 a capital fund for the development of new youth cafés. The development of youth café facilities is a priority for my Department should further capital funding become available for these purposes in future years.

Ministerial Meetings

335. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of meetings requested by private external lobby groups and the number of meetings held in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43594/15]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): The information requested is contained in the following table.

Number of Meeting Requests	Number of Meetings held with Minister	Number of Meetings held with Officials of Department
6	0	1

Departmental Expenditure

336. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs his Department's photography costs since he came into office, inclusive of costs incurred from use of the ministerial allowance by year in tabular form; the occasions for which photographers were booked; the photographers used; the costs associated with each occasion; the policy in place regarding the booking of photographers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43626/15]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): Since coming to office, I have not used my Ministerial allowance for photography. The only photography costs incurred by my Department were the following:

The Comhairle na nÓg national showcase event at Croke Park on 20th November 2014. This biennial event included a celebration to mark the 25th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and was attended by the Taoiseach. The photographer was booked by Foróige but the cost of €522.75 was paid by my Department. A photographer was engaged for a Dáil na nÓg event on 27th November 2015. The company used was Maxwell Photography Limited, the cost was €424.35

My Department paid €90.08 to Fennell Photography with regard to the Mother and Baby Homes Commission on 12 February 2015.

Departmental Contracts

337. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs his Department's use of external public relations firms since he came into office by year in tabular form; the uses of these firms and the policy regarding employing them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43642/15]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): Since my coming to office my Department has not engaged any Public Relations firms.

Departmental Reports

338. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reports he commissioned from external consultants since March 2011 by year, title, cost, date published and company in tabular form [43658/15]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): In order to deliver key commitments in relation to children and young people and to put in place a unified framework of policy, legislation and provision across Government in respect of children and young people, it is at times necessary to commission reports and utilise expertise from a range of expert individuals and bodies. My Department ensures that all reports commissioned are of direct relevance to the operational and policy commitments of my Department.

I have set out below the full range of external consultant reports commissioned by my Department. Costs may include, where applicable, copy editing, design and other costs relating to publication. Separate material is provided in respect of the Growing Up in Ireland study.

Name of External Report	Date of Commission	Date/expected - date of Publication	Name of External Consultant	Cost of Report
Audit of Children and Young people's Participation in decision making in Ireland	November 2009	November 2011	Cnag ar an Doras and Sandra Roe (joint contract)	€19,890.42

Name of External Report	Date of Commission	Date/expected - date of Publication	Name of External Consultant	Cost of Report
National Consultation with Children Living in the Care of the State	November 2010	July 2011	Cnag ar an Doras	€25,610.00
Body Image Survey Report	March 2011	October 2011	Anam Cara	€6,800.00
Youth Work: A Systematic Map of the Research Literature	September 2011	June 2013	Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of (EPPI-Centre) London.	€67,000
Valuation report	November 2011	Internal use only	Elliott Fitzgerald Ltd.	€1,230.00
Needs Assessment for the Re-development of www.childrens-database.ie	December 2011	Internal use only	Centre for Effective Services	€18,400
Every Child a Home: A Review of the Implementation of the Youth Homelessness Strategy	December 2011	July 2013	Centre for Effective Services Penhouse Design Intacta Print Carole Devaney for proofing of report and of briefing note	€6,000 €5,522.70 €4,706.57 €1,360.00 Total: €17,589.27
Comhairle na nÓg and Garda Síochána survey on the Attitudes of Gardaí to Young People. Questionnaire for Gardaí and Young People	July 2012	Publication date to be finalised	Anam Cara	€7,650

Questions - Written Answers

Name of External Report	Date of Commission	Date/ expected - date of Publication	Name of External Consultant	Cost of Report
Public Knowledge and Attitudes Relating to Children's Rights, Welfare, Protection and Services	July 2012	Publication date to be finalised	Behaviour and Attitudes Qualitative Research – Group Facilitation Quantitative Research – Interviews Barometer Research	€42,864.98 €59,040.00 €1,107.00 Total:€103,011.98
Ireland's Consolidated 3rd and 4th Report to the United Nations Committee in the Rights of the Child	July 2012	July 2013	Ms. Carmel Corrigan – Drafting of Report Ms. Carol Devaney – Editing, Formatting and Indexing	€12,600 €4,760 Total:€17,360
Strategic Human Resources	December 2012	April 2013	Mazars	€20,602.50
Internal Audit Report: Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme Internal Audit Report: ICT Shared Services Arrangements	December 2012 December 2012	Internal Use Only Internal Use Only	Capita Business Services Ltd- Capita Business Services Ltd	Combined for both reports €23,803.00
Summary Report for Young Voices Have Your Say- Structured Dialogue	January 2013	March 2013	Cnag ar an Doras	€4,918.00
Care Issues Review	March 2013	Internal use only	Victor McElfatrick	€3,556.56
Report on Structural Damage	March 2013	Internal use only	Frontier Engineering Group Ltd.	€7,668.74
Staff Roster Review	April 2013	Internal use only	McGuinness Killen Partnership	€6,715.80
Role Review for Child & Family Agency	May 2013	November 2013	Mazars	€16,512.75
Care Issues Review	September 2013	Internal use only	Conal Devine & Associates	€13,636.21

Name of External Report	Date of Commission	Date/ expected - date of Publication	Name of External Consultant	Cost of Report
Internal Audit Report: Community Child-care Subvention/Childcare Education and Training Supports Programmes	January 2014	Internal Use Only	Capita Business Services Ltd	€8,200.00
Care Issues Review	February 2014	Internal use only	Kieran McGrath	€13,500
Policy Analysis and Development on Remission of Sentence	March 2014	Internal use only	Bramell Lane Ltd	€29,151
Land Valuation Report	August 2014	Internal use only	Lisney Chartered Surveyors	€2,152.50
Internal Audit Report: National Children's Detention Facility	October 2014	Internal use only	Capita Business Services	€12,623
Internal Audit Report: Programme Integration Platform (January 2015)	January 2015	Internal use only	Capita Business Services	€16,858
Internal Audit Report: Programme Integration Platform (June 2015)	November 2014	Internal Use Only	Capita Business Services	€15,675
Report on Ireland's Implementation of EU Youth Strategy	November 2014	Late 2015	Carmel Corrigan	€6,300
Report of the involvement of children and young people in the recruitment of the Ombudsman for Children	March 2015	December 2015	Sandra Roe	€6,000

Questions - Written Answers

Name of External Report	Date of Commission	Date/ expected - date of Publication	Name of External Consultant	Cost of Report
“Becoming an Active Player” - Report on meeting of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures Advisory Council	December 2014	Internal use only	The Change Exploratory Ltd.	€1,600
A report of consultations with children and young people for Ireland 2016	May 2015	March 2016	Ursula Kelly - UCC	€9,827.70
Report of the process of consulting children and young people living in Direct Provision	July 2015	January 2016	Ursula Kelly - UCC	€9,948
Audit of education and training on children’s rights and children’s and young people’s participation in decision-making in all third level and further education programmes and continuing professional development programmes in Ireland	September 2015	March 2016	Ursula Kelly - UCC	€19,978
Report of the workshop discussions at Dáil na nÓg 2015	October 2015	January 2016	Sandra Roe	€4,000
Updating the Comhairle na nÓg Toolkit	November 2015	June 2016	Cnag ar an Doras	Per diem rate –number of days to be determined

Growing Up in Ireland

In 2006 a Contract to carry out the first phase the National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland was awarded by the Department of Health and Children (through the Office of the Min-

ister For Children & Youth Affairs) to a consortium comprising of the ESRI and the Children's Research Centre at TCD. Since then the Study has adopted the working title of 'Growing Up in Ireland'. Following another public procurement competition a contract was awarded to the ESRI/TCD consortium to carry out the second phase of the study over the period 2015-2019. As part of the overall contracts the ESRI/TCD are required to prepare and publish reports from time to time. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs meets the costs of printing these reports and since this Department was established in June 2011 the total cost of printing is €31,967.14.

Ministerial Advisers Data

339. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of special advisers on his staff and their yearly salary, from 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43674/15]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table. It should be noted that, since its establishment in June 2011, there have been three Ministers appointed to this Department, each with their own personal staff. In accordance with the Department of Finance and Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Guidelines on Staffing of Ministerial Offices, a total of two whole time equivalent Special Advisers were appointed to each serving Minister.

The information provided in the following table reflects worksharing arrangements, staff changes and the changes of Ministers and their Special Advisers in 2014.

Year	Number of Special Advisers	Total Salary (including Employers PRSI)
2011	3	€109,955
2012	3	€179,916
2013	4	€160,010
2014	7	€155,407
2015	2	€193,138

Child and Family Agency Services

340. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if he will request Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, to meet with representatives of the Target project in Donaghmede in Dublin 13 to discuss the restoration of funding for their counselling services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43811/15]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): Target Ltd. is based in St. Kevin's National School, Donaghmede, Dublin 13 and receives funding from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency for the following activities:

- Marriage/Couple Counselling
- Child Counselling
- Bereavement Counselling
- Bereavement Support

Tusla values the work of counselling organisations and recognises the positive contribution that Target Ltd. makes in supporting families and local communities.

Target Ltd. received funding of €49,600 from Tusla in 2015.

Tusla has advised that a meeting with the Centre will be arranged in the New Year.

Legislative Programme

341. **Deputy Anne Ferris** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reason for the delay in progressing the adoption (information and tracing) Bill, if he is aware of the effect this delay is having on tens of thousands of persons awaiting personal information and connection with natural family members, if he will ensure that this Bill is enacted during the term of this Government; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43894/15]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): The Government approved the publication of the Heads and General Scheme of the adoption (information and tracing) Bill 2015 last July. The Bill is intended to facilitate access to adoption information and operates on the basis of a presumption in favour of disclosing information in so far as is legally and constitutionally possible. The Bill will, for the first time, provide a statutory basis for the provision of information related to both past and future adoptions. It will provide clarity around the information that can be provided and the circumstances in which it can be provided.

I referred the Bill to the Joint Oireachtas Committee for Health and Children for pre legislative scrutiny. The Committee published their Report recently and my Department is currently examining the recommendations of the Committee with a view to incorporating the views of the Committee where appropriate and subject to legal advice.

Child and Family Agency Services

342. **Deputy Gabrielle McFadden** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if he will assure the Westmeath Support Services against Domestic Abuse that it can continue to operate its services on a long-term basis, that the month-by-month funding of the services will be replaced by long-term funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43994/15]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): Tusla, the Child and Family Agency provided €47,000 in funding to Westmeath Support Services against Domestic Violence in 2015.

I recently announced a significant increase in the funding allocation to Tusla for next year. Tusla will have available to it some €676 million in funding, representing an increase of €38 million over 2015.

The precise level of funding to be provided to Domestic Violence Services for next year will now be considered by Tusla in developing its Business Plan for 2016, which will be sent to me for consideration.

Tusla will communicate with individual funded organisations about funding arrangements for 2016 at the earliest opportunity and will continue to engage with stakeholders in Co. Westmeath as to how best to provide domestic violence support services as part of integrated community-based services.

Children in Care

343. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children who have died in care during the years 2011 to date, including their ages and cause of death; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44063/15]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): The death of any child or young person is a tragedy, and a profound loss for their families and carers. To all those affected, I wish to express my sincere sympathies. In order to identify learning about how to better address the needs of vulnerable children and families, the National Review Panel (NRP) was established in 2010 to review serious incidences and deaths of children in care. It is an independent body chaired by Dr Helen Buckley of Trinity College and its reports are published on the Tusla website.

The National Review Panel recently published its 2014 Annual Report of reviews of the cases of 29 children and young people, 26 of these children died, and a further 3 were involved in serious incidents:

- Nearly one third of these deaths were a result of natural causes, including congenital conditions;
- Very sadly, a further 8 children and young people died by suicide, 3 of whom were in care;
- Five children died in road traffic accidents and 2 died by homicide.

The Review Panel found that there was no case where either action or inaction on the part of the HSE or Tusla was a direct contributory factor in the deaths. However, as is the explicit purpose of this work, the Review Panel also found areas of historical deficits in practice and inconsistencies in service provision. These include providing timely access to a social worker; more clear evidence of parental capacity to change in social work assessments and earlier decisions to take a child into care. This Government's establishment of a dedicated Child and Family Agency, Tusla, has already addressed some of these historical deficits. Government has provided additional funding to Tusla this year to significantly increase the number of social workers dedicated to working with these vulnerable children and families.

As a learning organisation, Tusla is committed to embedding the lessons of such reviews, and a number of relevant actions are currently underway to further enhance the response to vulnerable children and families such as:

- *Meitheal* is an initiative to make best use of all early interventions to support families in a coordinated way and to best address childrens' needs;
- Tusla is developing an assessment model for social workers, to support evidence-informed assessment, greater consistency and enhanced practice in engaging families;
- New *Threshold Guidance* has been introduced to ensure social work interventions are made in a proportionate and timely manner.

The information requested by the Deputy is represented in the following tables. All information included can be found in the National Review Panel Annual reports, published on the Tusla website.

Table 1: Care Status at Time of Death

Questions - Written Answers

Care Status	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
In care	2	3	3	3	11
Known to services	2	2	1	4	9
In aftercare at the time of death/in care immediately prior to their 18th birthday or in aftercare and under 21	11	18	13	19	61
Total	15	23	17	26	81

Table 2: Age at Time of Death

Age Band	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Infant < 12 months	4	4	7	6	21
1 -5 years old	2	4	1	4	11
6 - 10 years old	1	2	0	1	4
11 -16 years old	3	5	5	10	23
17 - 20 years old	5	8	2	4	19
> 20 years old	0	0	2	1	3
Total	15	23	17	26	81

Table 3: Cause of Death

Cause of Death	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Natural Causes	8	7	7	8	30
Suicide	3	9	4	8	24
Road traffic accident	1	2	0	5	8
Other - Accidental	1	4	1	1	7
Drug Overdose	2	0	1	1	4
Homicide	0	1	0	2	3
Cause of death to be verified	0	0	4	1	5
Total	15	23	17	26	81

Departmental Legal Costs

344. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the total cost to his Department, and those under his aegis, for the procurement of legal services in the State from 2011 to 2015 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44633/15]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): The information requested by the Deputy is currently being compiled and will be forwarded once it is available.

Special Educational Needs Staff

345. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when a nurse will be appointed to a school (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43796/15]

346. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide nursing support for a special needs school (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43816/15]

348. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide funding for nursing support for a school (details supplied) in County Kerry. [44154/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 345 to 348, inclusive, together.

The particular issue raised by the Deputies is a service matter for the Health Service Executive. Accordingly I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputies. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Food Safety Standards

347. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of rapid alerts for food and feed notifications from 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44016/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) is a notification system introduced under the General Food Law (Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002). It is operated by the European Commission to exchange information on identified hazards between Member States. It covers food, food contact materials and animal feed. This information helps Member States to act more rapidly and in a coordinated manner in response to a health threat. The Food Safety Authority of Ireland assesses these notifications for relevance to Ireland.

Those that relate to animal feed are followed up by the relevant unit in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Those relating to food or food contact materials are assessed and risk managed by the FSAI. When necessary, food business operators are requested to take action through the relevant official agencies. The Department of Health is kept fully informed by FSAI of any developments in this area. The FSAI food incident team reports back on all the findings and measures taken through RASFF.

The following table presents figures in relation to the number of RASFF notifications in Ireland for the relevant period:

Year	Total	Food	Food Contact Materials
2011	3717	3050	308
2012	3441	2827	289
2013	3168	2677	218
2014	3128	2636	184
2015 (to 4.12.15)	2776	2444	139

Question No. 348 answered with Question No. 345.

Neuro-Rehabilitation Policy

349. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Health when he will publish an implementation plan for the National Policy and Strategy for Neurorehabilitation Services in Ireland 2011-2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44318/15]

379. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health why the strategy on neuro-rehabilitation services 2011 to 2015 ends in December 2015 with nothing delivered, not even an implementation plan, for the more than 25,000 people with neurological conditions such as acquired brain injury, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease and stroke who need rehabilitation services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43807/15]

385. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the status of the national strategy for neuro-rehabilitation services and if he will provide an implementation plan for the services and increase the number of community teams in neurological services. [43828/15]

387. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health why the strategy on neuro-rehabilitation services 2011 to 2015 concludes this month with nothing delivered; why there has not even been an implementation plan for the more than 25,000 persons with neurological conditions such as acquired brain injury, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease and stroke who need rehabilitation services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43835/15]

393. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health why the national strategy for neuro-rehabilitation services to provide a national framework to address the needs of thousands of persons living with neurological conditions such as stroke, acquired brain injury, multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease has not published an implementation plan or provided one additional community team since the strategy was published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43844/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 349, 379, 385, 387 and 393 together.

The report "National Policy & Strategy for the Provision of Neuro-Rehabilitation Services in Ireland 2011 - 2015", made a number of recommendations for services for people with rehabilitation needs including clinical, therapeutic, social, vocational and community supports. Following the development of the report, the Health Service Executive (HSE) established the Rehabilitation Medicine Clinical Programme. The scope of the Programme covers the whole of the patient journey from self-management and prevention through to primary, secondary

and tertiary care. This provides a national strategic and co-ordinated approach to a wide range of clinical services. The Programme includes the standardisation of access to and delivery of, high quality, safe and efficient hospital services nationally, as well as improved linkages with primary care services. The Rehabilitation Medicine Clinical Programme is nearing completion of a Model of Care for the provision of specialist rehabilitation services in Ireland, which will be the basis for the delivery of services.

The HSE Disability Services Division has a role in certain key aspects of Neuro-Rehabilitation Services, primarily the provision of community-based therapy services and personal social services. The Disability Services Division will use the recommendations of the Value for Money and Policy Review of Disability Services to focus on Disability funded rehabilitation services and enable reconfiguration of existing provision through establishment of demonstration sites. Close links will be maintained with the Rehabilitation Medicine Clinical Programme to ensure that there is no duplication of effort and that all initiatives receive optimal support. Demonstration sites have been identified by Disability Services and mapping has commenced.

A National Steering Group, chaired by the Health Service Executive Social Care Division, has been assigned the task of developing an implementation framework for the National Policy and Strategy for Neuro-Rehabilitation Services. The Steering Group includes representation from the National Clinical Programmes for Rehabilitation Medicine and Neurology, the Department of Health, Primary Care, Therapy Professions and the Neurological Alliance of Ireland. Once the implementation framework has been agreed by the Steering Group, it will then go for consultation to the wider stakeholder interest groups. Following consultation, the framework will be revised and it will guide and oversee the reconfiguration and development of neuro-rehabilitation structures and services at national and local level.

The HSE is very aware of the needs of people with neurological conditions and will continue to work towards improved services, making best use of available resources in the interests of all those who require supports.

I have referred the element of the Deputies' questions regarding community teams to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputies. If the Deputies have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, they can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

Medical Card Applications

350. **Deputy John Perry** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite an application for a medical card by a person (details supplied) in County Sligo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43534/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): 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. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Consultant Recruitment

351. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if will he intervene as a matter of urgency in appointing the required number of consultant neurologists given the recent report (details supplied) indicating that there is a serious shortfall with the waiting list for neurology at 13,361 and with 2,048 waiting more than 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43535/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Waiting Lists

352. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health when an operation will be scheduled for a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5 who has been waiting for 16 months as of November 2015. [43551/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the Health Service Executive, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Services for People with Disabilities

353. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if occupational therapy care will be provided for a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5 who requires it due to mental and physical special needs. [43552/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the particular issue raised by the Deputy relates to an individual case, this is a service matter for the Health Service Executive. Accordingly, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Transfers

354. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary

Question No. 166 of 19 November 2015, the status of this case, if it will be addressed as a matter of urgency (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43554/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

In relation to your further query on this issue, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Waiting Lists

355. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Meath will receive an appointment for a procedure at Connolly Hospital Blanchardstown and when the person will receive respite care. [43566/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the Health Service Executive, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Medical Card Applications

356. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite an application for a medical card by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry, as all relevant information has been submitted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43567/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): 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. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the

matter with them.

Home Care Packages Provision

357. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health why the home care package hours of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 22 were not increased when the person moved into independent living accommodation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43572/15]

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 (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, she can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

Hospital Waiting Lists

358. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for an operation for a person (details supplied). [43573/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the Health Service Executive, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Lobbying Data

359. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the number of meetings requested by private external lobby groups and the number of meetings held, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43601/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Since my appointment as Minister for Health I received representations, including requests for meetings, from a range of sources, including members of the Oireachtas, local and voluntary groups, private individuals, companies and representative associations. The information requested by the Deputy can be seen in the following table. I have received 58 requests for meetings and had 22 meetings with the bodies below.

The Deputy will be aware that the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 was commenced on 1

September 2015 and both Minister Kathleen Lynch and I are Designated Public Officials under the Act. The Act provides that the Standards in Public Office Commission (the Standards Commission) establish and maintain an on-line register of lobbying and oversee compliance with the legislative provisions. The purpose of the register will be to make information available to the public on the identity of those communicating with Designated Public Officials. Persons lobbying will have to register with the Standards Commission and will be required to submit returns on their lobbying activities.

The information relating to Minister Lynch is being compiled and I will reply directly to the Deputy as soon as possible with this.

Organisation	Request	Meeting
3Ts (Turn the Tide of Suicide)	1	- Referred to Minister Lynch
Age Action	1	0
ASH Ireland	3	2
Association of Occupational Therapists	1	1
COPD Support Ireland	1	0
Cork Chamber	1	0
First Light	1	0
Hume Brophy	1	0
IBEC	3	3
IMPACT Trade Union	1	0
IMSTA	1	0
Indian Youth Ireland	1	1 (on 14 Dec '15)
Irish Cancer Society	6	3
Irish College of General Practitioners	1	1
Irish Community Rapid Response	1	1 (on 11 Jan '16)
Irish Heart Foundation	4	0
IHCA	5	2
Irish Kidney Association	2	1
Irish League of Credit Unions	1	0
Irish Medical Organisation	2	1 (on 14 Dec '15)
Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation	2	1
Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association	2	0 (1 decision still pending)
Irish Pharmacy Union	1	1
Irish Rugby Football Union	1	Ministerial Advisor met IRFU on Minister's behalf
Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists	1	0
Irish Thoracic Society	1	0
Medtronic	1	1

Organisation	Request	Meeting
National Association of General Practitioners	1	1
National Off-Licence Association	1	0
National Women's Council of Ireland	1	1
Nursing Homes Ireland	1	1
PDFORRA	1	0
PR360	1	0
Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland	1	1
Royal College of Physicians of Ireland	1	1
TASC	1	0
The Asthma Society of Ireland	1	1
The Irish Hospice Foundation	1	0

Departmental Expenditure

360. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health his Department's photography costs since he came into office, inclusive of costs incurred from use of the ministerial allowance by year in tabular form; the occasions for which photographers were booked; the photographers used; the costs associated with each occasion; the policy in place regarding the booking of photographers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43633/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The details sought by the Deputy are set out in the following table up to June 2015. I will advise the Deputy separately if any such payments were made since June.

It is the policy of the Department to keep costs in relation to the use of photographers to a minimum. Photographers are usually booked through the Press and Communications Office. From time to time individual units may incur other photography costs.

No photography costs are met from my Ministerial Allowance.

Year	Occasion for which photography was booked	Name of Photographer	Cost - €
2014	All Ireland Chief Nursing Officers' Conference	Conor McCabe Photography Ltd	369
2014	HSE Aviva Stakeholder Consultation	Conor McCabe Photography Ltd	308
2014	All Ireland Chief Nursing Officers' Conference	Robbie Reynolds Photography Ltd	308

Year	Occasion for which photography was booked	Name of Photographer	Cost - €
2014	Portrait of Council Members - Healthy Ireland	Conor McCabe Photography Ltd	1046
2014	Launch of the National Rare Disease Plan for Ireland	Conor McCabe Photography Ltd	431
2014	A Ministerial Meeting of the British Irish Council – Misuse of Substances Sectoral Group, Dublin Castle	Robbie Reynolds Photography Ltd	246

Public Relations Contracts Data

361. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health his Department's use of external public relations firms since he came into office by year in tabular form; the uses of these firms and the policy regarding employing them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43649/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Press and Communications Office of the Department liaises with the media on behalf of the Department and does not use the services of public relations companies. The Department did not spend any money on public relations consultants between July 2014 and December 2014.

During 2015 external public relations expertise was required for the development of the Healthy Ireland Council. Details are outlined in the following table. I will advise the Deputy separately if any further public relations engagements were made since.

Year	Name of Company	Tendered Contract
2015	DHR Communications	Development of strategy to support communication of the Healthy Ireland Framework and toolkit for Healthy Ireland Council

It is the policy in my Department only to engage the services of external consultants where it is felt to be appropriate and cost-effective, taking account of Government decisions and policy on the matter.

Consultancy Contracts Data

362. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the reports he commissioned from external consultants since March 2011, by year, title, cost, date published and company in tabular form. [43665/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): It is the policy in my Department only to

Questions - Written Answers

engage the services of external consultants where it is felt to be appropriate and cost-effective, taking account of Government decisions and policy on the matter. The information requested by the Deputy is presented in the following table for the period March 2011 to June 2015.

I will revert to the Deputy should the Department have engaged any consultants to prepare reports since then.

Year	Organisation/ Consultants	Name of Report	Current status	Amount/Cost to June 2015
2015	Prospectus	Code of Con- duct for Health and Social Ser- vice Providers	Extracts will be published within clinical guide- lines	€86,138
2015	UCD	Clinical Hando- ver Guideline	Work ongoing	€86,292
2015	DCU	Management of the Acute Adult Asthma Patient – provision of research	Extracts to be published within clinical guide- line	€9,973
2015	DCU	Paediatric Early Warning Score – Baseline Re- search	Extracts to be published within clinical guide- line	€3,313
2015	INDECON Eco- nomic Consul- tants	Analysis of po- tential measures to encourage the provision of Primary Care facilities	Work ongoing	€0
2015	DKM Economic Consultants	Analysis of po- tential measures to encourage the provision of Nursing Homes and Community Nursing Unit facilities	Work ongoing	€40,221
2014	DCU School of Nursing	Report to sup- port the Task- force on Staffing and Skill mix for nursing	Will be used to inform the final Report on the Taskforce on Staffing and Skill Mix	€7,418

Year	Organisation/ Consultants	Name of Report	Current status	Amount/Cost to June 2015
2014	DCU School of Nursing	Literature Review and Nursing Work- force Evalua- tion to Support the Taskforce on Staffing and Skill Mix	Will be used to inform the Re- port of the Task- force on Staffing and Skill Mix	€19,845
2014	Crowe Horwath	Thematic Analysis of Submissions in response to a Public Con- sultation on the White Paper for Universal Health Insur- ance	Published on Department's website	€39,176
2014	NUI Galway	Systematic literature review Maternity Early Warning Score	Extracts pub- lished within clinical guide- line	€23,935
2014	DCU	Systematic literature review Paediatric Early Warning Score	Extracts will be published within clinical guide- line	€20,095
2014	UCC	Systematic literature review Clinical Practice Guidance	Published on Department's website	€20,712
2014	Sinéad Shannon	Review of the international evidence and literature on selection criteria for the Out- comes Frame- work (Whilst this piece of research which was commis- sioned in De- cember and approved in January, no pay- ments have been made to date)	Ongoing	€5,000

Questions - Written Answers

Year	Organisation/ Consultants	Name of Report	Current status	Amount/Cost to June 2015
2013	Prospectus Strategy Con- sultants	Review of Staff- ing Resources and Organisa- tional Structure of the Depart- ment of Health	Report com- pleted but not published, for Department's use only	€72,940
2013	Deloitte and Touche Consul- tants Ltd	Review of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme	Ongoing	€36,900
2013	Matheson Ormsby Pren- tice	Legal Research and advisory services on the design and implementation of an insurance based health system provid- ing universal coverage in Ireland	Not Published	€123,000
2013	Prof Oonagh Walsh	Report on sym- physiotomy in Ireland, 1944- 1984	Not published	€49,500
2013	Ernst & Young	Reports relating to the develop- ment of the Pro- gramme Man- agement Office (cost includes a range of consul- tancy services)	Ongoing – inter- nal reports	€79,212
2013	Dr Sinead Hana- fin & Associates	Review of the Traveller Health Advisory Com- mittee	Finalised	€6,150
2013	Prospectus	Overview of the development of the Health & Wellbeing Programme	Finalised	€15,156
2013	Research Mat- ters	Provision of Re- search Manage- ment Services	Ongoing	€74,490
2013	Institute of Pub- lic Health	Analysis re Consultation (Tobacco Prod- ucts Directive)	Completed - not yet published	€5,000

Year	Organisation/ Consultants	Name of Report	Current status	Amount/Cost to June 2015
2013	Professor Hammond	Research on Standardised Packaging- Irish Context	Ongoing	€5,000
2013	CJP Consultants	Preparation of report on the efficacy of minimum pricing and other public policies for alcohol.	Published on website	€31,488
2013	Advertising Standards Authority of Ireland	Annual Report of the Alcohol Marketing Communications Monitoring Body (AM-CMB)	Published	€21,115
2012	McGee Pharma International	Labelling of Medicinal Products in both Irish and English	Completed	€13,644
2012	Goodbody Stockbrokers and Matheson Ormsby Prentice Solicitors	Further Analysis of Options in relation to the restructuring of the Irish Private Health Insurance Market	Report completed	€62,349
2012	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform with the assistance of PwC	Review of the Department of Health's Parliamentary and Legislative Processes	Report completed but not published - for Department's use only	€18,020
2012	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform	A survey of experience and qualifications in the Department of Health	Report completed but not published - for Department's use only	None
2012	Michael Collins Associates	Supplementary Report and Addendum on Cost Comparison for the Dolphin Review Group	Completed not published, commercially sensitive	€12,423

Questions - Written Answers

Year	Organisation/ Consultants	Name of Report	Current status	Amount/Cost to June 2015
2012	John Martin	Further assessment of planning issues in relation to proposed sites for the Dolphin Review Group	Published	€6,000
2012	Simon Clear	Further assessment of planning issues in relation to proposed sites for the Dolphin Review Group	Published	€9,475
2012	The Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, UCC, in conjunction with the Centre for Health Policy and Management, TCD.	The Efficiency Review of the BreastCheck Screening Programme	Published	€71,270
2012	Mr Gerard Mul-laly	Reforming Chronic Care: Financing and Delivering Integrated Chronic Care	Not published	€5,227
2012	Mr Gerard Mul-laly	The Integrated Continuing Care System (ICCS): Reforming Elderly Care in Ireland	Not published	€7,558
2012	Matheson Ormsby Prentice	Options Appraisal of multi-payer universal health insurance models: Preliminary advice	Not Published	€6,150

Year	Organisation/ Consultants	Name of Report	Current status	Amount/Cost to June 2015
2012	Department of Health / SIRA Consulting	Report on the baseline measurement of the administrative burden from the Department of Health (as part of a cross Departmental project coordinated by Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation)	Published 2013	€14,000
2011	Goodbody Stockbrokers and Matteson Ormsby Prentice Solicitors	Commissioned to undertake a review of the Irish Private Health Insurance Market in Relation to the options which may exist for re-balancing	Report completed	€300,000

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

363. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the number of special advisers on his staff and their yearly salary from 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43681/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The information requested by the Deputy is detailed in the following table:

Special Advisors in the Department of Health

Year	Number of Advisors	Total Pay
2011	5	€157,189
2012	4	€208,132
2013	4	€196,139
2014	5	€206,895
2015	3	€243,961

Cross-Border Health Initiatives

364. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients from this State who have accessed the scheme under the Cross-Border Healthcare Directive 201/24/EU since its inception; the costs associated with these treatments; the number of patients who have

accessed treatment in this State under the same scheme and all costs associated with their treatment. [43709/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Health Service Executive operates the EU Directive on Patients' Rights in Cross Border Healthcare in Ireland. The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine the matter of the data requested and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

Medical Card Eligibility

365. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if a person's Health Service Executive compensation award for negligence is assessed as income or capital in an application for a medical card; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43710/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): 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. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Administration

366. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the progress made in amending the application form for the long-term illness scheme, which can be downloaded from the Health Service Executive website to employ the correct term of intellectual disability as one of the qualifying conditions, when the new form will be available to download; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43735/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the primary care schemes, therefore the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to you.

If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Irish Blood Transfusion Service

367. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding unfair in-patient charges for haemochromatosis patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43736/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Irish Blood Transfusion Service (IBTS)

provides a haemochromatosis service in its Stillorgan and D'Olier Street centres in Dublin, as well as in Cork. There is no charge for this service, irrespective of medical entitlement or health insurance cover. Where patients meet the normal blood donation criteria, they can also become blood donors.

People who wish to use the service should get a prescription from their GP or hospital clinic on the relevant IBTS form. This is available at www.giveblood.ie. The prescription will be valid for one year and will facilitate up to four venesections per person per year.

Respite Care Services Availability

368. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the status of respite services with St. Michael's House for a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43738/15]

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 HSE for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

General Medical Services Scheme Data

369. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of medical card holders paying the maximum monthly charge for prescriptions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43740/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the primary care schemes, therefore the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to you.

If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

General Medical Services Scheme Data

370. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of medical card holders who paid prescription charges in 2013 and 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43741/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the primary care schemes, therefore the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to you.

If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Home Care Packages Provision

371. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the average cost of home care packages in 2014 and in 2015 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43751/15]

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. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Facilities

372. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to address a matter (details supplied) regarding a helipad in Dublin 9; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43765/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospitals Data

373. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the waiting times for outpatient cataract surgery at St. Vincent's University Hospital in Dublin 4 following initial assessment; the number of procedures carried out in each of the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43779/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospitals Data

374. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the waiting times for outpatient cataract surgery at Sligo Regional Hospital, following initial assessment; the number of procedures carried out in each of the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43780/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

375. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the status of funding for a special needs assistant for a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43786/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Early

Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme, is the responsibility of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. While certain flexibilities had been built in to the Programme to facilitate the inclusion of children with a disability the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* children and young people's policy framework contained a commitment to develop a plan to facilitate the full participation of such children in the ECCE Programme. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs has lead responsibility for the implementation of this commitment and has concluded an intensive process of deliberation and consultation on the matter in conjunction with the Departments of Health and Education and Skills and has brought forward a new model of supports to facilitate the full participation of children with a disability in the ECCE Programme.

As part of Budget 2016, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs announced the necessary funding to implement the new model of ECCE supports for children with a disability. The new model will provide supports including enhanced continuing professional development for early years practitioners; grants for equipment, appliances and minor alterations; and access to therapeutic intervention. Funding of €15m has been provided to phase these supports in during 2016. Full year costs for these supports are estimated to be €33m from 2017 onwards. This model of supports was launched on 18th November last by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs with my full support and the support of my Government colleague Jan O'Sullivan T.D., Minister for Education and Skills.

Improving access to therapy services for children in primary care and in disability services is a particular priority for the Government. Building on additional investment in recent years, funding of €8m is being provided to the HSE in 2016 to expand, inter alia, the provision of Speech and Language Therapy in primary care and the further development of early intervention therapy services under the Progressing Disabilities Programme to facilitate the inclusion of children with a disability in mainstream pre-school settings as part of the rollout of the new inclusive preschools model.

It should be noted that while the Health Service Executive has no statutory obligation to provide assistant supports for children with special needs wishing to avail of the ECCE scheme, it has, to date, worked at local level and in partnership with the relevant disability service providers to address individual needs as they arise. This has been done, for example, by funding special pre-schools that cater specifically for children with disabilities. In some limited cases at local level, disability services have also facilitated children with a disability to attend mainstream pre-schools by providing assistant supports where possible and where resources are available. The provision of such pre-school assistant supports should not be confused with Special Needs Assistants who are funded by the Department of Education and Skills to support children with special educational needs in primary and post-primary school settings.

Within this context, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy in relation to the individual case she has raised. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Registration of Nurses

376. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if he will address the lengthy time it is taking for nurse registration (details supplied). [43793/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I wish to thank the Deputy for the matter raised.

Given that this is an operational matter, it is appropriate that it should be dealt with by the NMBI. I have referred the Deputy's question to the NMBI for attention and direct reply.

If you have not received a reply from the NMBI within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Appointments Status

377. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Health when an operation will be facilitated for a person (details supplied) in County Kerry, the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43795/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the Health Service Executive, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Home Help Service Eligibility

378. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will examine existing home help hours provided to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry, given the urgency of the case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43798/15]

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. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Question No. 379 answered with Question No. 349.

Services for People with Disabilities

380. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide funding to transport a special needs adult (details supplied) by taxi to and from the Cope Foundation on the Duntahane Road in Fermoy, in County Cork. [43808/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Each Local Health Office area in the Health Service Executive (HSE) has a dedicated Disability Manager

to coordinate the delivery of services to people with disabilities. It is open to the individual and their family to pursue this matter with the Disability Manager for their area who can be contacted at Mallow Primary Healthcare Centre, Gouldshill, Mallow, Co. Cork, telephone 022-58765.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

HSE Funding

381. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if he will request the Health Service Executive to meet with the Target project in Donaghmede in Dublin 13 to discuss the restoration of funding for their special needs programme and for a clinical director of counselling services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43809/15]

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 (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

Respite Care Services Availability

382. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if he will assist a person (details supplied) in County Dublin who needs respite care from St. Michael's House and the Health Service Executive. [43810/15]

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 HSE for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

Services for People with Disabilities

383. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if he will address the specific issue of the car purchase scheme referred to in Parliamentary Question No. 167 of 12 November 2015. [43820/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I understand that the Deputy has requested clarification on 3 transport schemes. My reply to the Deputy's recent question on this matter outlined the latest position on the Motorised Transport Grant and the Mobility Allowance scheme. The Government decided to close both schemes on 26 February, 2013. Work is ongoing on the policy proposals to be brought to Government for the drafting of primary legislation for a new transport support scheme. The Health (Transport Support) Bill is included in the Government Legislation Programme.

The Revenue Commissioners' Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) scheme is still in operation and provides a range of tax reliefs in connection with the purchase

and use of motor vehicles by people with disabilities. Details are available on the Revenue Commissioners website at www.revenue.ie Questions relating to this particular scheme are more appropriate to my colleague, the Minister for Finance.

Health Care Professionals

384. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Minister for Health the provisions he will make for existing physical therapists who are members of the Irish Association of Physical Therapists and who are mainly educated up to level 7 degrees as regulated by Quality and Qualifications Ireland under section 95 (3) of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43821/15]

391. **Deputy Eric Byrne** asked the Minister for Health if he will clarify a situation regarding a person (details supplied) in Dublin 12 who is a practising physical therapist; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43840/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 384 and 391 together.

The Physiotherapists Registration Board will soon make the necessary bye-laws under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 to allow it to establish its register early next year. The title of physiotherapist will, as a consequence, be protected for the exclusive use of the board's registrants when the register's 2 year transitional period ends in 2018.

I am currently examining the issue of also protecting the title of physical therapist under the Act. In the rest of the English speaking world the titles of physical therapist and physiotherapist are interchangeable and their users are qualified physiotherapists. In Ireland, however, the title is used by a number of practitioners who are not physiotherapists but who are competing with physiotherapists in the private sector in the provision of musculoskeletal therapies.

Earlier this year, having consulted with the Health and Social Care Professionals Council, I wrote to a number of relevant organisations, including the Irish Association of Physical Therapists, regarding my proposal to protect the title of physical therapist as a variant of the title of physiotherapist and invited them to submit their views. The submissions are now being examined and I expect that I will make a decision on the matter before the end of the year that ensures public protection and appropriately addresses the legitimate concerns of all parties.

Question No. 385 answered with Question No. 349.

Medical Card Eligibility

386. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Health if he will raise the gross income limits from the current €500 per week for applications for medical cards from persons of 70 years of age upwards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43830/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): There are no proposals to change the gross income limits for medical cards for persons aged 70 years and older.

I can advise the Deputy that persons aged 70 years and over can be assessed both under the over-70s gross income arrangements and under the standard medical card means test which is open to persons irrespective of their age. Furthermore persons, including those aged 70 years

and over, may be eligible for a medical card where discretion is exercised where they face undue hardship in arranging medical services as a result of medical or social circumstances.

Question No. 387 answered with Question No. 349.

Cross-Border Health Initiatives

388. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 76 of 25 November 2015, the assistance available to patients who wish to receive care under the Cross Border Healthcare Directive 2011/24/EU, including advice on their rights and on the varying policies in European Union countries participating in the directive, if he will establish such an advice service, if any, and how many persons have availed of this option for treatment to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43836/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Health Service Executive operates the EU Directive on Patients' Rights in Cross Border Healthcare in Ireland. In line with practice in other EU Member States, the HSE, through the National Contact Point (NCP) office, provides information for patients on the Cross-Border Directive (CBD) on its website - <http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/schemes/cbd/> - and also by phone. The principal function of the NCP (which is the mechanism specified for the dissemination of information on the CBD by Member States) is to facilitate exchange of information for patients concerning their rights and entitlements relating to receiving healthcare in another Member State, in particular the terms and conditions for reimbursement of cost and the procedures for accessing and determining those entitlements. The NCP also has a responsibility to ensure that all enquirers are informed of the right to healthcare, if any, that they may have through the European legislation on the coordination of social security schemes (EU Regulation 883/04) and which may be more beneficial to them. The NCP is able to inform patients what the cost of their treatments would be in Ireland to allow them make a comparison with the costs they are being quoted for comparable treatment in another Member State.

The healthcare being sought under the CBD can only be healthcare that a person would be entitled to within the public health system in Ireland, which is not contrary to Irish legislation. It will be a matter for the patient and his/her referring doctor to identify the clinician abroad and satisfy him/herself in relation to the qualifications, quality and safety of the services being availed of in the other jurisdiction. In general, healthcare is not routinely advertised and the best options for treatment are most appropriately discussed within the professional setting and advice received as to where services might be sought, including availing of the provisions of the CBD for treatment.

It is also noteworthy that access to healthcare abroad under the Directive is based on patients following public patient pathways; that is, a referral is required in order to be eligible for reimbursement. Referral for care under the CBD can be made by a GP, a hospital consultant and certain other HSE clinicians. This referral is not limited to Irish health professionals but nevertheless the great majority of patients are likely to have consulted an Irish health professional who then referred them for treatment here or, if they wished, within the EU/EEA. As a consequence, a general information campaign regarding the CBD has not been undertaken. It is also noteworthy that Recital 4 of the Directive states "the transposition of this Directive into national legislation and its application should not result in patients being encouraged to receive treatment outside their Member State of affiliation". The HSE has tried to balance its dissemination of information regarding the CBD with this Recital in mind and has concentrated on informing the clinicians who make the referrals about the Directive. To this end it has met with the ICGP and various consultants at hospital level to inform them of the provisions of the

Directive.

The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine the matter of the data requested and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

Health Services Access

389. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive an appointment; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43838/15]

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 to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Medical Card Applications

390. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite an application for a medical card by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43839/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): 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.

If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

Question No. 391 answered with Question No. 384.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Coverage

392. **Deputy Derek Nolan** asked the Minister for Health if he will introduce a scheme to allow all phenylketonuria patients receive their specialised foods for free, or at a discounted rate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43843/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Phenylketonuria (PKU) is one of 16 conditions covered by the Long Term Illness Scheme, a statutory scheme administered by the HSE. Under this scheme, PKU patients are entitled to free approved drugs, medicines and medical and surgical appliances directly related to the treatment of the condition.

There are no plans to introduce a separate scheme providing specialised foods for PKU patients.

Question No. 393 answered with Question No. 349.

Health Insurance Cover

394. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if it is equitable that health insurance companies provide health insurance packages regardless of age or gender; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43849/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The inclusion of maternity benefit in all health insurance products is a statutory requirement. It is part of a legal obligation on health insurers to provide a specific minimum level of benefit in all health insurance products sold. Minimum Benefit Regulations, made under the Health Insurance Acts, require insurers to offer a minimum benefit to every insured person. The key purpose of the Regulations is to ensure the continued availability of the type of broad hospital cover traditionally held as a minimum by the insured population and to ensure that individuals do not significantly under-insure.

This approach is designed to be equitable and fair, by ensuring that all consumers obtain an appropriate minimum level of health insurance cover regardless of what plan they purchase. Every plan available is inclusive of the minimum suite of benefits/procedures, some of which are applicable to the whole market and some of which will be applicable specifically to either men or women. For example, the Regulations include provision for such medical treatments as a prostatectomy or testicular biopsy (in the case of men) and cervical biopsy or maternity services (in the case of women).

The health services and procedures provided by minimum benefit should be viewed as a cohort of procedures that are important and of benefit to the community of the insured population, and thus should be protected and provided as a minimum base to all.

Hospital Waiting Lists

395. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the average waiting times for cataract surgery for those graded as routine and for those graded as urgent in University Hospital Galway; if these waiting times have increased since this time in 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43859/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Health Services Staff Recruitment

396. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Health when a position will be filled (details supplied) in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43861/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service issue this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. If you have not received a reply within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office and they will follow

up the matter with them.

Primary Care Services Provision

397. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the full-year cost of providing a fully operational primary care team for every 1,500 children and if he supports this recommendation of the Barnardos Rise Up for Children Report [43888/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Primary Care Teams comprise a range of healthcare professionals and may include general practitioners, nursing staff, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, social workers, health care assistants, home helps, managers and administrative staff, according to the needs of the population served and the available resources. Primary Care Networks provide additional specialist resources to a larger population and may include speech and language therapists, dieticians and psychologists amongst other professional resources.

The HSE is at present working to implement the reform of non-acute services set out in the Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO) Report, which was published in October 2014. Nine CHOs have been established to replace the previous 17 Integrated Service Areas. A central element of the implementation plan is the reorganisation of community services into 90 Primary Care Networks, each serving about 50,000 people. The new structures will have a strong focus on building good linkages with the acute hospital system so that people's care pathways are appropriately planned and their needs met in the right setting.

Currently, approximately 484 Primary Care Teams are in operation and vary as to their composition in terms of professional disciplines, staff numbers and associated costs. It is not possible, without undertaking a detailed exercise, including a comprehensive assessment of the resources already available in each relevant location and a clear understanding of the working assumptions to be used, to provide an estimate of the net cost of establishing 1,500 Primary Care Teams, as requested by the Deputy.

European Health Insurance Card

398. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health how many different people, including their country of origin, and how many dialysis sessions are provided by the Health Service Executive to people presenting the European health insurance card each year. [43891/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under EU Regulations, all persons ordinarily resident in the EU are entitled to apply for a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). The EHIC certifies that the holder has the right to receive emergency healthcare during a temporary stay in any EU country as well as Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Iceland. This right is guaranteed to all persons who are covered by the public healthcare system of these countries. The European Health Insurance Card holder has the right to receive necessary treatment in the host Member State's public healthcare system on the same terms and at the same cost as nationals of the State concerned. Renal units in this State normally accommodate dialysis for those presenting a EHIC once contact has been made with them in advance of the patient travelling here and the patient's clinicians provide all relevant patient information to the consultants in the receiving renal unit here.

The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15

working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

European Health Insurance Card

399. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health for how many different people who have presented the Irish European health insurance card and for how many dialysis sessions in Europe does the Health Service Executive pay in a year and in which countries did they receive their dialysis treatment. [43892/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under EU Regulations, all persons ordinarily resident in Ireland are entitled to apply for a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). The EHIC certifies that the holder has the right to receive emergency healthcare during a temporary stay in any EU country as well as Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Iceland. This right is guaranteed to all persons who are covered by the public healthcare system of these countries. The European Health Insurance Card holder has the right to receive necessary treatment in the host Member State's public healthcare system on the same terms and at the same cost as nationals of the State concerned. Dialysis is normally accommodated in host Member States for those presenting a EHIC once contact has been made with them in advance of the patient travelling and the patient's clinicians provide all relevant patient information to the consultants in the receiving renal unit in the host Member State.

The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

Ambulance Service Response Times

400. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health the average response time for an ambulance to arrive at the scene of an emergency call in the Graiguenamanagh district of County Kilkenny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43895/15]

401. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health if there are time limits in respect of a maximum allocation of time in which an ambulance must arrive to the scene of an emergency call in the Graiguenamanagh district of County Kilkenny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43896/15]

402. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health the number of ambulances available to the Graiguenamanagh district of County Kilkenny for emergency call-outs, the average response time for such ambulances in arriving at the scene of an emergency call; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43897/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 400 to 402, inclusive, together.

With regard to the specific queries raised by the Deputy, as these are service matters, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Primary Care Services Provision

403. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health if funding exists within the Health Service Executive to assist a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43898/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the Health Service Executive (HSE) has statutory responsibility for the administration of the primary care schemes.

As the particular issue raised relates to an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the HSE for direct reply to you. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Waiting Lists

404. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Roscommon will be called for a procedure; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43900/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the Health Service Executive, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Health Insurance Community Rating

405. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health to outline what the money raised through the levy on health insurance policies is used for; the amount of money received in each of the years 2013 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43906/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Community rating whereby all subscribers are charged the same premium for a particular plan, irrespective of risk factors such as age, gender or health status is a fundamental cornerstone of the Irish health insurance market. Risk equalisation is the standard transfer mechanism used to equalise risk and underpin community rating internationally. The Risk Equalisation Scheme in Ireland involves the collection of a community rating levy from insurers by the Revenue Commissioners. These levies are paid into a Risk Equalisation Fund operated by the Health Insurance Authority who redistributes the Fund back to the market through credits payable to insurers in respect of insured older lives (aged 60 and over) and utilisation of in-patient hospital services. This system ensures that all

insured persons continue to pay the same net amount for a given health insurance product and helps to support affordable premiums for all.

The Risk Equalisation Scheme is self-funding, ie the cost of credits is met by the stamp duties raised. The total stamp duty levies raised under the Risk Equalisation Scheme on health insurance products written in 2013 was €413m, while an additional €173m was taken in under the ARTC Scheme in respect of policies taken out or renewed from 1 August to 31 December 2012 and paid to the Exchequer in February 2013. The total amount raised in 2014 was €582m.

Health Services Funding

406. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health if the Health Service Executive will honour its commitment to provide capital funding of €320,000 to Tír na nÓg respite house at 2 Friars Green in County Carlow to construct a new purpose-built house for respite services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43908/15]

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 HSE for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

National Treatment Purchase Fund

407. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the cost of the National Treatment Purchase Fund initiative in offering external appointments to those waiting longer than 12 months for a colonoscopy; the institutions that will facilitate these appointments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43921/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The NTPF has recently commenced a GI Endoscopy Initiative which it aims to complete before the end of the year. The Initiative will target those waiting over 12 months now or before the end of December 2015 for a routine endoscopy. While these patients are largely confined to a small number of hospitals, the Initiative aims to offer an external appointment to all patients waiting 12 months.

The HSE has in place a weekly monitoring system to ensure all patients referred for an urgent colonoscopy are seen within a 28 day target time. A policy of zero tolerance applies to any breaches.

From its 2015 allocation, an amount of €1.1m has been identified by the National Treatment Purchase Fund Board to facilitate the treatment, in private hospitals, of public patients listed as waiting for more than 12 months for a gastroscopy, colonoscopy or proctoscopy procedure.

The following private hospitals have agreed to participate in this initiative:

- Aut Even;
- Barringtons;
- Blackrock Clinic;
- Bon Secours;

- Clane Hospital;
- Galway Clinic;
- Hermitage;
- Mater Private;
- North West Independent Hospital;
- St. Francis;
- Whitfield Clinic;
- 3Fivetwo Healthcare.

Nursing Home Beds Data

408. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the details of all nursing home beds by hospital group area, and by private or public, in tabular form. [43922/15]

410. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the details of all nursing home beds by hospital group area, and by private or public type, in tabular form. [43930/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 408 and 410 together.

The Health Information and Quality Authority is an independent authority established under the Health Act 2007. Since 2009 all nursing homes - public, voluntary and private have been registered and inspected by HIQA. Under Section 49 of the Act the Chief Inspector must establish and maintain a register of designated centres. Details entered into the register include the name of the centre, address and date of registration. This information is published and available on the Authority's website *www.hiqa.ie*.

Medical Card Applications

409. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite an application for a medical card by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry, given that the person has submitted all relevant information; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43929/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): 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.

If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

Question No. 410 answered with Question No. 408.

Autism Support Services

411. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health his views on a matter regarding assessments, diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorder, the adoption of the very successful methods of a doctor (details supplied) to address the escalating number of persons with this condition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43934/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The particular issue raised by the Deputy is a service matter for the Health Service Executive. Accordingly I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Equipment

412. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Health why the older computed tomography scanner in University Hospital Waterford was closed upon the opening of the new computed tomography unit in April 2015, if the older scanner was in working order when it was closed and how many scans were performed in 2014 on the old scanner, if the staff who operated the older scanner were re-deployed to utilise the new scanner, if the old scanner is still located at the hospital or if it has been relocated to a different hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43941/15]

413. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Health the waiting time for an appointment for a computed tomography scan at University Hospital Waterford, if this is the best service the hospital can provide to its patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43942/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 412 and 413 together.

With regard to the detailed queries raised by the Deputy, as these are service matters, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Medical Card Administration

414. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Health his views on the bureaucracy within the Health Service Executive faced by persons acquiring discretionary medical cards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43945/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy will be aware, in accordance with the provisions of the Health Act 1970, medical cards are provided to persons who are, in the opinion of the HSE, unable without undue hardship to arrange GP services for themselves and their dependants. The legislation obliges the HSE, when making a decision on a person's eligibility, to take account of a person's financial situation. This requires the provision of information by the applicant.

Every effort is made by the HSE, within the framework of the legislation, to support applicants in applying for a medical card and, in particular, to take full account of difficult circumstances, whether medical or social which might result in undue financial hardship in arranging

medical services. In doing so, the HSE may seek additional supporting information which can be, at times, intensive but necessary to ensure a fair discretionary review for applicants whose income has exceeded the income limits.

I recognise that the existing assessment system is complex because it tries to ensure that a wide range of personal circumstances can be taken into account. We are still committed to further improving the existing system and the work of the Clinical Advisory Group on medical card eligibility will be central to this in the immediate future. The Group was established by the Director General of the HSE and is continuing its work on developing a framework for assessment and measurement of the burden of disease and appropriate operational guidelines for the medical card scheme.

As evidenced by the increase in the number of discretionary medical cards in circulation from about 52,000 in mid-2014 to nearly 96,000 at the beginning of November this year, the HSE is exercising greater discretion in its medical cards assessments than ever before.

Medical Card Delays

415. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Health when an application for a medical card by persons (details supplied) in County Longford will be processed, given that it has been with the deciding officer for some weeks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43946/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): 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.

If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

Disability Services Provision

416. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide transport for a person (details supplied) in Dublin 8. [43951/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Each Local Health Office area in the Health Service Executive (HSE) has a dedicated Disability Manager to coordinate the delivery of services to people with disabilities. It is open to the individual and their family to pursue this matter with the Disability Manager for their area who can be contacted at The Bungalow, Bru Chaoimhin, Cork Street, Dublin 8, telephone 01-4156564.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

Hospital Appointments Status

417. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a procedure in the South Infirmity Victoria University Hospital Cork for a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43952/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the Health Service Executive, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Mental Health Services Provision

418. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health the status of the experience (details supplied) of an individual seeking access to mental health services in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43974/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service issue this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. If you have not received a reply within the next 15 days, please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Health Services Funding

419. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide funding in his forthcoming Supplementary Estimate to clear the historic deficit of an organisation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43978/15]

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 HSE for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

Respite Care Grant Applications

420. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application for additional respite hours by a person (details supplied) in County Offaly, when the person will

receive payment, and transport for the existing services with the Health Service Executive. [44003/15]

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 HSE for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

Health Services Provision

421. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of the fitting of a device for a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44008/15]

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 to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Health Services Charges

422. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health the status of medical costs for haemochromatosis patients (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44025/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Irish Blood Transfusion Service (IBTS) provides a haemochromatosis service in its Stillorgan and D'Olier Street centres in Dublin, as well as in Cork. There is no charge for this service, irrespective of medical entitlement or health insurance cover. Where patients meet the normal blood donation criteria, they can also become blood donors.

People who wish to use the service should get a prescription from their GP or hospital clinic on the relevant IBTS form. This is available at www.giveblood.ie. The prescription will be valid for one year and will facilitate up to four venesections per person per year.

Hospital Waiting Lists

423. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 805 of 3 November 2015, where the Health Service Executive stated that there was no evidence to suggest that a patient would be waiting two months for a result of a dexta scan at the Midland Regional Hospital, if he is aware of the case of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath who has been waiting for four months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44032/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Health Services

424. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will urgently intervene regarding the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44058/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy will be aware, I am precluded under section 6 of the Health Service Executive Governance Act 2013 from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual. The particular issues raised by the Deputy in respect of the individual in question are service matters for the HSE. Accordingly I have arranged for the question to be referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Health Services Provision

425. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health to report on the waiting times for occupational therapy in Dublin 5, 13 and 17; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44060/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service issue, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with the Executive.

Hospital Appointments Delays

426. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients who did not attend outpatient appointments at Beaumont Hospital in Dublin 9 and the steps being taken to reduce this number, in the years 2013 to date, in tabular form. [44061/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Health Services Staff Training

427. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if and what changes have been made to the Health Service Executive medical training and intern programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44064/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Acts, the Health Service Executive has statutory responsibility for medical training including the Intern Programme. I

have asked the HSE to respond to you directly on this matter. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them. I am aware that the process for allocating intern places has been amended given that there is a limit to the number of places of sufficient quality that can be provided.

Hospital Appointments Status

428. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal will receive an appointment for surgery in Sligo University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44067/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the Health Service Executive, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Clinical Trials

429. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the outcome of the clinical trial surrounding shared care in the area of cataract surgery in County Sligo involving Sligo Regional Hospital and community optometrists, if the trial was a success, its impact on waiting lists, if he will roll this out to other areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44072/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

430. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the cost of implementing a living wage of €11.45 for all employees directly employed or in agencies funded by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44082/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): There would be only very minimal if any additional cost in respect of staff of my Department as the lowest gross annual salary would be at or about the equivalent of the €11.45 per hour referred to in your question.

Information in respect of bodies under the aegis of my Department is being collated and will

be forwarded to you as soon as possible. I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly on the matter. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Constitutional Amendments

431. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his views regarding proposals to remove the eighth amendment of the Constitution, specifically the grounds on which he believes an abortion may be obtained such as the health of the mother; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44087/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As the Deputy is aware, Article 40.3.3° of the Irish Constitution states that: “The State acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right.”

Article 40.3.3° of the Constitution, as interpreted by the Supreme Court in *Attorney General v. X*, provides that it is lawful to terminate a pregnancy in Ireland if it is established as a matter of probability that there is a real and substantial risk to the life, as distinct from the health, of the mother, which can only be avoided by a termination of the pregnancy.

The Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013 was enacted on 30 July 2013 and commenced on 01 January 2014. It regulates access to lawful termination of pregnancy in accordance with the *X* case and the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the *A, B and C v Ireland* case.

The Government does not intend to propose any amendments to Article 40.3.3° of the Constitution at present.

Hospital Accommodation Provision

432. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health if accommodation in hospitals has been increased to cater for an increasing population (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44107/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Health Services Provision

433. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 158 of 4 November 2015, if he will answer the question asked, that is, if the Health Service Executive had a treatment plan in place in 2001 for dealing with the side effects of Lariam and if these arrangements were changed given the warnings issued by the manufacturer (details supplied), particularly as neuropsychiatric effects were recognised before licensing and that no mention was made of specialist treatment or tests for neurotoxicity or neurotoxicity of the central nervous system and against the backdrop of the supplier recognising that its use can cause permanent damage. [44109/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I understand that the Health Service Executive (HSE) recently responded to the original question asked by the Deputy on 4 November 2015. I will forward this question to the HSE for a further response. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospitals Funding

434. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Health the budgets allocated to each hospital for each of the years 2007 to date in tabular form. [44143/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Your question has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office who will follow up on the matter.

Hospital Staff Data

435. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff at each hospital for each of the years 2007 to date in tabular form. [44144/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Staff Data

436. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Health the number of doctors at each hospital for each of the years 2007 to date in tabular form. [44145/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Staff Data

437. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Health the number of nurses at each hospital for each of the years 2007 to date in tabular form. [44146/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospitals Data

438. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Health the number of in patients at each hospital for the years 2007 to date in tabular form. [44147/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): In relation to the specific queries raised by

the Deputy, as these are service matters, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Medical Card Eligibility

439. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a medical card to all children in receipt of the domiciliary care allowance to ensure that all children with life-limiting conditions and profound disabilities receive the full medical care they require; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44148/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Under the provisions of the Health Acts, medical cards are provided to persons who are, in the opinion of the HSE, unable without undue hardship to arrange GP services for themselves and their dependants. In the assessment process, the HSE can take into account medical costs incurred by an individual or a family. Where deemed appropriate in particular circumstances, the HSE may exercise discretion and grant a medical card even though an applicant's means exceed the prescribed threshold. Where a person does not qualify for a medical card, they may be provided with a GP Visit Card, appropriate therapy or other community supports or drugs.

The Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA) payment is made by the Minister for Social Protection to carers in respect of a child at home under 16 years of age with a severe disability, where it has been determined that the child requires ongoing care and attention, substantially over and above the care and attention usually required by a child of the same age. Eligibility for the DCA is not based primarily on the medical or psychological condition, but on the resulting lack of function of body or mind necessitating the degree of extra care and attention required. As such it is not possible to say if a particular child or any particular medical condition or disability will qualify for a payment under the DCA scheme.

The Deputy will be aware that the report of the Expert Panel on Medical Need for Medical Card Eligibility, known as the Keane Report, recommended that a person's means should remain the main qualifier for a medical card and that it was not feasible, desirable, nor ethically justifiable to list medical conditions for medical card eligibility. Nonetheless, it is clear that there are people – including children - with medical needs and it is important that they should be able to access necessary assistance in a straight forward manner.

Consequently, the Clinical Advisory Group on medical card eligibility was established by the HSE to develop a framework for assessment and measurement of the burden of disease and appropriate operational guidelines for the medical card scheme. However, the Clinical Advisory Group has not recommended that children in receipt of the Domiciliary Care Allowance should automatically qualify for a medical card. In advance of the Group completing its work, there are no proposals to issue automatic medical cards to one particular group.

The Government is committed to making the medical card system as responsive as possible to the circumstances of people with significant medical needs. As a result of a range of improvements, the HSE is exercising greater discretion. Consequently, the number of discretionary medical cards has increased by about 84% - from about 52,000 in mid-2014 to nearly 96,000 at the beginning of November this year.

Ultimately, the proper way to address this issue is to develop a system of universal health care, which is at the centre of Government health policy. Otherwise, whenever there are qualifying rules, there will always be a person who is above the means test, does not have the se-

lected disease, or is not in receipt of the specific social welfare payment.

General Practitioner Contracts

440. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of general practitioners in receipt of the rural practice allowance, and the amount allocated by county in each year since 2010, in tabular form. [44155/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service issue, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with the Executive.

Hospital Waiting Lists

441. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite an appointment in Kerry General Hospital for a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44161/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Waiting Lists

442. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will be assessed by a medical specialist and if this matter will be expedited, given its urgency. [44169/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service issue this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. If you have not received a reply within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Waiting Lists

443. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Kildare will receive appropriate treatment in Tallaght Hospital in Dublin 24. [44170/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Staff Recruitment

444. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health if he will re-introduce the back-to-work scheme for nurses who have been out of work for a period of time, given the shortage of nurses in the health service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44187/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Nursing Staff Remuneration

445. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health his plans to address the ongoing situation of fourth year nursing students who are earning half the living wage and who cannot afford the long distances of travel to work or for accommodation closer to their work, which is a particular problem for student nurses from County Donegal who are automatically disadvantaged by its distant location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44191/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Pursuant to the Lansdowne Road Agreement, the Department of Health and the HSE are to consider the issues of pay for student nurses during the fourth year 36 week placement with the nursing unions. This process has commenced.

Student nurses participate in the 4th year rostered clinical placement as part of their degree programme and are paid in accordance with the trainee rates specified in the National Minimum Wage Acts for the duration of the placement. At present they are paid €6.49 per hour for the first 12 weeks of the placement, €6.92 for the second 12 weeks and €7.79 for the third 12 weeks, excluding premium payments. This equates to approximately 53% of the 1st point of the staff nurse scale. Mental health student nurses are paid 2.3% more, reflecting existing relativities between general and psychiatric staff nurse pay scales. When undertaking the placement, the students are not qualified nurses and require supervision. This is reflected in the 2:1 replacement ratio for student nurses replacing staff nurses.

The current rates of pay will be increased from the 1st January 2016, in line with the increase in the minimum wage to €9.15 per hour announced in Budget 2016 and provided for in the National Minimum Wage Order 2015 (S.I. No. 442 of 2015).

Questions - Written Answers
Departmental Legal Costs

446. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the total cost to his Department, and those under his aegis, for the procurement of legal services in the State from 2011 to 2015, inclusive, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44575/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The information requested regarding the total cost for the procurement of legal services from 2011 - 2015 is not immediately available and will be collated and forwarded to the Deputy at the earliest opportunity.

Details of such expenditure for bodies under the aegis of the Department are operational matters for the bodies concerned and the Deputy should contact the relevant Director/CEO/Registrar directly. I have requested the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy in this matter. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

EU Issues

447. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if a cross-Border group will be set up to prepare for a possible British exit from the European Union; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40016/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Government is very much aware of the key significance of UK membership of the EU for our national interests. We know how important it is not just for our economy but also for the continuing strength of British-Irish relations and for peace and stability in Northern Ireland. It's also our firm view that the EU is better and stronger as a whole on account of UK membership. That is why our main focus remains on doing all we can to ensure that the UK remains part of the Union, rather than planning for their departure.

At the same time, the Government fully recognises that it must be prepared for all scenarios and we are already in regular contact with a wide range of stakeholders, both North and South of the border and across the UK. This should help identify the many different issues that could arise, including with regard to Northern Ireland.

Further work is also being undertaken across other Government Departments in this regard. The Department of the Taoiseach continues to coordinate cross-Governmental efforts in this area as we move forward with this work. This includes research that the Department of Finance has commissioned from the Economic and Social Research Institute on macro-economic links between the UK and Ireland in the context of EU membership.

My own Department, given its responsibility for both Foreign Affairs and Trade, is naturally heavily involved. My officials are engaging actively with counterparts across our own system, as well as within the Northern Irish and British administrations and further afield in other EU capitals.

A key aim for us is to ensure that stakeholders in Northern Ireland and across the UK understand why their EU membership matters as much as it does for Ireland. Most recently, on 26 November I joined the Northern Ireland Minister for Finance and Personnel, Ms. Arlene Foster MLA, in addressing a seminar in Belfast which was jointly organised by Queen's University Belfast (QUB), the Institute for International and European Affairs (IIEA) and the Irish Association for Cultural, Economic and Social Relations. This provided a valuable opportunity to

stimulate debate on this issue, raising awareness of the potential impacts for Northern Ireland.

I have also addressed influential audiences on this topic in Chatham House, London and most recently in Dublin at a Breakfast Seminar organised by the British-Irish Chamber of Commerce (BICC) and hosted by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade at Iveagh House.

At a political level, my recent meeting with Foreign Secretary Hammond in London on 23 November provided an opportunity to re-emphasise the importance of the UK's continued membership of the EU. The Taoiseach has had similar exchanges with Prime Minister Cameron, most recently on 9 November. We have underlined our commitment to supporting the UK's efforts to reach agreement at EU level on reforms that address the broad issues raised by Prime Minister Cameron in his letter of 10 November to European Council President Donald Tusk, while ensuring an outcome that is not only good for the UK, but good for Ireland and good for the EU as a whole.

Ministerial Meetings

448. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of meetings requested by private external lobby groups and the number of meetings held, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43600/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Since my appointment in July 2014 I have met with the groups listed in the following table, on the dates indicated. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade also receives many requests for meetings at Headquarters and in Missions abroad from a wide-range of groups and individuals whom it is not always possible for me to meet.

Date of meeting	Details of meeting
27 August 2014	Meeting with Mary Robinson
8 October 2014	Meeting with representatives of the following NGOs: Trócaire Dóchas Plan Sightsavers GOAL Oxfam Ireland Camara Tearfund Ireland World Vision Ireland
27 November 2014	AmCham
12 February 2015	Amnesty Ireland
5 March 2015	AmCham (Launch of the Ireland-US Economic Relationship 2015 Report)
15 May 2015	Meeting with Justice for the Forgotten/Pat Finucane Centre
7 July 2015	Meeting with Front Line Defenders
21 July 2015	Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
27 July 2015	Fermanagh Orange Order
7 October 2015	Meeting with ICTU
22 October 2015	Meeting with members of the Civil Society Network

Departmental Contracts

449. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his Depart-

ment's photography costs since he came into office, inclusive of costs incurred from use of the ministerial allowance, by year in tabular form; the occasions for which photographers were booked; the photographers used; the costs associated with each occasion; the policy in place regarding the booking of photographers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43632/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My Department only avails of the services of external photographic agencies where it is warranted, in particular for major events and State occasions. This is a service which my Department provides so that media can easily and freely avail of photography where their own staff photographers cannot be fully accommodated.

Examples of such events this year included the visit in May of HRH The Prince of Wales and HRH The Duchess of Cornwall, the hosting of the first Global Irish Civic Forum in June and the official launch in October of the Passport Card. In addition, the use of photography services by overseas missions for significant promotional events resulted in positive global coverage of Ireland.

In September 2011, my Department led a collaborative advertised tender process for the procurement of a multi-supplier competitive framework of photographic service providers. This is now available for use by all Government Departments. Details of the framework arrangements and the photographers used are posted on the National Procurement Service website: www.procurement.ie/suppliers/contracts/1298. The purpose of this framework is to ensure Departments' compliance with EU procurement rules and to ensure value for money by having a competitive process for photographic assignments.

In addition, my Department now makes greater use of in-house resources for photography, including, for example, at last month's launch in Iveagh House of the National Report on Global Education in Ireland.

Total expenditure from my entry into office in July 2014 to date is €50,054.65, as detailed in the following table form:

July-Dec 2014 events	Expenditure from July – Dec 2014
Missions*	3,335.27
Visit of President of Mozambique	3,102.50
Official visit to New York for United Nations General Assembly and Washington DC	2,683.78
Credentials Ceremonies	1,459.06
Visit of the Thai Royal Family	1,377.60
Presidential Distinguished Service Awards 2014	839.89
National Ploughing Championship	687.00
Schools Awareness Programmes	561.00
Irish Aid Awards 2014	560.88
Visit of Scottish Minister Fiona Hyslop	551.04
Reconciliation Forum	516.60
Irish Aid Zero Hunger Event	398.46
Unveiling of W.B Yeats Statue	378.84
Visit by Canadian Foreign Minister	378.84

July-Dec 2014 events	Expenditure from July – Dec 2014
Launch of Documents in Irish Foreign Policy	344.40
Iveagh House Commemorative Lecture by Congressman John Lewis	327.18
Irish Aid Fellowships Training Programme	246.00
Irish Aid Volunteering Fair	241.00
Meeting with Senator Gary Hart	240.45
Meeting with representatives of the Orange Halls	223.81
Irish Aid Annual Report Launch	103.00
Images of Seal of Office	34.44
Image of Xi Jinping Visit	17.22
Total	18,608.26

*It was not possible to provide a full breakdown in the time available

2015 Events – to date	Expenditure to date
Missions*	8,873.93
Credentials Ceremonies	3,917.54
The State Visit by the President of Germany	2,773.65
Visit of HRH The Prince of Wales and HRH The Duchess of Cornwall	2,662.95
Global Irish Economic Forum	2,057.83
Global Island Conference	2,043.00
Global Irish Civic Forum	1,015.98
Iveagh House Lecture and visit by United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon	998.76
Iveagh House Christmas Truce Lecture	895.44
Official visit to New York for United Nations General Assembly 2015 and Washington DC	736.41
The Irish Aid Annual Report launch	654.36
Ireland 2016 Diaspora Commemorations Launch	533.82
Official launch of the Passport Card	516.60
The Iveagh House Lecture by the President of the World Bank Mr. Jim Young Kim	482.16
Launch of the Iveagh Scholars Programme for 2016	464.94
The Iveagh House Lecture on the American Civil War	378.84
The Iveagh House Lecture by Secretary General of the OSCE	373.92
OECD DAC Peer Review	361.62
Meeting and lunch in honour of Dr and Mrs Herrema	344.4
Iveagh House Scholars Programme	327.18

2015 Events – to date	Expenditure to date
Announcement of the Passport Card	258.30
Meeting with members of the Orange Order	241.08
The Iveagh House Lecture with Governor of the Bank of England	206.64
Diaspora engagement event with Sonia O’Sullivan	172.20
Launch of 2015 St Patricks Day Programme at Ding	137.62
Congressman John Lewis Lecture Photo	17.22
Total	31,446.39

*It was not possible to provide a full breakdown in the time available

Public Relations Contracts Data

450. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his Department’s use of external public relations firms since he came into office by year in tabular form; the uses of these firms and the policy regarding employing them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43648/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): A table containing the information is set out as follows. My Department has not incurred expenditure on external public relations services since my entry into office in July 2014. The expenditure in question has rather arisen in the context of specific initiatives under Ireland’s overseas development programme for which we have from time to time commissioned companies with a public relations and communications background to provide other professional services such as project management, logistics and event management.

DHR Communications has been contracted to manage and administer grants to journalists reporting on international development issues under the Simon Cumbers Media Fund (SCMF) and to manage and administer annual Africa Day celebrations.

The SCMF involves managing three funding rounds each year and managing the SCMF student competition. This typically involves the following activities:

- Convening national and regional information workshops;
- Managing and administering the application process;
- Organising the judging process
- Providing detailed feedback to all applicants;
- Processing grant payments and keeping detailed administrative and financial records;
- Maintaining and updating the SCMF website.

It should be noted that expenses paid to third parties account for approximately 30% of the total paid to DHR for managing and administering the Simon Cumbers Media Fund. This includes costs associated with maintaining and updating the SCMF website, facilitating the judging process and raising awareness of the Fund among journalists. DHR was awarded a new two-year contract in April 2015 following a competitive tendering process.

Following a further competitive tendering process, DHR was also engaged to plan, manage and execute a national Africa Day 2015 flagship event in Dublin. Like annual Africa Day events held over successive years, this incorporated musical entertainment and cultural activities aimed principally at family audiences. DHR's role involved the administration of a small grants scheme for regional events which they managed on behalf of the Department in partnership with a number of local authorities. DHR also worked to raise public awareness of the Africa Day events, including through the use of social media and the Africa Day website. This work represented a very minor element of the overall project and was conducted in close cooperation with my Department's communications office.

In relation to the expenditure on Africa Day, expenses paid to third parties accounted for between 70% and 80% of the total costs listed below. This included expenditure on security, sanitation, venue set-up, health and safety issues and small grants to facilitate the participation of community groups.

The table below sets out the payments to DHR since July 2014.

Expenditure July 2014 - Date

Receipt and Project/Event	2014	2015
DHR Communications – Simon Cumbers Media Fund	€32,220	€84,565.48
DHR Communications – Africa Day	€39,587	€173,345.1

It is important to note that the variance in Africa Day amounts for 2014 and 2015 is accounted for by the fact that a majority of 2014-related expenditure was incurred prior to my entry into office in July of last year.

Consultancy Contracts Data

451. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the reports he commissioned from external consultants since March 2011, by year, title, cost, date published and company in tabular form. [43664/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Department is responsible for two Votes – Vote 28 (Foreign Affairs and Trade) and Vote 27 (International Cooperation).

The Department commissions external expertise where highly specialised skills are not available within the Department and particularly where ongoing independent evaluation of programmes and projects is required. During the course of their engagements, these consultants/experts may prepare reports and other documentation for the Department.

In-depth analysis of issues by external experts has informed - and continues to inform - my Department's policies, allowing for more targeted use of resources and greater accountability in the allocation of budgets.

These services are procured by open competitive tender in accordance with EU and national rules and comply with the overall value for money objective of the Department.

Separately, a low number of consultancies are occasionally engaged directly by our Missions abroad from time to time.

Questions - Written Answers

The following tables set out the details of external reports commissioned by the Department since March 2011.

-	Commission	Experts/Consultants	Report/Subject	Cost (€)	Date of publication
2011		Kevin Moore	Support to the Governments of Zambia and South Africa to develop Special Economic Zones for the promotion of inward investment and employment	17,861	Not Applicable – see footnote*
2011		Paul Sheane	Support to the Governments of Zambia and South Africa to develop Special Economic Zones for the promotion of inward investment and employment	9,965	*
2011		Stefanie Meredith	Review of Irish Aid Support for Product Development Partnerships in developing countries	10,100	*
2011		Samia Saad	Review of Irish Aid Support for Product Development Partnerships in developing countries	9,198	*

2011		Paud Murphy	Development Education Reviews - to examine the current funding support and engagement in each of the priority areas identified in the Development Education strategy (primary, post primary, third level, adult, community and youth work)	9,064	*
2011		80:20	Development Education Reviews - to examine the current funding support and engagement in each of the priority areas identified in the Development Education strategy (primary, post primary, third level, adult, community and youth work)	9,870	*
2011		Eilis Murray	Development Education Reviews - to examine the current funding support and engagement in each of the priority areas identified in the Development Education strategy (primary, post primary, third level, adult, community and youth work)	6,068	*
2011		ISOS	Development Education Reviews - to examine the current funding support and engagement in each of the priority areas identified in the Development Education strategy (primary, post primary, third level, adult, community and youth work)	42,247	*
2011		Bernard McLoughlin	Review of the Irish Aid Centre, Dublin	6,143	*

Questions - Written Answers

2011		Paud Murphy	Development Education Reviews - to examine the current funding support and engagement in each of the priority areas identified in the Development Education strategy (primary, post primary, third level, adult, community and youth work)	9,064	*
2011		Cathal Higgins	Preparation of a report on the programme of education sector budget support towards school infrastructural development in Karamoja region and skills development in the oil sector (Uganda)	5,000	*
2011		Mike Williams	Review of Humanitarian Programme Plan for Irish Aid	18,742	*
2011		Humanitarian Policy Ltd	Review of Security Policy & Practice among Irish Aid Humanitarian Partners	33,930	*
	2012	Mike Williams	Evaluation of the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation	12,247	July 2013
	2012	PA Consulting Group	Evaluating the value of the economic relationship between the United Kingdom and Ireland	73,083	July 2013
	2012	Cathy Roche	Review of the Our World Awards 2005-2011	6,300	*
	2012	Everywhere Consulting	Feasibility Study on the Establishment of a Humanitarian Hub at Shannon Airport	40,584	*
	2012	Fintan Farrelly	Review of the Irish Aid Strategic Environmental Partnership Programme	6,000	*
	2012	Mike Williams	Review of Mísean Cara	15,099	*

2011		Paud Murphy	Development Education Reviews - to examine the current funding support and engagement in each of the priority areas identified in the Development Education strategy (primary, post primary, third level, adult, community and youth work)	9,064	*
	2012	Pham Quang Hoa	Local consultancy contract 'Review of P135 infrastructure projects funded by Irish Aid'	5,453	*
	2012	IOD Parc	South Africa Country Strategy Programme 2008-2012 Final Report	73,256	January 2013
	2012	Itad	Evaluation of the Irish Aid Ethiopia Country Strategy Programme 2008-2012	143,886	May 2013
	2013	Peter McEvoy	Evaluation of a number of Organisations funded by the Emigrant Support Programme(ESP)	13,075	July 2013
	2013	Wright Consultancy Ltd	Gender Equality Audit	14,000	*
2013		Mary Jennings	Review of HRD (Human Rights and Democratisation) Scheme Irish Aid Palestine	15,500	*
2013		Bronagh Hinds & Karen McMinn Consultants	Report on the implementation of Ireland's National Action Plan on UNSCR (United Nations Security Council Resolution) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security	20,811	June 2013
2013		ASTECC Global Consultancy Ltd	Review of Irish Aid Financial Policies and Procedures	44,493	*

Questions - Written Answers

2013		Gareth Williams	Review of Financial and Programme of the Camara Education Programme	20,000	*
2013		John Geraghty	Review of University College Cork's Programme of Technical Support Internships for Food Security	7,568	*
2013		Natural Research Institute	Review of Irish Aid Support to Fair and Ethical Trade Initiatives	19,292	*
2013		Pham Quang Hoa	Review Programme 135 (for Ethnic Minorities) of Irish Aid funded infrastructure projects	5,588	*
2013		IOD Parc	Evaluation of Irish Aid's Sierra Leone Strategy Paper, 2011-2013	77,907	August 2014
2013		Mokoro	Evaluation of Ireland's Support to Timor Leste, 2001-2014	85,203	August 2014
	2014	Tierney & Associates, Risk & Governance Consultants	Audit of grants awarded under Emigrant Support Programme	19,934	*

	2014	Hogan Lovells, Washington	Review of tax, social insurance and health obligations and other conditions of service in respect of locally-recruited staff members at our missions in the United States	57,756	*
	2014	Gallup Korea (Korea Gallup Poll Co. LTD)	Working Holiday Agreement Report	7,217	March 2015
2014		Andy Pollak	Review of Irish Aid support for Initial Teacher Education	11,564	*
2014		ADETEF	OECD DAC EVAL-NET Study on Collaborative Partner- Donor Evaluation Work	25,000	*
2014		Tran Thi Ngoc Diep	Local input into Review of Irish Aid scholarship programmes	1,502	*
2014		Tom Collins	Feasibility Study - Celebrating and Sustaining Ireland's relationship with Africa	5,000	*
2014		ITAD Limited	Mid Term Review of the Civil Society Support Programme	68,135	*

Questions - Written Answers

2014		David Goodman Payne	Review of Irish Aid Civil Society Facility in Vietnam	8,589	On-going
2014		Cathy Gaynor/Niamh O'Grady/Gill Roe	Evaluability Assessment of the Programme of Strategic Cooperation	43,200	*
2014		Willis Risk Services (Ireland) Limited	Consultancy for insurance policy report and tender documentation for the Rapid Response Corps	5,000	*
2014		Me-kong Dev Research Institute	Impact assessment of Irish Aid funded infrastructure projects under P135 in 2011 & 2012	43,912	*
2014		Karen McMinn	Report and final review on the implementation of Ireland's National Action Plan on UNSCR (United Nations Security Council Resolution) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security	9,750	2015

2014		Mokoro	Evaluation of Irish Aid's Uganda Country Strategy Paper 2010-2014	113,739	Not published yet
2014		ASM (B) Ltd	Payroll System Audit	11,636	*
	2015	ASM	Audit of grants awarded under Emigrant Support Programme	€9,800	*
2015		Peter McEvoy	Professional Services for the appraisal of Irish Aid fellowship Training Programme	16,560	*
2015		Coffey International Development Ltd	Review of the Irish Aid Programme Grant Mechanism	23,588	*
2015		Tran Thi Ngoc Diep	Local input into scoping study to explore Ireland's cooperation in the agriculture & agribusiness sector under the IDEAS programme	4,442	*
2015		Johnny O'Regan	Organisational Assessment of Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice	4,400	*

2015		ASM	The provision of audit services to examine grants awarded under the ESP	14,700	*
2015		Mazars	ICT Audit	27,552	*
2015		Crowleys DFK	Payment System Audit	19,004	*

*is report commissioned by the Department is an internal management report and not for publication.

Ministerial Advisers Data

452. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of special advisers on his staff and their yearly salary, from 2011 to 2014, inclusive, and to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43680/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The names and salaries of the Special Advisers appointed to the Ministers and Minister of States in this Department during the period in question are set out in the following table:

Name	Position held	Annual Salary – years in question	Period of service
Mark Garrett	Chief Adviser - Office of the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Eamon Gilmore, T.D.	€168,000 - 2011, €168,000 - 2012 €168,000 - 2013* €156,380 – 1 July 2013 – end of contract	10 March 2011 – 11 July 2014
Colm O'Reardon	Economic Adviser – Office of the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Eamon Gilmore, T.D.	€155,000 - 2011 €155,000 - 2012 €155,000 - 2013* €144,550 – 1 July 2013 – end of contract	10 March 2011 – 11 July 2014
Jean O'Mahony	Special Adviser – Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Eamon Gilmore, T.D.	€80,051 - 2011 €83,337 - 2012 €86,604 - 2013* €81,676 – 1 July 2013 €84,706 - 2014	10 March 2011 – 11 July 2014

Name	Position held	Annual Salary – years in question	Period of service
Niamh Sweeney	Special Adviser – Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Eamon Gilmore, T.D.	€80,051 – 2012*€75,647 – 1 July 2013€78,670 – 2014	7 November 2012 – 11 July 2014
Stephen O’Shea	Special Adviser - Minister of State for European Affairs, Lucinda Creighton, T.D.	€61,966 - 2011€61,966 - 2012€64,257 - 2013	28 November 2011 – 22 July 2013
Deborah Sweeney	Special Adviser - Minister of State for European Affairs, Paschal Donohoe, T.D.	€68,293 - 2014	6 January 2014 – 31 July 2014
Sarah Kavanagh	Special Adviser - Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Charlie Flanagan, T.D.	€79,401 - 2014€82,587 - 2015	11 July 2014 - date
Susie O’Connor	Special Adviser - Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Charlie Flanagan, T.D.	€79,401 - 2014€82,587 - 2015	11 July 2014 - date
Conor Gouldsbury	Special Adviser – Minister of State for European Affairs and Data Protection Dara Murphy, T.D.	€61,966 - 2014€64,257 - 2015	6 October 2014 – date

**Reduction in salary due to the Haddington Road Agreement*

Diplomatic Representation

453. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the prohibition of peaceful demonstrations in France and the measures taken by the police authorities to break up peaceful demonstrations; if he has raised any concerns regarding the matter with the French authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43717/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Following the horrific attacks of 13 November in Paris in which 129 people were killed, and more than 350 injured, President François Hollande declared a State of Emergency. On 19 November the French Parliament, definitively adopted the three-month extension and expansion of the State of emergency.

The French Government decided that in order to avert possible further terrorist attacks, and to protect public safety, some restrictions on demonstrations and public gatherings were

necessary. While such restrictions are a serious matter in any society, the terrible circumstances which gave rise to them has to be taken into consideration.

Every government has a responsibility to balance the duty to protect its citizens with their entitlement to freedom of assembly. I have no doubt that the French Government is fully sensitised to the need for such balance.

Diplomatic Representation

454. **Deputy Eric Byrne** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding an Irish citizen imprisoned abroad; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43806/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has a clear strategy in this case which is focused on achieving a positive outcome at the earliest time possible for this citizen. That strategy is based on two key objectives: Firstly, to see this citizen released by the Egyptian authorities so that he can return to his family and his studies in Ireland and, secondly, to provide consular support for his welfare while he remains in detention.

In furtherance of these objectives, I have intensively engaged with the Egyptian authorities, including the Egyptian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Egypt's Ambassador to Ireland, and with EU and international partners, including High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Ms. Federica Mogherini. The Taoiseach also raised the case in person on two occasions with Egyptian President al-Sisi. The information we receive from all of these contacts is carefully considered and used in reviewing our approach to this case on a constant basis.

Significant resources in Cairo and in Dublin continue to be deployed in the provision of comprehensive consular assistance to both the citizen and their family. I would also note that Embassy officials visited this citizen in detention for the forty-eight time on 23 November.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade continues to accord a high priority to this case and our approach is guided at all times by the two key objectives set out above.

Diplomatic Representation

455. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the assistance given to a person (details supplied) who is currently detained in Egypt awaiting trial. [43926/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): This citizen and his family have been the recipients of comprehensive consular assistance from my Department and the individual in detention has been visited on forty-eight occasions by Embassy officials, most recently on 23 November. Numerous positive interventions have been made with the Egyptian authorities on his behalf. The Embassy has also attended all his trial hearings to date, and they will also attend the next one later in December.

Passport Services

456. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to report on the initial two months of the passport card, if there have been any reports of it not being accepted at any locations in Europe, to outline what communications have been made with the various border authorities in Europe, if he is aware that it is not listed on the European Council's public register of travel and identity documents online website; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43927/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I launched the Passport Card on 5 October. Since then over 12,000 applications have been received and over 11,200 cards produced. The card is accepted for travel in all EU and European Economic Area (EEA) countries and Switzerland (31 countries in total) and gives exactly the same entitlements and protections as a passport book. There has been a positive public reaction to this Irish-led innovative project including from those Irish citizens who travel frequently within Europe. It is also appears to be in demand by young adults for age-identification purposes.

We have been informed by a small number of citizens that they have encountered difficulties with the card being accepted. This appears to have happened at regional airports in the main. To avoid this in the future I have asked our Embassies in each EU and EEA country and Switzerland to make contact with Ministries of Justice/Home Affairs as relevant and request them to ensure that all border guards are fully appraised of the validity of the Irish Passport Card for travel.

Additionally the details of the Passport Card have been uploaded to Keesing's document checker database. This is a comprehensive database for identity documents and bank notes and is widely used by government agencies including military and police, immigration offices, customs, embassies and tax authorities.

An Garda Síochána have arranged for that document to be uploaded to the Edison Database (Electronic Documentation and Information System on Investigation Networks). This database can be accessed by all 190 Interpol member countries through a secure internet system known as I-24/7.

The process of uploading the document onto the European Union "False and Authentic Documents Online" (FADO) database is underway by An Garda Síochána. FADO is available to document experts in partner states including in all member states of the EU. When this process is complete the document will be uploaded to the European Council's Public Register of Authentic Travel and Identity Documents Online website. I am advised by An Garda Síochána that this final stage could take up to four months.

Northern Ireland Issues

457. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the revelations in the British Broadcasting Corporation's programme "Spotlight" on 24 November 2015 regarding the murder of a person (details supplied), the 50 allegations regarding the double-agent known as Steakknife, the implications for the truth and reconciliation process in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43467/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I welcome the announcement in October by the Director of Public Prosecutions in Northern Ireland that he has requested the PSNI Chief Constable to investigate the full range of alleged offences which relate to the activities of the individual commonly known under the codename 'Steakknife' or 'Stakeknife'. This includes the investigation of any criminal activity that may have been car-

ried out by Security Service Personnel and the murder of the person in question.

Given the broad scope and range of possible offences, relating to up to fifty murders, this investigation will require considerable PSNI resources if it is to be concluded effectively. I understand that the PSNI is currently engaged in a scoping exercise to determine the potential scale of the investigation necessary, with a view to potentially seeking additional resources from the Northern Department of Justice or from the Northern Ireland Office.

The issues raised in this case are serious and complex, and are a reminder of the importance of dealing with the legacy of the violence perpetrated by all parties to the Troubles. I remain convinced that the institutional framework as agreed in the Stormont House Agreement offers the best possible way of bringing whatever healing is possible to those affected by the loss of loved ones and those who continue to suffer trauma. The Government remains committed to achieving the establishment of these institutions so that we can, in a fundamental way, deal with the past and foster reconciliation.

It is my intention to meet with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Theresa Villiers MP, and with the Northern Minister for Justice, David Ford, later this month. Among the issues which we would discuss would be how to make progress on legacy matters. This would include how the PSNI's legacy investigations would be resourced pending implementation of a new institutional framework for dealing with the past.

Passport Applications Data

458. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of passports issued and the number of times where the ten-day turnaround was not met in 2014 and in 2015 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44200/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Passport Service has issued 644,481 passports to date this year which represents an increase of over 15,000 from the 629,446 passports that were issued in 2014.

The ten day turnaround applies to those applications submitted in person at the Passport Offices in Dublin and Cork and through the An Post Passport Express service.

All applications which were submitted in person at the Passport Offices met the guideline turnaround times in 2014 and 2015.

Passport Express applications fall into two categories, renewals and first time applications. First time applications take longer to process than renewal applications as the Passport Service requires detailed documentation relating to identity and citizenship entitlement. In the case of a renewal the identity and citizenship of the applicant has normally already been firmly established.

There follows details of the average turnaround times on a monthly basis for applications submitted via the Passport Express service in 2014 and 2015 to date. The average annual turnaround time for renewals was 10.5 days last year. So far this year it is 9.3 days.

The Department stresses, including on passport application forms and on the website, that turnaround times are a guideline rather than a stated guarantee. For this reason we recommend that citizens apply at least six weeks in advance of any planned travel.

2014	First Time - Passport Ex- press		Renewal – Pass- port Express	
	Applications Processed	Average Turn- around in days	Applications Processed	Average Turn- around in days
January	5372	11	29836	9
February	5136	11	28284	11
March	6629	11	32926	10
April	9440	12	39425	10
May	8254	12	44596	11
June	7063	12	40181	11
July	8897	13	36903	11
August	4475	11	21550	11
September	4365	14	19590	13
October	3208	11	15811	10
November	2588	10	13817	9
December	1653	11	9154	10
Annual Average				10.5

2015	First Time - Passport Ex- press		Renewal – Pass- port Express	
	Applications Processed	Average Turn- around in days	Applications Processed	Average Turn- around in days
January	4579	13	29837	12
February	5249	13	32160	11
March	6903	11	37418	9
April	9206	11	45049	10
May	8059	12	47182	11
June	7478	14	46372	12
July	7346	13	36094	10
August	4311	9	23626	7
September	3330	5	21656	5
October	2667	7	16846	6
November	1490	10	11430	10
Average to date				9.3

European Council Meetings

459. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will meet the Belgium Foreign Minister, Mr. Didier Reynders, outside the European Union Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44201/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I meet regularly with my foreign minister colleagues at the monthly Foreign Affairs Council meetings including with my Belgian counterpart with whom I have excellent working relations.

I have no immediate plans to meet the Belgian Minister outside the Council framework at

this juncture.

Departmental Appointments

460. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade when he will fill the post of ambassador of Ireland to Bulgaria; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44202/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Government, on foot of proposals made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, nominates officers to Ambassadorial posts. The nominated Ambassadors are subsequently appointed by the President.

The former Ambassador of Ireland to Bulgaria retired from his post in October 2015. Candidates for this post are currently being considered and I will bring a proposal for a successor to Cabinet early in the New Year. In the interim, the Deputy Head of Mission is acting as Chargé d’Affaires, in line with the usual practice.

Ministerial Meetings

461. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will meet the Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs and Co-operation, Mr José Manuel García-Margallo y Marfil, outside the Council of the European Union; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44203/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I meet regularly with my foreign minister colleagues at the monthly Foreign Affairs Council meetings including with my Spanish counterpart with whom I have excellent working relations.

I have no immediate plans to meet the Spanish Minister outside the Council framework at this juncture.

Legal Costs

462. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the total cost to his Department and those under his aegis of the procurement of legal services in the State from 2011 to 2015, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44574/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My Department is responsible for two Votes, Vote 28 (Foreign Affairs and Trade) and Vote 27 (International Cooperation).

My Department generally seeks advice on domestic legal matters from the Office of the Attorney General and/or the Chief State Solicitor’s Office. Depending on the subject-matter, domestic litigation is dealt with on my Department’s behalf by the Attorney General’s Office, the Chief State Solicitor’s Office or the State Claims Agency which engage lawyers to act for the Department where necessary and pay their fees. Department has a Legal Division, which deals with matters of public international law, human rights law, and European Union law and other relevant legal issues. The Division also acts as agent for the Government before certain international courts and tribunals, such as the European Court of Human Rights. In this regard, it

works closely with the Office of the Attorney General, which pays the fees of external lawyers.

The amounts incurred by my Department in legal costs (excluding settlement costs/awards) in the years 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and to end-November 2015 are set out in the table:

Year	Total costs
2011	100,821
2012	79,854
2013	162,129
2014	217,703
2015 (to end-November)	147,118

Third Level Funding

463. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost of increasing the number of intellectual disability training places in Dublin City University from 20 to 35; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43848/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The position in relation to the funding of higher education institutions, such as Dublin City University, is that my Department allocates recurrent funding to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for direct disbursement to the HEA designated higher education institutions. The HEA allocates the funding to Universities via a Recurrent Grant Allocation Model on the basis of student numbers in each institution and it is then a matter for the individual institution as to how that funding is allocated internally.

State Examinations Exemptions

464. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will examine the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry who requested an exemption in the leaving certificate examinations; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43510/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations. The State Examinations Commission operates a scheme of Reasonable Accommodations in the Certificate examinations. In view of this I have forwarded your query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to you.

Schools Building Projects Status

465. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the conveyancing process for a school (details supplied) in County Galway will be concluded so that work can begin on providing a new school; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43514/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I can confirm that the legal issues which arose as part of the conveyancing process have now been resolved and the acquisition of the site is currently being finalised.

Education Policy

466. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason for differing school times (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43522/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): Circular 11/95 and the Rules for National Schools provide that the minimum length of the normal full school day at primary level comprises of a period of not less than 5 hours and forty minutes. The Deputy has not stated the class that the child is attending but Circular 11/95 and the Rules for National Schools also provide that pupils in infant classes may have a school day that is one hour shorter than the length of the normal school day. It is a matter for the Board of Management of a particular school to decide whether this concession should be applied in the case of its school. If pupils in infant classes are being given a shorter day, their parents should be notified accordingly and invited to collect them at time of dismissal. Where the implementation of the shorter day for pupils in infant classes may cause issues for some parents, my Department would encourage school authorities to engage with parents locally with a view to arriving at a mutually acceptable resolution. My Department does not support the position of any school which may take a unilateral decision to shorten the school day for any pupil, irrespective of whether the pupil may have a special educational need or not. It is the position of my Department that all school children are entitled to participate fully in their school. If there are reasons why an earlier finishing time should be applied in the case of any child, any such arrangements should be agreed with the parents of the child in advance of their implementation. If the Deputy has information which indicates that, because of a child’s special educational needs, a school has shortened their school day, without the agreement of the child’s parents, such information should be forwarded to the special Education Section of my Department.

Educational Disadvantage

467. **Deputy Jonathan O’Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of schools with delivering equality of opportunity in schools status that have merged with other schools since this status was introduced, and the number of the newly merged schools that maintained or received this status in tabular form. [43525/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I wish to advise the Deputy that since DEIS was launched in 2005 a total of 37 schools with DEIS status have amalgamated with other schools, some of which had DEIS status and some of which were non-DEIS schools. There were 29 such amalgamations at primary level and 8 at post primary. The details of same are set out in the table attached. In line with all such amalgamations, the new school continues to receive the current level of supports in respect of the number of eligible pupils from the former DEIS school until that pupil cohort have left the school. In the case of a primary school these supports continue to be supplied for 8 years following the amalgamation. In the case of a post primary school these supports continue to be supplied for 6 years following the amalgamation.

DEIS was launched in 2005

First Amalgamations involving DEIS Schools are in the 2007/08 school year. (No such amalgamations in 2008/09 school year).

Amalgamations involving DEIS schools for 2007/2008 school year

Amalgamate	DEIS status	Amalgamate	DEIS status	Amalgamate	DEIS status	New School details	New DEIS classification
CBS Primary School (RN 16870T), Ennistymon, Co. Clare	DEIS RURAL	Ennistymon Convent Primary School (RN 16359L), Ennistymon, Co. Clare	DEIS RURAL	-		Ennistymon National School (RN 20245S), Ennistymon, Co. Clare	DEIS Primary RURAL
St. Michael's Junior School (RN 19708C), Cootehill, Co. Cavan	DEIS	St. Michael's Senior School (RN 19709E), Cootehill, Co. Cavan	DEIS	-		St Michael's National School (RN 20277I), Cootehill, Co. Cavan	DEIS Primary-URBAN
Scoil Chroí (RN 05215W), Ballina, Co. Mayo	DEIS	Scoil Íosagáin (RN 17201E), Ballina, Co. Mayo	DEIS	-		Scoil Íosa (RN 20275E), Convent Hill, Ballina, Co. Mayo	DEIS Primary-URBAN
St Brigid's GNS (RN 16591P), Newtownmountkennedy, Co. Wicklow	DEIS URBAN	St Joseph's BNS (RN 18732R), Newtownmountkennedy, Greystones, Co. Wicklow	DEIS URBAN	-		Newtownmountkennedy Primary School (RN 20278K), Newtownmountkennedy, Co. Wicklow	DEIS Primary URBAN
St Benedict's NS (RN 19262L), Grange Park, Raheny, Dublin 5	DEIS	St Mary's NS (RN 19440J), Grange Park View, Raheny, Dublin 5	DEIS	-		St Benedict's and St Mary's National School (RN 20281W), Grange Park, Dublin 5	DEIS Primary-URBAN

Amalgamations involving DEIS schools for 2009/2010 school year

Amalgamate	DEIS status	Amalgamate	DEIS status	Amalgamate	DEIS status	New School details	New DEIS classification
SN an Droma (RN 13528Q), Leitir Mealláin, Co. na Gaillimhe	DEIS RURAL	Sn Leitir Mealláin, Leitir, Leitir Mealláin (RN 13416F), Galway	DEIS RURAL	-	-	Sn Leitir Mealláin (RN 20345W), Leitir Mealláin, Co. Na Gaillimhe	DEIS Primary RURAL
St Patrick's College, Tuam, Co. Galway (RN63140U)	DEIS	St Jarlath's College (RN 63150A), Tuam	NON DEIS			St Jarlath's College (RN 68074M), Tuam, Co. Galway	NON-DEIS Post Primary
St Aengus PP School (RN 71490U), Mountrath	DEIS	Brigidine Secondary School (RN 63410A), Mountrath	NON DEIS	Patrician College (RN 63440J) Ballyfin -	NON DEIS	Mountrath Com School (RN 91550B), Dysartbeigh, Mountrath, Co. Laois	NON- DEIS Post Primary C & C

Amalgamations involving DEIS schools for 2010/2011 school year

Amalgamate	DEIS status	Amalgamate	DEIS status	Amalgamate	DEIS status	New School details	New DEIS classification
Sráid Bhaile Boys NS (RN 17692D)	DEIS RURAL	Stradbally Convent (RN 13937K)	NON DEIS			St Coleman's NS (RN 20353V), Stradbally, Co. Laois	NON-DEIS Primary RURAL

Amalgamations involving DEIS schools for 2011/2012 school year

Questions - Written Answers

Amalgamate	DEIS status	Amalgamate	DEIS status	Amalgamate	DEIS status	New School details	New DEIS classification
Scoil Pío Naofa (RN 16851P), Ballybunion, Co. Kerry	DEIS RURAL	St Joseph's NS (RN 13233U), Doon Road, Ballybunion, Co. Kerry	DEIS RURAL	-	-	Scoil Íosagáin (RN 20196I), Church Road, Ballybunion, Co. Kerry	DEIS Primary RURAL
St Attracta's NS (RN 13944H), Kilmactigue, Aclare, Sligo	DEIS RURAL	St Joseph's NS, (RN 19923G), Banada, Sligo	NON DEIS			Our Lady's NS (RN 20385L), Tourlestrane, Co. Sligo	NON-DEIS Primary RURAL
Scoil Mhuire Girls School (RN 05913A), Kilcormac, Offaly	DEIS RURAL	St Cormac's Boys School (RN 17359Q), Kilcormac, Offaly	DEIS RURAL			Scoil Mhuire agus Chormaic (RN 20387P), Kilcormac, Co. Offaly	DEIS Primary RURAL
Maria Assumpta JNS (RN 18237H), Ballyphehane, Cork	DEIS URBAN	Marian Assumpta GNS (RN 18238J), Ballyphehane, Cork	DEIS URBAN			Scoil Maria Assumpta (RN 20389T), Ballyphehane, Cork	DEIS Primary URBAN
Abbeyfeale Vocational School (RN 71870H)	DEIS	St Joseph's Secondary School (RN 63990V)	NON-DEIS	St. Ita's College (RN 63970P), Abbeyfeale	NON-DEIS	Coláiste íde & Íosaf (Abbeyfeale Community College) (RN 76093M), Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick	NON – DEIS Post Primary ETB
Abbey Community College (RN 70820K), Wicklow	DEIS	De La Salle College (RN 61850S), St. Man-tan's Road, Wicklow, Co. Wicklow	NON-DEIS			Coláiste Chill Mhantáin (RN 76099B), Burkeen, Co. Wicklow	NON – DEIS Post Primary ETB
McHale College (RN 72070D), Achill Sound, Westport, Co. Mayo	DEIS	Scoil Damhnait (RN 64490G), GOB A'Choire, Co. Mhuigh Eo	NON-DEIS			Coláiste Pobail (RN 76150V), Acla, Achill Sound, Westport, Co. Mayo	NON – DEIS Post Primary ETB
Vocational School Kildare (RN 70690A), Kildare Town, Kildare	DEIS	St Joseph's Academy (RN 61700W), Kildare Town, Co. Kildare	DEIS	Presentation Secondary School (RN 61701B), Kildare Town, Co. Kildare	NON-DEIS	Kildare Town Community School (RN 91530S), Kildare	NON-DEIS Post Primary C & C
Scoil Íosagáin/Mhuire (RN 19766Q), Mount La Salle, Dublin 10	DEIS SENIOR	Scoil Mhuire/Seosamh (RN 19767S), Mount La Salle, Dublin 10	DEIS SENIOR			De La Salle NS (RN 20391G), Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	DEIS Primary URBAN Vertical
St Louise De Marillac Junior school Senior school (RN 18342E)	DEIS (Junior)	St Louise De Marillac Senior School (RN 18341C)	DEIS (Senior)			St Louise De Marillac Primary school (RN 20397S), Drumfin Road, Ballyfermot, Dublin (Amal from 09/01/2012)	DEIS Primary URBAN Vertical school

Amalgamations involving DEIS schools for 2012/2013 school year

Amalgamate	DEIS status	Amalgamate	DEIS status	Amalgamate	DEIS status	New School details	New DEIS classification
Scrupul National School (RN 08241P), Mullagh, Ennis, Co. Clare	DEIS RURAL	Coore NS (RN 10191P), Mullagh, Ennis, Co. Clare	DEIS RURAL			Coore National School (RN 20404M), Mullagh, Ennis, Co. Clare	DEIS Primary RURAL
St Mary's Girls NS (RN 00570R), Bishop Street, Limerick	DEIS (Vertical)	St Mary's BNS (RN 20185D), Island Road, Limerick	DEIS (Vertical)			St Mary's NS (RN 20405O), Island Road, Limerick	DEIS Primary URBAN Vertical
Sn Mhin na Manach (RN 16142J), An Clochan Liath, Co. Dhún na nGall	DEIS RURAL	Scoil Chroine (RN 19553W), An Clochan Liath, Donegal	NON DEIS			Scoil Chroine (RN 20421M), An Clochan, Liath, Co. Dhún na nGall	NON-DEIS Primary RURAL

Amalgamations involving DEIS schools for 2013/2014 school year

Amalgamate	DEIS status	Amalgamate	DEIS status	Amalgamate	DEIS status	New School details	New DEIS classification
Scoil na Manistreach (RN 12747A), Kildare	DEIS	Scoil Bhríde Naofa (RN 15599D), Kildare	DEIS			St Brigid's Kildare Town Primary School (RN20427B), Kildare Town, Co Kildare	DEIS Primary URBAN
Mater Dei Primary School (RN 00743W), Basin Lane, Dublin 8	DEIS Vertical	Scoil Seamus (RN18519R), James Street, Dublin 8	DEIS Vertical			St James's Primary School (RN 20429F), Basin Lane, James St, Dublin 8	DEIS Primary URBAN Vertical
St Mary's BNS (RN 18822S), Summerhill, Carrick on Shannon, Co. Leitrim	DEIS URBAN	Marist NS (RN 17906T), Cara Dreoma Ruisc, Co. Leitrim	NON-DEIS			Scoil Mhuire (RN 20432R), Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim	NON-DEIS Primary URBAN
Plás Mhuire BNS (RN 20005V), St Mary's Place, Dorset St, Dublin 7	DEIS Vertical	Scoil Mhuire's Iósaf Girls (RN 19895E), Dorset St, Dublin 7	DEIS Vertical			St Mary's Primary School (RN 20436C), St Mary's Place, Dorset Street, Dublin 7	DEIS Primary URBAN Vertical
Coláiste Pho-bail Mhichil (RN 71810M), Cappamore, Limerick	DEIS	St Fintan's Secondary School (RN 64040V), Doon, Limerick	NON-DEIS	St Joseph's Secondary School (RN 64050B), Doon, Limerick	NON-DEIS	Scoil na Tríonóide Naofa (Rn 68121S), Doon, Co. Limerick	NON-DEIS Post Primary

Amalgamations involving DEIS schools for 2014/15 school year

Amalgamate	DEIS status	Amalgamate	DEIS status	Amalgamate	DEIS status	New School details	New DEIS classification
St Joseph's BNS (RN17718S), Collooney, Co. Sligo	DEIS RURAL	Mary Immaculate GNS (RN 16793E), Collooney, Co. Sligo	DEIS RURAL			Scoil Mhuire agus Iósaf (RN 20122C), Collooney, Co. Sligo	DEIS Primary RURAL

Questions - Written Answers

Amalgamate	DEIS status	Amalgamate	DEIS status	Amalgamate	DEIS status	New School details	New DEIS classification
Mater Christ Secondary School (RN60852R), Cappagh, Finglas, Dublin 11	DEIS PP SCHOOL	Patrician College (RN 60571J), Finglas West, Dublin 11	DEIS PP SCHOOL			New Cross College (RN 68181N), Cappagh Road, Finglas, Dublin 11	DEIS Post Primary

Amalgamations involving DEIS schools for 2015/16 school year

Amalgamate	DEIS status	Amalgamate	DEIS status	Amalgamate	DEIS status	New School details	New DEIS classification
St. Fergal's Junior School (RN 19508R), Bray, Co. Wicklow (*GCEB school)	DEIS URBAN	St. Fergal's Senior School (RN 19654F), Bray, Co. Wicklow	DEIS URBAN	-		St. Fergal's NS (RN 20466L), Bray, Co. Wicklow	DEIS Primary URBAN
St Dominic's NS (RN 19950J) Mountain Park, Tallaght(*GCEB school)	DEIS URBAN	Scoil Cholmcille (RN 19464A), Mountain Park, Tallaght	DEIS	-		St Dominic's NS, Mountain Park, Tallaght, Dublin 24 (RN 20468P)	DEIS Primary URBAN
St Munchin's CBS, Bóthar Siolbroin, Limerick (RN 17942A)	DEIS Vertical	St. Munchin's GNS, Ballynanty, Limerick (RN 17941V)	DEIS Vertical	St Lelia's NS, Kileely, Limerick (RN 17445J)	DEIS Junior	Thomond Primary School, Ballynantly Road, Limerick (RN 20460W)	DEIS Primary URBAN Vertical
South Junior National School (RN 19372S) Southhill, Limerick (*BTC school)	DEIS Junior	Galvone NS (RN 20184B), Kennedy Park, Limerick (*BTC school)	DEIS Vertical	-	-	Le Chéile NS, Galvone, Limerick (RN 20459O)	DEIS Primary URBAN Vertical
Scoil Eoin Senior Boys (RN 02276E), Arklow, Co. Wicklow	DEIS URBAN	St. Michael's Girls NS (RN 13932A), Arklow, Co. Wicklow	Non-DEIS	St Peter's Infant Boys NS (RN 15383D), Arklow, Co. Wicklow	Non-DEIS	St John's Senior School, Arklow, Co. Wicklow (RN 20469R) St Michael's and St Peters Junior School, Arklow, Co. Wicklow (RN 20470C)	NON – DEIS Primary URBAN
Bunscoil Naomh Iósaf, (RN 13542K), Caherciveen, Co. Kerry	DEIS Rural	Scoil Mhuire na mBraithre (RN 16702V) Caherciveen, Co. Kerry	DEIS Rural	-		Caherciveen NS, Caherciveen, Co. Kerry (RN 20112W)	DEIS Primary Rural
St Joseph's NS (RN 13210I) Ballingarry, Thurles, Co. Tipperary	DEIS Rural	Mohober NS, (RN 07048Q), Mullinahone, Thurles, Co. Tipperary	NON-DEIS	-		Our Lady's National School, Ballingarry, Thurles, Co. Tipperary (RN 20475M)	NON-DEIS Primary Rural
Ballyduff Central NS (RN 19805A), Tralee, Co. Kerry	DEIS Rural	Rathmorrell NS (RN 18901A), Co. Kerry	Non-DEIS	-		Ballyduff NS, Ballyduff, Tralee, Co. Kerry (RN 20478S)	NON-DEIS Primary Rural

Educational Disadvantage

468. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the circumstances surrounding the loss of delivering equality of opportunity in schools status when Scoil Damhnait and McHale College merged to become Coláiste Pobail Acla in County Mayo, given that the larger McHale College previously had this status and took on the extra students when Scoil Damhnait closed, given that parents were informed that this status would not be affected and given that there are now nine national schools with this status feeding into a secondary school without this status in one of the most economically disadvantaged areas in the State; the persons who made the decision to remove this status from the school, and her plans to rectify this as a matter of urgency. [43527/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): As the Deputy is aware Coláiste Pobail Acla was established on 1st September 2011 following the amalgamation of a DEIS post-primary school, McHale College and Non DEIS post-primary school, Scoil Damhnait. In line with all such amalgamations, the new school will continue to receive the current level of supports in respect of the number of eligible pupils from the former DEIS school until that pupil cohort have left the school. In the case of Coláiste Pobail Acla these supports continue to be supplied for 6 years following the amalgamation. You will be aware that the process for the review of the DEIS Programme is currently underway in my Department. This process is being undertaken over the course of the current school year and will consider all issues pertaining to educational disadvantage. I hope to be in a position to make an overall proposal for the delivery of future interventions to tackle educational disadvantage after that. While this process is underway, I do not intend to make any changes to the current DEIS programme.

SOLAS Training and Education Programmes Administration

469. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the options available to a person (details supplied) in Dublin 2 to avail of further funding under the Momentum initiative in order to avail of further driving lessons. [43530/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): This is an operational matter for SOLAS which administers the Momentum Programme. I understand from SOLAS that there is no mechanism in the Momentum Programme to provide additional training and testing once the participant has completed the course.

Schools Building Projects Status

470. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when construction work will begin and be completed on a school (details supplied) in Dublin 7; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43537/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The school to which the Deputy refers is at an advanced stage of the tender process. Subject to no issues arising in the supplementary tender report, it is anticipated that works will commence in early 2016. It is anticipated that the project will take approximately 18 months to complete.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

471. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 546 of 17 November 2015 concerning a school (details supplied) in

County Longford, if she will respond to the clarification sought to aspects of that earlier reply. [43549/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I wish to advise the Deputy that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for allocating resource teachers and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) to schools to support children with special educational needs. The NCSE operates within my Department’s criteria in allocating such support. The criteria by which SNA support is allocated to pupils is set out in my Department’s Circular 0030/2014. It is important to note that each school’s allocation of SNA support can change from year to year and may be increased or decreased as students who qualify for SNA support enrol or leave a school. New students with care needs may, or may not, enrol to replace students who have left, for example, or SNA allocations may be decreased where a child’s care needs have diminished over time. The NCSE has published details of SNA allocations for schools for September 2015 on its website www.ncse.ie. The NCSE has advised that the school in question had an allocation of 12 whole time equivalent (WTE) SNA posts for the 2015/16, to support a current enrolment of 26 pupils. In addition the school has 5 teaching staff, which provides 17 whole time staff supporting 26 pupils in the school. Notwithstanding the fact that these pupils have a range of complex needs, this represents a very significant level of staffing for this school. The NCSE has advised that the school concerned has recently lodged an appeal of its staffing allocation under the NCSE appeal process, details of which are provided at www.ncse.ie. The NCSE has advised that this appeal will be processed shortly by a Senior SENO and that the school will be advised of the outcome as soon as possible.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

472. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of applications for grants to Student Universal Support Ireland by independent students and the parameters involved; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43553/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): Very significant numbers of third-level students move out of home to go to college and continue to be supported by their parents while in full-time education. Confirmation that a student is living separately from their parents/guardians is, of itself, not sufficient to establish independent status. When considering whether a student meets the conditions to be assessed independently of his or her parents, grant awarding authorities are obliged to satisfy themselves beyond doubt that an acceptable degree of proof of independent living in the relevant period has been submitted by the grant applicant. For student grants purposes, a student may be assessed as an independent student if he/she has attained the age of 23 on the 1st of January of the year of first entry to an approved post leaving certificate course or an approved higher education course or of re-entry to an approved course following a break in studies of at least three years, and is not ordinarily resident with his/her parents from the previous 1 October. Otherwise he/she would continue to be assessed on the basis of his/her parents’ income. The awarding authorities are obliged to satisfy themselves beyond doubt that an acceptable degree of proof has been submitted by the grant applicant in establishing eligibility under all aspects of the scheme including independent residency.

The onus is on the grant applicant to provide the necessary documentary evidence as requested by the relevant grant awarding authority. As such, it is not possible to provide a definitive list of all documents that would be acceptable to an awarding authority, as each individual’s particular set of circumstances varies. However, the type of documentary evidence that might be required would include:

- a letter confirming that the applicant's address is registered with the Private Residential Tenancies Board; or
- a Local Authority lease agreement or a letter confirming the applicant's rental under the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS); or
- a letter confirming the receipt and period of rent or mortgage supplement; or
- a utility bill in the applicant's name, for example; landline telephone, fixed broadband, gas, electricity or cable/satellite television bill. If the utility bills in the household are in the applicant's spouse's name then they will be accepted along with a copy of the marriage certificate; or
- official documentation posted to the applicant at his/her address and relating to his/her residence there e.g. a letter from the Department of Social Protection confirming Rent Allowance at the address or a letter from a previous awarding authority.

In circumstances where an applicant cannot provide any of the above, SUSI will work with the applicant to see what combination of evidence can be provided, and accepted, to satisfy the awarding authority that the applicant is living independently. If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI. Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down, in writing, by SUSI and remains of the view that the scheme has not been interpreted correctly in his/her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the independent Student Grant Appeals Board.

State Examinations

473. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the State Examinations Commission will complete its review of its procedures for allocating resources to assist leaving certificate students under the reasonable accommodations in the certificate examinations scheme. [43555/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations. The State Examinations Commission operates the scheme of Reasonable Accommodations in the Certificate examinations. In view of this I have forwarded your query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to you.

Departmental Programmes

474. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will establish a food forum to address the issue of hunger in schools; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43556/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures is the Government's overarching National Policy Framework for children and young people (aged 0-24 years). This cross-government approach will run from 2014 until 2020 and accommodate a number of constituent strategies. The Framework sets out common outcomes, policy commitments and key actions to ensure innovative and effective ways of working to improve the lives of children and young people. The underpinning principles will ensure that policy and practice protect the rights of children and young people, are family-oriented, pro-

mote equality and are evidence-informed and outcomes-focused. The current focus of my Department is on its participation in the implementation process and on working with relevant Government Departments and non-governmental organization to progress the education-related commitment of the Policy Framework. In this context I do not plan to establish a Food Forum to address the issue of hunger in schools.

Departmental Programmes

475. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will fund a scheme to deliver nutrition, cookery and healthy eating courses for parents within schools. [43557/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Schools may choose to provide information directly to parents, but the main focus in schools is on educating their students on health and well-being. This takes place firstly through the school curriculum, in the subjects Social, Personal and Health Education, Home Economics, and Physical Education; and secondly through various extra-curricular initiatives. Schools also have policies on healthy eating. The Government published "Healthy Ireland - A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013 - 2025". "Healthy Ireland" aims to improve the health not only of our students, but also of our nation. Education has a key role to play in the "Healthy Ireland" agenda. In fact, the Department of Education and Skills, having consulted with the Department of Health and the HSE, in September 2015, issued guidance for post-primary schools, initially, on promoting healthy lifestyles, in the form of Departmental Circular 0051/2015. At the same time, the Department of Health published updated guidelines for post primary schools on the development of healthy eating policies. Data from the Department's own Lifeskills Survey, 2012, indicate that almost all post-primary schools provide information to students on the importance of a balanced diet. Some 325 post-primary schools responded to the 2012 Survey. Data from the 2015 survey are currently being analysed.

Autism Support Services

476. **Deputy Shane Ross** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Nos. 229 of 4 November 2015 and 162 of 18 November 2015, if she will acknowledge a chronic lack of special classes for students with autism in mainstream secondary schools, and the reason for her policy of allowing schools to undertake such classes subject to their own willingness. [43558/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): As the Deputy is aware my Department provides for a range of placement options and supports for schools which have enrolled pupils with autism in order to ensure that, wherever a child is enrolled, they will have access to an appropriate education. Children with autism may be enrolled in a mainstream school and can attend all mainstream classes. In such cases these children will receive additional teaching support through the learning support and/or the resource teacher and, where appropriate, will receive access to Special Needs Assistance and assistive technology if required. In respect of children with autism who cannot be accommodated in mainstream education, they may be enrolled in special classes or special schools where more intensive and supportive interventions are provided. Progress in developing this network has been significant and in addition to the special school placements there are over 1,000 special classes throughout the country at primary and post primary level. The number of special classes at post primary level has risen by approximately 70 classes in the last 3 years. The National Council for Special Education

(NCSE) has recently submitted their Policy Advice on Educational Provision for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. In developing this policy advice, the NCSE has consulted widely with parents, professionals and other stakeholders and interested parties while also conducting research. The policy advice is currently under consideration in my Department. My officials will consider and report to me on any recommendations in the report which relate to the issues raised by the Deputy.

Educational Disadvantage

477. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a school (details supplied) in County Wexford will be considered under the delivering equality of opportunity in schools scheme; if she will include new schools under this scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43574/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The school referred to by the Deputy was surveyed in 2005 and was judged not to have a sufficient concentration of disadvantage among its pupils to warrant its inclusion in DEIS. An appeal by the school to the independent review body in 2006 confirmed that the level of disadvantage did not warrant the school’s inclusion. I wish to advise the Deputy that a process for the review of the DEIS Programme is currently underway in my Department. The review process is being undertaken over the course of the current school year. While this process is underway it is not intended to make any changes to the current programme, including the addition of any further schools. The review process will consider all issues pertaining to educational disadvantage. I hope to be in a position to make an overall proposal for the delivery of future interventions to tackle educational disadvantage after that.

School Accommodation Provision

478. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills her views on the shortage of secondary school places in Wexford town, if she will address this; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43575/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): As the Deputy will be aware, I announced in November last the need for the establishment of 4 new primary schools and 9 post primary schools to cater for increased demographics across a number of locations in 2017 and 2018. The demographic projections for the Wexford Town area does not indicate that a new post primary school is required.

As part of my Department’s School Capital Investment Programme, a number of building projects in Wexford schools are being progressed, including Loreto Secondary School and Wexford C.B.S., that will provide for increased capacity in the area. In addition, an application for additional accommodation was received last week from Selskar College which is being considered. My Department is also monitoring the position in the area taking into account the latest pupil enrolment data and the impact of planned expansion of school capacity. My Department is committed to working with the schools concerned to address any immediate accommodation need.

Physical Education

479. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of State-funded schools which she has funded since 2002 from her budget for designated facilities for physical education; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43580/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The specific information requested by the Deputy is not available in my Department as the provision of physical education facilities including P.E. Halls, General Purpose rooms and outdoor hard play areas such as basketball courts etc. are included in the accommodation brief for school projects and within the overall project cost.

Departmental Expenditure

480. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the gross yearly cost of allowances paid to principals of primary schools to carry out their leadership functions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43581/15]

481. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the gross yearly cost of all promoted posts, including deputy principal, assistant principal and special duties posts, in all State-funded primary schools; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43582/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 480 and 481 together.

The gross yearly cost of allowances paid in respect of Principal, Deputy Principal, Assistant Principal and Special Duties allowances are provided in the table.

GRADE	Gross Amount Paid 2014
	€ML
Principal	46
Deputy Principal	22
Assistant Principal	7
Special Duties	22

Teacher Data

482. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary school teachers who were employed directly in Traveller education in the 2008-09 school year, as a reference year, and in the 2014-15 school year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43583/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Traveller specific posts that existed in 2008/2009 were made up of a Visiting Teacher Service for Travellers and a Resource Teacher service for Travellers. In 2009, 41 Visiting Teacher Service for Travellers (VTST) posts were in place with 21 of these posts in the primary education system. From 1st September 2009, responsibility for the Visiting Teacher Service for Travellers moved to the National Educational Welfare Board as did other support services including the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) service. The HSCL service works with Traveller parents but it has the broader remit of working with other families whose children are at risk of educational disadvantage. These services are now part of Tusla – the Child and Family Agency. 484 Resource Teacher for Traveller (RTT) posts were in place during 2008/2009 at primary level. Following

the withdrawal of the RTT posts from 31st August 2011, a limited number of alleviation posts to assist schools that had high concentrations of traveller pupils who were previously supported by RTTs were created. 120 alleviation posts at primary level were in place in 2014/2015. The General Allocation Model, which provides additional learning support and resource teaching allocations for primary schools is designed to include traveller pupils who had previously been supported by RTT posts. The current policy in relation to Traveller Education is informed by the Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy which was launched in 2006, following wide ranging consultation with Traveller representative groups and other relevant stakeholders. The principle of inclusion is at the core of the Strategy. The focus of both current and future provision is on the development of an inclusive school environment through the whole school planning process, teaching practice, admissions policies, codes of behaviour and whole school evaluation. In keeping with this principle, additional resources provided in the education system for children are allocated on the basis of identified individual educational need. This includes Traveller children who require additional resources based on need and not on their identity as Travellers.

Special Educational Needs Staff

483. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of teachers employed directly in providing support to children for whom English was not their first language in the current school year and in the 2008-2009 school year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43584/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): Reforms introduced in the 2012/13 school year created a single simplified allocation process for both learning and language support. At primary level, learning/language support hours are allocated on the basis of mainstream classroom teaching posts in the school. At post-primary level, learning/language support is allocated on the basis of pupil numbers. Schools have autonomy to deploy this resource between learning support and language support depending on the specific needs of the school.

The new arrangements also provided for additional permanent teaching posts to be given to schools with high concentration of pupils that require language support.

Further additional temporary support is also provided, as necessary, to schools that have high concentrations of pupils that require language (EAL) support. At primary level, these allocations are made on the basis of appeals by any of these schools to the Primary Staffing Appeals Board. Where at least 20% of the total enrolment of the school is made up of pupils that require EAL support, the school may lodge an appeal with the Appeals Board. Having considered the circumstances outlined by the school and having regard to the high number of pupils requiring EAL support, additional post(s) may be approved by the Appeals Board.

I will arrange for the information sought by the Deputy to be forwarded directly to him.

Teaching Qualifications

484. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary teachers probated by her Department’s inspectorate in each year from 2010 to 2014, the number of full-time equivalent inspectors engaged in this process; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43585/15]

485. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of newly qualified teachers who were not considered suitable for probation by the inspectorate in the year in which they were due to be probated from 2010 to 2014; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43586/15]

486. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the time allocation, in days or part-days, provided in an inspector's workload for the probation of a teacher, from the preliminary visit to completion of the final report; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43587/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 484 to 486, inclusive, together.

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills does not have overall responsibility for the probation of newly qualified teachers. From 1 September 2012, the Teaching Council is the decision-making body with statutory authority to determine criteria and procedures for probation for registration of newly qualified teachers. The Council has outlined a service requirement and a professional competence requirement for the probation process. Currently, the Inspectorate supports the process of probation for registration purposes at the request of the Teaching Council in some primary schools. Inspectors conduct inspection visits to inform the Council about the professional competence requirement of conditionally registered teachers in these schools. These inspection visits are part of the Inspectorate's annual programme of work. Generally, the time allocated to these inspection visits ranges from one half day to one day per teacher in a year.

The numbers of primary teachers who satisfied the professional competence requirement of the probation process by means of inspection visits for each academic year from 2010/11 to 2014/15 and whose details were provided to the Teaching Council are as follows: 1924 teachers in 2010/11; 1961 teachers in 2011/12; 1918 teachers in 2012/13; 1715 teachers in 2013/14 and 1778 teachers in 2014/15.

These teachers will also have had to satisfy the Council regarding service requirements and the Inspectorate is not involved in that process. In addition, since 2013/14, a number of teachers have satisfied the professional competence and service requirements for full registration through the Council's Droichead process. Consequently, the Inspectorate is not aware of the total number of teachers who have satisfactorily completed the probation process for registration with the Teaching Council within the years 2010-2014.

The numbers of primary teachers who were inspected but who did not satisfy the professional competence requirement of the probation process by means of inspection visits for each academic year from 2010/11 to 2014/15 are as follows: 70 teachers in 2010/11; 48 teachers in 2011/12; 62 teachers in 2012/13; 51 teachers in 2013/14; and 54 teachers in 2014/15.

These teachers may have satisfied the professional competence requirement in subsequent years.

Teacher Training Provision

487. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost per year of training a primary school teacher over the four years of the bachelor of education course in St. Patrick's College, Dublin City University and Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. [43588/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): St. Patrick’s College and Mary Immaculate College are funded via the Higher Education Authority. The average unit cost is estimated by the Higher Education Authority to be between €10,000 - €12,000 per annum per student.

Capitation Grants

488. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the value of the capitation grant paid to students in each of the four years of the bachelor of education course and in each of the two years of the masters of education programme in Coláiste Mhuire in Marino in Dublin 3. [43589/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The total value of capitation grants paid to Marino Institute of Education in the current academic year in respect of eligible students on the Bachelor of Education course is as follows:

Year 1 (September 2015 entrants) €740,879

Year 2 (September 2014 entrants) €740,879

Year 3 (September 2013 entrants) €740,879

Year 4 (September 2012 entrants) €726,493

Total 2015/16 - €2,949,130

The total value of capitation grants paid to Marino Institute of Education in the current academic year in respect of eligible students in each of the Masters of Education courses was €359,650 per year cohort as follows;

Year 1 (September 2015 entrants) €359,650

Year 2 (September 2014 entrants) €359,650

Total 2015/16 - €719,300

The first Masters of Education course commenced in September 2014 and the second courses commenced in September 2015.

Ministerial Meetings

489. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of meetings requested by private external lobby groups and the number of meetings held, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43597/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): Please see the following table of meeting requests received by the Minister as requested.

Date	Meeting Requests
Wednesday 23/7 /2014	Laura Harmon USI
Wednesday 27/8/2014	INTO
Wednesday 27/8/2014	CPSMA

Questions - Written Answers

Date	Meeting Requests
Thursday 28/8/2014	Anne Looney NCCA
Thursday 28/8/2014	Association of Community and Comprehensive schools
Thursday 28/8/2014	Joint Managerial Bodies
Tuesday 2/9/2014	Michael Moriarty and Ceo's of ETBI
Wednesday 3/9/ 2014	ASTI and Tui
Thursday 4/9/2014	National Parents Council Post Primary
Thursday 4/9/2014	National Parents Council (Primary)
Tuesday 9/9/2014	ASTI
Wednesday 10/9/2014	Church of Ireland Board of Education
Wednesday 10/9/2014	Catholic Bishops/Schools Partnership
Thursday 11/9/2014	David Puttnam
Thursday 11/9/2014	Irish Second Level Student Unions
Wednesday 17/9/2014	Irish Universities Association
Wednesday 17/9/2014	TUI
Tuesday 23/9/2014	Irish Primary Principals Network and National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals
Tuesday 30/9/2014	Institutes of Technology
Thursday 9/10/2014	CEO BT
Thursday 9/10/2014	Council of Governors for Protestant Schools
Thursday 9/10/2014	USI
Thursday 9/10/2014	Institute of Guidance Counsellors
Thursday 16/10/2014	Chair of Galway Educate Together Second Level Start up group
Tuesday 21/10/2014	Director St Nicholas Montessori College Dun Laoghaire
Wednesday 22/10/2014	ASTI and TUI
Monday 10/11/2014	Professor Kevin Ryan Chartered Engineer Limerick
Wednesday 12/11/2014	Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul
Tuesday 18/11/2014	CEO Barnados
Wednesday 19/11/2014	ASTI and TUI
Thursday 20/11/2014	Building and Allied Trade Unions
Monday 24/11/2014	Unite Union
Wednesday 3/12/2014	President of Hibernia College
Tuesday 9 /12/2014	Educate To-gether
Wednesday 10/12/2014	Right to Peace
Tuesday 16/12/2014	IFUT
Wednesday 17/12/2014	US Ambassador
Thursday 18/12/2014	IMPACT Trade Union
Monday 22/12/2014	Limerick Principals and Deputy Principals Assoc
Wednesday 14/1/2014	ASTI and TUI
Thursday 15/1/2015	President of USI

Date	Meeting Requests
Wednesday 21/1/2015	One in Four
Monday 26/1/2015	Exec Director of IPPN
Thursday 29/1/2015	Humanist Ireland with Taoiseach
Monday 9/2/2015	Interim CEO Limerick Chamber
Monday 9/2/2015	CEO UL Hospitals group
Tuesday 10/2/2015	Atheist Ireland with Taoiseach
Wednesday 18/2/2015	NDFFA with Minister Howlin
Thursday 19/2/2015	President Down Syndrome Ireland
Wednesday 25/2/2015	Educate To-gether
Thursday 5/3/2015	Education Centre Directors
Wednesday 11/3/2015	Managing Director HP Ireland
Wednesday 11/3/2015	IUA Presidents
Monday 23/3/2015	Limerick Education Centre
Wednesday 25/3/2015	INTO
Wednesday 25/3/2015	TUI
Thursday 26/3/2015	IMPACT Union
Wednesday 1/4/2015	Special School Principals
Thursday 2/4/2015	Committee of the Educate Together Secon Levele Campaign
Tuesday 21/4/2015	CEO Transgender Equality Network Ireland
Wednesday 22/4/2015	Right to Peace
Thursday 23 /4/2015	Chair CICA
Thursday 30/4/2015	Steiner Schools
Wednesday 6/5/2015	School Completion Programme
Wednesday 20/5/2015	Incoming President USI
Friday 22/5/2015	Limerick IFA County Chairman
Wednesday 3/6/2015	David Puttnam
Tuesday 16/6/2015	Jewish representative Council with the Tao- iseach
Thursday 25/6/2015	Finnish Educationalist
Wednesday 8/7/2015	Chief Executive National Concert Hall
Tuesday 14/7/2015	President and Deputy President USI
Wednesday 15/7/2015	Co- Chair of Siptu'S Equality Sub Commit- tee NUIG
Wednesday 15 /7/2015	Alliance Victim Support
Thursday 16/7/2015	National Adult Literacy Agency
Tuesday 21/7/2015	Chief Executive Barnado's
Wednesday 22/7/2015	Irish Heart Foundation
Thursday 23/7/2015	12 o Clock Hills Project
Monday 7/9/2015	Vietnamese Vice Minister for Education
Tuesday 15/9/2015	Director St Nicholas Montessori College Ireland
Wednesday 23/9/2015	President US-Ireland Alliance
Friday 25/9/2015	CEO Blue Box

Date	Meeting Requests
Tuesday 29/9/2015	Labour National Youth Executive
Wednesday 30/9/2015	Globalforce
Wednesday 30/9/2015	Saudi Arabian Cultural Attache
Wednesday 30/9/2015	JMB, ACCS AND ETBI
Wednesday 7/10/2015	USI
Thursday 8/10/2015	Centre Manager Oakview Childcare Tralee Co Kerry
Tuesday 3/11/2015	President of SIPTU's Education Sector
Wednesday 4/11/2015	Governor of Hubei
Thursday 12/11/2015	Catholic Bishops
Tuesday 1/11/2015	Equate: Equality in Education

Departmental Expenditure

490. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills her Department's photography costs since she came into office, inclusive of costs incurred from use of the ministerial allowance, by year, in tabular form; the occasions for which photographers were booked; the photographers used; the costs associated with each occasion; the policy in place regarding the booking of photographers; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43629/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Photography costs of approximately €1,860 are outlined for the Deputy's information in the documents below. To mark the 90th anniversary of the Department in its modern form since the establishment of the Ministers and Secretaries Act, 1924 a sum of approximately €7,500 was paid in July 2014 by my Department for the restoration, framing and installation of photographs in order to establish a photo gallery of Ministers and Secretaries General who have served in the Department. Since my appointment, no photographers have been booked or costs incurred for Ministerial events through the Ministerial Allowance.

My Department adheres to appropriate procurement guidelines when procuring the use of photography services.

Press Office Photography Costs

Cost	Occasion
€17.22 (€14.00+€3.22 VAT)	Jpeg – Minister Jan O'Sullivan, Seal of Office on 15th August 2015 – Maxwell Photography
€34.44 (€28.00 + €6.44 VAT)	Jpegs – Launch of the Apprenticeship Council on July 30th 2015 – Maxwell Photography.
€757.68 (€616 + €141.68 VAT)	Photographs taken at the launch of the Apprenticeship Council on July 30th 2015 – Maxwell Photography

Corporate Services

In July 2014/2015, the Department paid €7503.80 for the restoration, framing and installation of photographs in order to establish a photo gallery of Ministers and Secretaries General who have served in the Department. 2014 marked the 90th anniversary of the Department in

its modern form since the establishment of the Ministers and Secretaries Act, 1924. The project was in train for some time.

Cost Centre Name	Nominal Code Name	DR Charge	CR Charge	Journal Line Description	Supplier Name	Invoice Date
Corporate Services Dublin	PHOTOGRAPHY	1,532.00	NULL	minister and sec gen photos inv 1212224	IRISH PHOTO ARCHIVE LTD	20-Jul-2014
Corporate Services Dublin	PHOTOGRAPHY	1,320.00	NULL	minister and sec gen photos inv 1212224	IRISH PHOTO ARCHIVE LTD	20-Jul-2014
Corporate Services Dublin	PHOTOGRAPHY	303.60	NULL	minister and sec gen photos inv 1212224	IRISH PHOTO ARCHIVE LTD	20-Jul-2014
Corporate Services Dublin	PHOTOGRAPHY	206.82	NULL	minister and sec gen photos inv 1212224	IRISH PHOTO ARCHIVE LTD	20-Jul-2014
Corporate Services Dublin	PHOTOGRAPHY	300.00	NULL	spare frames for photos inv 1212228	IRISH PHOTO ARCHIVE LTD	28-Jul-2014
Corporate Services Dublin	PHOTOGRAPHY	69.00	NULL	spare frames for photos inv 1212228	IRISH PHOTO ARCHIVE LTD	28-Jul-2014
Corporate Services Dublin	PHOTOGRAPHY	1,600.00	NULL	Photos for ministers inv 106342	LENSMEN AND ASSOCIATES	20-Jul-2014
Corporate Services Dublin	PHOTOGRAPHY	750.00	NULL	Photos for ministers inv 106342	LENSMEN AND ASSOCIATES	20-Jul-2014
Corporate Services Dublin	PHOTOGRAPHY	320.00	NULL	Photos for ministers inv 106342	LENSMEN AND ASSOCIATES	20-Jul-2014
Corporate Services Dublin	PHOTOGRAPHY	216.00	NULL	Photos for ministers inv 106342	LENSMEN AND ASSOCIATES	20-Jul-2014
Corporate Services Dublin	PHOTOGRAPHY	73.60	NULL	Photos for ministers inv 106342	LENSMEN AND ASSOCIATES	20-Jul-2014
Corporate Services Dublin	PHOTOGRAPHY	67.50	NULL	Photos for ministers inv 106342	LENSMEN AND ASSOCIATES	20-Jul-2014
Corporate Services Dublin	PHOTOGRAPHY	44.57	NULL	Installation photos - Ministers & Sce Gens Inv ARIE008686	MAURICE WARD AND CO LTD	07-Aug-2014
Corporate Services Dublin	PHOTOGRAPHY	46.38	NULL	Installation photos - Ministers & Sce Gens Inv ARIE008686	MAURICE WARD AND CO LTD	07-Aug-2014
Corporate Services Dublin	PHOTOGRAPHY	193.78	NULL	Installation photos - Ministers & Sce Gens Inv ARIE008686	MAURICE WARD AND CO LTD	07-Aug-2014
Corporate Services Dublin	PHOTOGRAPHY	343.53	NULL	Installation photos - Ministers & Sce Gens Inv ARIE008686	MAURICE WARD AND CO LTD	07-Aug-2014
MAC Members	PHOTOGRAPHY	13.92	NULL	Ministerial photographs Inv 1212372	IRISH PHOTO ARCHIVE LTD	19-Dec-2014
MAC Members	PHOTOGRAPHY	103.10	NULL	Ministerial photographs Inv 1212372	IRISH PHOTO ARCHIVE LTD	19-Dec-2014
		7,503.80				

Date	-	Photography	€
24.04.2015	ePortfolio International Conference	Maxwell Photography	172.2
15.05.2015	Announcement of the hardware and software suppliers for DCG	Maxwell Photography	206.64
15.05.2015	Prints from DCG	Maxwell Photography	38.64
29.05.2015	Jpegs from ePortfolio International Conference	Maxwell Photography	637.14

Public Relations Contracts Data

491. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills her Department's use of external public relations firms since she came into office, by year and in tabular form; the uses of these firms and the policy regarding employing them; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43645/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): In relation to my Department's policy for the engagement of external expertise, this is generally only considered where the issues involved require expert skills or capabilities that are not readily available within my Department and any such engagement is done in accordance with the provisions of the Department of Finance "Guidelines for the Engagement of Consultants and other External Support by the Civil Service".

The following table provides details of external public relations firms employed by my Department since coming to office.

Year	Name of Firm	Purpose
2014	Mitchell-Kane, Belfast	Consultancy, Creation of brand, guidelines and logo
2014	ZOO Digital, D2	Creation of online banner advertising Design, Development and project management of website Set up Hosting for 1 year
2014	Phd, Clonskeagh, D14	Digital advertising and online media awareness campaign
2014	Prontaprint	Printing of Flyers and Business Cards
2014	Careers Unlimited	Stand at Jobs Expo 2014, Cork and Dublin
2014	Gds, Tallaght	Pull-up stands for graphic display
2014	Carr Communications	Interview board training & interviewee skills training

Year	Name of Firm	Purpose
2015	Carr Communications	Interview board training & interviewee skills training

Consultancy Contracts Data

492. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will provide in tabular form, for each year since March 2011, all external consultant reports commissioned by her Department; the costs per report; the company involved; the title of the report and the publication date. [43661/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): Details in relation to consultants engaged by my department are compiled annually in respect of the previous year and in this regard I attach details in respect of the years 2011 to 2014 inclusive. All consultancy engagements during this period are listed and the status of any report that may have been produced is indicated in each case. Details in respect of consultants engaged in 2015 will not be compiled until January 2016.

2011

Consultants, Experts, Advisors	Start date	Completion date	Status of Report	reports/reviews/studies	Total Cost 2011
Centre for Cross Border Studies	October-11	December-11	*	2011 annual review paper on Northern Ireland Postgraduate Courses	€2,420.00
Jim Duffy & Pat McLoughlin members of an independent panel	February-11	April-11	No Report	Recommendations to the Minister on the preferred proposal for designation of a single awarding authority together with recommendations considered necessary in relation to modification or development of the preferred proposal for implementation purposes	€1,927.86

Questions - Written Answers

Consultants, Experts, Advisors	Start date	Completion date	Status of Report	reports/reviews/studies	Total Cost 2011
Gartner	October-11	October-14	No Report	Subscription for provision of ICT research, advice, guidance & related services 1/10/2011 - 30/09/2012	€35,150.49
Sr. Eileen Randles	May-10	November-10	*	Review in an appeal against an inspection under section 13 (9) of the Education Act 1998	€920.00
Dr Simon Marginson	January-11	March-11	Published by the HEA June 2011	Criteria for the proposed re-designation of amalgamated institutes of Technology Universities arising from the recommendations of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030	€9,075.00
Farrell Grant Sparks	October-10	June-11	Completed	Advice on necessary reductions and initial advice on possible updated accounting arrangements	€8,410.71

Consultants, Experts, Advisors	Start date	Completion date	Status of Report	reports/reviews/studies	Total Cost 2011
Forum on Patronage & Pluralism in the Primary Sector-Professor John Coolahan, Dr Caroline Hussey, Fionnuala Kilfeather	April-11	January-12	Published April 2012	Report to the Minister on the Forum on Patronage & Pluralism in the Primary Sector.	€20,000.00
Price Waterhouse Coopers LLP (PWC) Belfast	December-10	March-12	Published March 2012	Evaluation of the Special Education Support Service.	€97,866.01
Goodbody Economic Consultants	April-11	December-11	Published February 2012	Evaluation of the Initial Implementation of Siolta, the National Quality framework for Early Childhood Education	€31,280.92
The PA Consulting Group	July-11	November-11	Published November 2011	Evaluation of the training and education programmes for the unemployed delivered under LMAF 2010	€52,003.38
Fitzpatrick & Associates	February-11	August-11	Published ESF website August 2011	Mid term Evaluation of the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme 2007-2013	€61,589.00

Questions - Written Answers

Consultants, Experts, Advisors	Start date	Completion date	Status of Report	reports/reviews/studies	Total Cost 2011
Deloitte	March-11	April-11	*	Audits of the national agencies for the Lifelong Learning Programme in Ireland to serve as the basis for the submission of Declarations of Assurance from International Section to the European Commission	€13,212.99
Public Authority Pension Services Ltd	June-10	June-11	*	Pensions advisory work relating to the establishment of a pension scheme for staff of the NCTE	€4,791.60
Analysis Mason	July-11	April-12	*	Commercial Financial & Technical Procurement advice for Schools Broadband Tender	€63,632.51
Grant Thornton	September-11	October-11	*	External audit of Dell and Waterford Crystal EGF programmes	€5,445.00
			* Internal reports -not for publication	2011 Total:	€407,725.47

* Internal reports -not for publication

2012

Consultants, Experts, Advisors	Start date	Completion date	Status of Report	Reports/Reviews/Studies	Total Cost 2012
Analysis Mason	July-11	March-13	*	Commercial, financial and technical advice on the procurement of broadband services for schools	€52,040.42
Goodbody Economic Consultants	April-11	December-11	Published	Evaluation of the Initial Implementation of Siolta, the National Quality framework for Early Childhood Education	€16,747.68
Mazars	2012	2012	*	IT Security Audit of the EUSF IT Database	€5,063.91
Mazars	July-11	June-12	*	Audit of Labour Market Activation Fund (LMAF)	€9,839.14
Version 1	April-12	December-12	No Report	Provision of Oracle Financials training support along with training documentation in the implementation of Performance Budgeting	€2,070.00
Mokum Change Management Ltd	April-12	December-12	No Report	Provision of Oracle Financials training support along with training documentation in the implementation of Performance Budgeting	€17,302.88
Seamus O'Dwyer-Consulting and Training	July-12	January-13	No Report	Training and expert advice relating to the Public Service Pensions Bill and training and advice in relation to the Legal Framework and Family Law	€2,700.00

Questions - Written Answers

Consultants, Experts, Advisors	Start date	Completion date	Status of Report	Reports/Reviews/Studies	Total Cost 2012
Sydney Blain	October-11	February-12	*	Review of an appeal against an inspection under section 13(9) of the Education Act	€718.75
Mokum Change Management Ltd	April-12	December-12	No Report	Provision of Oracle Financials functional & accounting advice in moving from a four vote operating unit to a single operating unit	€11,606.90
Sir Jim Rose	December-12	2020	No Report	Provision of international expertise on Literacy & Numeracy to the Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Advisory Committee	€3,870.13
Gartner	October-11	October-14	No Report	Subscription for provision of ICT research, advice, guidance & related services	€36,788.67
Sion Quality Healthcare Solutions	October-12	October-12	*	Completion of a workplace assessment for staff member with a disability and resulting report	€370.00

Consultants, Experts, Advisors	Start date	Completion date	Status of Report	Reports/Reviews/Studies	Total Cost 2012
Pat McLoughlin	February-11	April-11	No Report	Costs relating to Recommendations to the Minister on the preferred proposal for designation of a single awarding authority together with recommendations considered necessary in relation to modification or development of the preferred proposal for implementation purposes which were paid in 2012	€83.66
The Centre for Cross Border Studies	October-12	December-12	*	2012 annual review paper on Northern Ireland Postgraduate Courses	€1,845.00
Deloitte	March-12	April-12	*	Audits of the national agencies for the Lifelong Learning Programme in Ireland to serve as the basis for the submission of Declarations of Assurance from International Section to the European Commission	€16,568.10
				2012 Total:	€177,615.24

* Internal reports -not for publication

2013

Consultants, Experts, Advisors	Start date	Completion date	Status of Report	Reports/Reviews/Studies	Total Cost 2013
Dr Tony Crooks	February-13	June-13	*	Review of an inspection report under Section 13(9) of the Education Act 1998.	€460.00

Questions - Written Answers

Consultants, Experts, Advisors	Start date	Completion date	Status of Report	Reports/Reviews/Studies	Total Cost 2013
The Centre for Cross Border Studies	October-13	December-13	No Report	2013 annual review paper Northern Ireland Postgraduate Courses	€1,845.00
Accenture	September-13	October-13	No Report	Consulting services in relation to the Management Framework Agreement between City of Dublin Education & Training Board and the Department of Education & Skills for the centralised Administration of Student Grants.	€5,904.00
University of Birmingham on behalf of Dr Mike Linden	November-13	March-14	Date of publication to be decided	Review of Visiting Teachers for children with hearing & Visual Impairment (VTHVI) Service, Ireland	€10,947.00
University of Manchester on behalf of Dr Wendy MC Cracken	November-13	March-14	Date of publication to be decided	Review of Visiting Teachers for children with hearing & Visual Impairment (VTHVI) Service, Ireland	€0.00**
Mokum Change Management Ltd (IT consultancy)	April-12	February-13	No Report	Post Performance Budgeting Support-Consultancy	€2,169.14
Gartner (IT consultancy)	October-11	October-14	No Report	IT Leaders Advisor Subscription 07/2013 to 06/2014 including credit in respect of 07-08/2013. Provision of ICT Research, advice, guidance and related services.	€41,061.50

Consultants, Experts, Advisors	Start date	Completion date	Status of Report	Reports/Reviews/Studies	Total Cost 2013
Padraig McNamara	October-13	November-13	*	External Review of historic funding and financial arrangements for Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) centres funded by the Department.	€0.00**
Deloitte	November-13	Q2-2014	No Report	To assist in development of a new organisational design for Education & Training Boards (ETBs) and SOLAS	€0.00**
Deloitte	October-13	Q2-2014	*	Provision of external expert assistance for the development of a Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) and implementation roadmap for an integrated payroll shared service for the ETB/SOLAS sector in accordance with the shared services commitments set out in the Government's Public Service Reform Plan.	€0.00**
Educational Research Centre	December-12	February-14	*	Consultancy Services to provide input to ICT Census of Primary, Post Primary and special schools and analysis of census data	€0.00**
Public Authority Pensions Services Ltd	December-12	March-13	No Report	Pensions Advisory work relating to the establishment of a pension scheme for the staff of the NCTE	€2,152.50

Questions - Written Answers

Consultants, Experts, Advisors	Start date	Completion date	Status of Report	Reports/Reviews/Studies	Total Cost 2013
Fitzpatrick's Associates/AE-CON	December-13	April-14	1st report April 14 Final Report Jan 2015	Ex-Ante Evaluation of the ESF Operational Programme in preparation for the period 2014-2020	€0.00**
Mazars	November 13	January-14	*	External Audit of EGF Talk Talk Programme	€0.00**
Deloitte	March-13	April-14	*	Audits of the national agencies for the Lifelong Learning Programme in Ireland to serve as the basis for the submission of Declarations of Assurance from International Section to the European Commission.	€14,475.34
Seamus O'Dwyer Consulting & Training	July-12	January-13	No Report	Provision of training & advice relating to the Public Service Pensions Bill	€200.00
Stratigos Ltd	October-13	December-14	No Report	Provision of customised Business Process Improvement training to include coaching (with provision of advice) of relevant staff	€4,428.00
Version 1	December-13	March-14	No Report	Shared Financial Services Project - provision of Oracle Financials support to set up purchasing module	€7,595.25

Consultants, Experts, Advisors	Start date	Completion date	Status of Report	Reports/Reviews/Studies	Total Cost 2013
Deloitte	December-13	December-13	*	Audits of the national agencies for the new Erasmus+ Programme in Ireland to serve as the basis for the submission of the ex-ante compliance assessment from International Section to the European Commission.	0.00**
				2013 Total:	€91,237.73

* Internal reports not for publication

**Consultancies engaged in 2013 but where no payment had been made by year end 2014

Consultants, Experts, Advisors	Start Date	Completion Date	Status of Report	Purpose of Consultancy	Total Cost 2014
Gartner	Nov-11	Jun-15	No Report	Provision of ICT research, advice, guidance and related services to the IT Unit	42,435.00
Dr Mike McLinden Dr Wendy McCracken	Nov-13	Jun-14	Published Feb 2015	Review of the Visiting Teachers service for blind and visually impaired and deaf and hard of hearing (VTVHI)	€15,363.24
Padraig McNamara	Oct-13	Nov-13	*	External Review of funding and financial arrangements for Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) centres funded by the Department.	€4,000.00
National Council for the Blind	Jan-14	Feb-14	No Report	Accessibility audit of the Department's website	€4,850.00

Questions - Written Answers

Consultants, Experts, Advisors	Start Date	Completion Date	Status of Report	Purpose of Consultancy	Total Cost 2014
MKA (Mitchell Kane Associates)	Jan-14	Apr-14	No Report	Creation of brand guidelines and logo re Springboard, ICT Skills Conversion, Momentum, the Skillnets Jobseekers Programmes, Job Bridge and Jobs Plus	€5,412.00
Centre for Effective Services (CES)	Jun-14	Mar-15	May-15	SUSI Review - Phase 1. Review of the learning gained from the establishment of the Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI).	€7,000.00
Centre for Cross Border Studies	Oct-14	Dec-14	No Report	Review Paper on Southern Irish Postgraduates in Northern Ireland, to comply with Section 8(7) of the Student Support Act 2011.	€1,845.00
SIA Management Group	Jun-14	Jun-14	No Report	Consultancy Service provided to MAC in relation to Planning Activities.	€2,892.50
Grant Thornton	Sep-14	Nov-14	Affidavit to Court of Appeal	Specialist expert advice on the application by STS Ltd to adduce new evidence to the Court of Appeal in its appeal of the HC judgement of 23rd October, 2012	€35,842.20

Consultants, Experts, Advisors	Start Date	Completion Date	Status of Report	Purpose of Consultancy	Total Cost 2014
Version 1 - (IT)	Apr-14	Feb-15	No Report	Provision of Oracle Financials consultancy services to support the proof of concept phase of the preparation of the move to the Financial Shared Services Project	€34,557.50
Economic & Social Research Institute	Oct-14	Jan-15	Published Jan 2015	Report on the Evaluation of DEIS	0**
Deloitte	Nov-13	Dec-14	No Report	New organisational design for ETBs and Solas	11,623.50
Deloitte	Jan-14	Jul-14	*	Provision of support for the development of the Business Case for ETB Shared Services Payroll Project	81,549.00
Eamonn Stack	Jun-13	Jun-14	Jun-14	Leading a Working Group on proposals for a new model for allocating teaching resources for students with special educational needs to mainstream schools.	€9,880.00
Deloitte	Mar-13	Apr-14	*	Audits of the national agencies for the Lifelong Learning Programme in Ireland to serve as the basis for the submission of Declarations of Assurance to the European commission	€14,975.25

Questions - Written Answers

Consultants, Experts, Advisors	Start Date	Completion Date	Status of Report	Purpose of Consultancy	Total Cost 2014
Deloitte	Dec-13	Dec-13	*	Audits of the national agencies for the Erasmus + Programme in Ireland to serve as the basis for the submission of Declarations of the ex ante compliance assessment to the European commission	€10,455.00
Fitzpatrick's & Associates	Dec-13	Jul-14	Jan-15	Ex Ante Evaluation of the ESF Operational Programme	€53,218.00
Mazars	Nov-13	Jan-14	*	External Auditing Services	€3,195.39
H2 Learning	May-14	Sep-15	No Report	Advice and guidance on the development and implementation of the Digital Strategy for schools.	€33,517.50
ICS Skills	Jun-14	Nov-14	*	As part of the development of the Digital Strategy for schools, the running of focus groups, conducting analysis and summarise the data, and reporting findings	€19,000.00
Education Research Centre	Jan-13	Sep-14	Published Oct 2015	The provision of input to ICT census of primary, post-primary, and special schools and analysis of census data	€24,624.00
Stratigos Ltd	Oct-13	Jun-14	No Report	Business Process Improvement Training (BPI)	€23,899.65

Consultants, Experts, Advisors	Start Date	Completion Date	Status of Report	Purpose of Consultancy	Total Cost 2014
Institute of Public Administration (IPA)	Jul-14	Mar-15	No Report	Provision of Guidelines relating to best practice approach by management regarding delegation, meeting and coaching skills.	€2,447.70
Ernst & Young (EY)	Nov-14	Aug-15	*	Expert assistance in relation to the development of a baseline report, business case (cost benefit analysis & implementation roadmap) for a financial shared service within the ETB sector.	0**
				2014 Total:	€442,582.43

* Internal reports not for publication

** Consultancies engaged in 2014 but where no payment had been made by year end

Ministerial Advisers Data

493. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of special advisors on her staff and their yearly salary, from 2011 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43677/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The following tabular statement gives details of personnel contracted as Special Advisers at the Department of Education & Skills together with their annual salary as at the 31st December in the years stated by the Deputy. In accordance with the terms of the Ethics in Public Office Acts copies of their contracts with details of their conditions of employment were laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Year 2011

Mr. Ruairí Quinn, T.D.

Minister for Education & Skills

Name	Grade	Salary
John Walshe	Special Adviser	€92,672
Deirdre Grant	Special Adviser	€86,604

Year 2012

Mr. Ruairí Quinn, T.D.

Minister for Education & Skills

Name	Grade	Salary
John Walshe	Special Adviser	€92,672
Deirdre Grant	Special Adviser	€86,604

Year 2013

Mr. Ruairí Quinn, T.D.

Minister for Education & Skills

Name	Grade	Salary
Neil Ward	Special Adviser	€75,647
Deirdre Grant	Special Adviser	€81,676

Year 2014

Ms. Jan O Sullivan T.D.

Minister for Education & Skills

Name	Grade	Salary
Neil Ward	Special Adviser	€75,647
Paul Daly	Special Adviser	€81,676

Year 2015

Ms. Jan O Sullivan T.D.

Minister for Education & Skills

Name	Grade	Salary
Neil Ward	Special Adviser	€78,670
Paul Daly	Special Adviser	€84,706

Please note Ms Siobhan Creaton was appointed as a temporary Special Adviser during the tenure of Mr. Ruairí Quinn, T.D. as Minister to cover a period of absence when one of the Special Advisers was on 26 weeks maternity leave. Her salary was €80,051 per annum.

Schools Building Projects Status

494. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the construction of a secondary school (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43708/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): My Department uses a Geographical Information System (GIS) to identify where the pressure for school places will arise. The outcome of the latest demographic exercises, based on the GIS, is that on 17th November last, I announced the establishment of 4 primary schools and 9 post-primary schools to open in 2017 and 2018.

A new post-primary school to serve the area to which the Deputy refers was not included as part of this announcement and it is not envisaged that a new post-primary school will be constructed to serve this area.

The post-primary schools opening in the Dublin area in 2017 and 2018 will serve the following areas: Carpenterstown and Castleknock; Lucan; Malahide and Portmarnock; Swords and Dublin South City Centre. Of the 8 new post-primary schools which will open in 2016, 3 will serve the Dublin area, namely Tallaght, Dublin 24; Ballinteer and Stepside; and Balbriggan.

The patronage determination process for new schools is a separate process, which is run after it is decided that, based on the demographic data, a new school is required. Parental preferences are central to this process and prospective patrons are required to provide evidence of demand for their particular type of school. It is open to all patrons and prospective patrons to apply for patronage of a new school under this process.

Schools Building Projects Status

495. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the funding and building of St. Thomas's national school in Lucan, County Dublin, including the amount of funding allocated from the current capital programme, the stage that planning is at and when the works will be completed. [43753/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The major building project for the school to which the Deputy refers is at an advanced stage of architectural planning – Stage 2(b). This stage includes the applications for Planning Permission, Fire Cert and Disability Access Cert and the preparation of Tender Documents. Details on the estimated cost of the project cannot be provided ahead of the tender stage owing to commercial sensitivities.

As the Deputy is aware on Tuesday 17th November 2015 I announced details of the major school building projects where construction is expected to commence over the next 6 years. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the project to which she refers is included in this plan. Information in respect of all projects on this 6 year plan is available on my Department's website www.education.ie

Educational Disadvantage

496. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will restore delivering equality of opportunity in schools status to a school (details supplied) in County Mayo under the terms of the national review; when the review will be completed, if certain assurances were given to the school; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43755/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): As the Deputy is aware the school in question was established on 1st September 2011 following the amalgamation of a DEIS post-primary school and Non DEIS post-primary school. In line with all such amalgamations, the new school continues to receive the current level of supports in respect of the number of eligible pupils from the former DEIS school until that pupil cohort have left the school. In the case of a post primary school, these supports continue to be supplied for 6 years following the amalgamation.

I am not aware of any assurances given to the school by my Department in relation to the

retention of its DEIS status post amalgamation.

As you are aware the review of the DEIS Programme is currently under way in my Department. This process involves a number of strands and is being undertaken over the course of the current school year. It will consider all issues pertaining to educational disadvantage. I hope to be in a position to make an overall proposal for the delivery of future interventions to tackle educational disadvantage after that. While this process is under way, I do not intend to make any changes to the current programme.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

497. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when Student Universal Support Ireland will finalise an application for a grant by a student (details supplied) in County Mayo given that this application is waiting review of documentation submitted more than one month ago, if she will ensure a more timely decision on this case given the hardship the delay is causing; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43759/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): As part of a comprehensive customer service and communications strategy provided by Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI), to ensure that all necessary avenues are open to applicants to receive the information they need, a dedicated email and phone line service is provided by SUSI for Oireachtas members. This was established to meet an identified need for applicants who choose to engage the assistance of their public representatives in making enquiries about their grant applications.

This service compliments the established channels provided by SUSI which include online application tracking, a dedicated website, a telephone helpdesk, email and social media, including Facebook and Twitter.

Enquiries may be emailed direct to SUSI at oireachtas@susi.ie. Staff in SUSI are responding to email queries within a matter of days.

If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant or that the rate of grant awarded is not the correct one, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI.

Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down in writing by SUSI and remains of the view that the scheme has not been interpreted correctly in his/her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board within the required timeframe.

School Playgrounds

498. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will revert to this Deputy on a matter (details supplied) regarding playground development; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43761/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): As the Deputy may be aware, where significant grant aid is provided by the Department for the development of school premises on property not owned by the State, this investment is secured by way of a charging lease.

While I have a vested interest in this site, the land referred to is not in my ownership. In

relation to any divesting or disposal arising, this is a matter for the school patron to consider in the first instance.

In circumstances where a request is received to release the Minister's interest secured under a charging lease on part/all of a property, such requests are considered in the context of the specific circumstances which pertain to the individual property.

Psychological Assessments

499. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Education and Skills why a Youthreach student (details supplied) has not been assessed by an educational psychologist. [43762/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I can inform the Deputy that funds are made available from my Department to the Educational Training Boards to provide for the various non-pay cost of students on the Youthreach programme, including counselling and psychology services.

I would advise therefore that if the parents of the student referred to in the Deputy's question have concerns in relation to his educational development that they raise them with the coordinator of the Youthreach Centre involved with a view to discussing the matter of the need for an educational psychological assessment with the relevant E.T.B.

National Educational Psychological Service Staff

500. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of interviews conducted to date to replace a psychologist within the National Educational Psychological Service in County Mayo; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43763/15]

501. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a psychologist will be replaced within the National Educational Psychological Service (details supplied) in County Mayo; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43764/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 500 and 501 together.

I can inform the Deputy that my Department's National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) provides educational psychology service to all primary and post primary schools through an assigned NEPS psychologist and in some cases through the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments (SCPA), full details of which are on the Department's website. Under this scheme schools can have an assessment carried out by a member of the panel of private psychologists approved by NEPS, and NEPS will pay the psychologist the fees for this assessment directly.

In common with many other psychological services and best international practice, NEPS has adopted a consultative model of service. The focus is on empowering teachers to intervene effectively with pupils whose needs range from mild to severe and transient to enduring. Psychologists use a problem solving and solution oriented consultative approach to maximise positive outcomes for these pupils. NEPS encourages schools to use a continuum based assessment and intervention process whereby each school takes responsibility for initial assessment, educational planning and remedial intervention for pupils with learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Teachers may consult their NEPS psychologist should they need to at this stage in the process. Only in the event of a failure to make reasonable progress, in spite of the

school's best efforts in consultation with NEPS, will the psychologist become involved with an individual child for intensive intervention or assessment.

This system allows psychologists to give early attention to urgent cases and also to help many more children indirectly than could be seen individually. It also ensures that children are not referred unnecessarily for psychological intervention.

I can inform the Deputy that one member of staff in the NEPS Castlebar Office has been lost due to long-term career break and that my Department is actively pursuing a replacement. In the interim, however, I would advise that any parent who has concerns in relation to their child's educational development should raise these concerns, in the first instance with the Principal of the school with a view to discussing the situation with the local NEPS service. If an assessment is deemed appropriate, it will be provided.

Schools Building Projects Status

502. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of plans for the future development of a primary school (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43773/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): As the Deputy is aware, a project for the school, referred to, is included in the 6 Year Construction Programme that I announced on 17th November last, and is listed to proceed to tender and construction in 2017. My Department will be in contact with the school concerned in the near future in relation to the next steps to be taken.

School Patronage

503. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will develop an Educate Together school in County Galway, given that an independent demographic study commissioned by GET2LS, the Educate Together secondary level start-up group, clearly demonstrated a demographic need for a new school, and there are now five Educate Together primary schools in County Galway which between them accept six classes of junior infants each year (details supplied) with no multi-denominational post-primary for them to go to; if she is aware that there are more than 1,200 expressions of interest from independent parents living in County Galway in having an Educate Together secondary level school in County Galway; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43794/15]

542. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will provide a choice of secondary education under the patronage of Educate Together in Galway City, if she has conducted research to ascertain the demand for such a choice, if not, if and when she will do so; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44221/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 503 and 542 together.

My Department uses a Geographical Information System (GIS) to identify where the pressure for school places will arise. The outcome of the latest demographic exercises, based on the GIS, is that on 17th November last, I announced the establishment of 4 primary schools and 9 post-primary schools to open in 2017 and 2018.

The patronage determination process for new schools is a separate process, which is run

after it is decided that, based on the demographic data, a new school is required. Parental preferences are central to this process and prospective patrons are required to provide evidence of demand for their particular type of school. It is open to all patrons and prospective patrons to apply for patronage of a new school under this process.

In relation to the Galway City and Environs, this is an area that is experiencing increased demographic pressure at post-primary level and will be kept under ongoing review by my Department, as I indicated in my announcement of 17 November. This ongoing review will take account of updated enrolment data and also the impact of existing and planned capacity increases to existing schools in the area. Notwithstanding that the Galway City area including environs is an area defined as a demographic growth area, it is also an area where certain schools are experiencing a decline in pupil numbers.

Further exploration of existing capacity and scope for expansion of existing provision is ongoing. The outcome of this exploration and the ongoing review of demographic changes in the area will determine the steps to be taken.

Special Educational Needs Staff

504. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the pilot scheme for the allocation of extra teachers to schools for pupils with special education needs, including the schools that qualified and the number of teachers allocated to each school; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43803/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I understand that the Deputy is referring to the pilot scheme of a new model for delivering teaching resources to schools to support students with special needs, which is currently under way.

The Deputy will be aware that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) recommended the development of a new model for delivering teaching resources to schools to support students with special needs. It recommended that a school’s Special Needs Teaching allocation should be determined by a baseline component according to pupil numbers and a school’s educational profile. This profile is to take account of the number of pupils with complex needs, the percentage of pupils performing below average in standardised tests and the social context and gender breakdown of the school.

The NCSE Working Group report recommended sufficient time be allowed for consultation before the new model is implemented. A pilot of the new allocation model is therefore taking place over the course of the current school year.

47 schools (28 primary schools and 19 posts primary schools) have agreed to participate in the pilot project, which will run for the duration of the current school year. An initial list of schools was selected by the Educational Research Centre, using sampling techniques designed to ensure that as full a range of schools as possible is represented. For primary schools the sample included appropriate representation by disadvantaged classification, gender mix and size. For post-primary schools the sample included appropriate representation by sector, disadvantage classification, gender mix and size. A list of schools was generated within each of these categories, along with replacements for first-selected schools.

The pilot will test the practical impacts of the new model prior to full implementation. Significant guidance has been prepared and provided to the schools involved. During the Pilot all participating schools will complete an assessment questionnaire to gather information on their experiences. All participating schools attended a pilot information day on 15th September and

a further information day took place on Friday last.

A list of the schools participating in the pilot project and details of the support teaching allocation which has been made for each school is attached. Please note, the allocations noted for each school represent the total allocations made to the school under the pilot project. These allocations therefore replace the allocations usually made to schools through learning support general allocations and the NCSE allocation process, but are not allocations made additionally to these allocations.

Appendix 1: Schools Participating in Pilot Project 2015/16

Primary Schools

Roll_Number	Name of School	County	DEIS	School Gender	Allocation (Hours)
20231H	St. Benedict's National School	Dublin		Mixed	237.5
19583I	St. Josephs Senior NS, Ballymun	Dublin	DEIS 1	Mixed	125
15046I	St. Stephen's National School	Waterford	DEIS 2	Boys	155
18057F	Scoil Mhuire	Offaly		Senior Girls	157.5
20292E	Maynooth Educate Together	Kildare		Mixed	87.5
16928B	Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Philom	Offaly	DEIS 2	Girls	55
198460	Reath na Maidine	Kerry		Boys	110
15948C	Clologue National School	Wexford		Mixed	27.5
20309S	Mary Mother of Hope	Dublin		Mixed	145
03936C	Scoil Náisiúnta (Scoil Mhuire)	Westmeath		Mixed	27.5
17493U	Rosenallis National School	Laois		Mixed	27.5
19490B	Scoil Mhuire	Dublin	DEIS 1	Mixed	110
17840P	SN Bheinín Naofa	Meath		Girls	70
19837N	Drimnagh Castle CBS NS	Dublin		Boys	305
17903N	Cornamaddy NS	Westmeath		Mixed	115
13632L	Annalitten National School	Monaghan		Mixed	13.4
18246I	SN Baile Mhuine	Cork		Mixed	13.4
17920N	Donard National School	Wicklow		Mixed	40.3
16829W	Scoil Eoin Pól (Lough an Iubhair)	Donegal	DEIS R	Mixed	14.250
18350D	Scoil Náisiúnta Na Hinse	Tipperary		Mixed	29.875
18598Q	Earnain Mxd NS	Westmeath		Mixed	33.50
15257V	Quignamanger National School/St Oliver Plunket	Mayo		Mixed	103.07
19418Q	Castlerahan Central National S	Cavan		Mixed	56.775
19817H	St. Marys NS Lucan	Dublin		Mixed	128.075
02413L	Scoil Naomh Eoin, Birr	Offaly		Mixed	40.4
16289Q	St.. John's NS	Mayo		Mixed	26.90
14625T	Doon Convent NS	Limerick		Mixed	36.90
20260o	Gaelscoil Chluainín	Leitrim		Mixed	38

Post Primary Schools

Roll_number	Name of Schools	sector	County	DEIS	School Gender	Allocation Hours
70250S	Marino College	Vocational	Dublin	Yes	Mixed	132.5
60480G	Drimnagh Castle Secondary (Meanscoil Iognaid Ris)	Secondary	Dublin	No	Boys	197.5
71450I	Mullingar Community School	Vocational	Westmeath	Yes	Mixed	135
65370B	St. Joseph's C.B.S	Secondary	Tipperary	No	Boys	105
91505T	St Wolstan's Community School (Girls).	Comm/Comp	Kildare	No	Girls	77.5
60400F	St Vincents	Secondary	Dublin	Yes	Boys	85
70620C	Coláiste Cois Siúire	Vocational	Kilkenny	Yes	Mixed	45
60710U	Muckross Park College	Secondary	Dublin	No	Girls	95
70960D	Coachford College	Vocational	Cork	No	Mixed	107.5
64971W	Our Lady Of Mercy Secondary School	Secondary	Waterford	No	Girls	83.45
62000W	Mary Immaculate Secondary School	Secondary	Clare	No	Mixed	46.525
91500J	Loreto Community School	Comm/Comp	Donegal	No	Mixed	164.075
64610N	St. Colman's College	Secondary	Mayo	No	Boys	88.325
61340S	St. Bridgids Secondary School	Secondary	Kerry	No	Girls	108.825
70400L	Borris Vocational	Vocational	Carlow	No	Mixed	97.550
61320M	Coláiste Bhréainn	Secondary	Kerry	No	Mixed	151.4
76102K	Gaelcolaiste an Eachreidh	Vocational	Galway	No	Mixed	75.825
72020L	Moyne College Ballina	Vocational	Mayo		Mixed	182.275
68077S	Ardcoil na Tríonode	Secondary	Kildare		Mixed	127.05

Adult Education Provision

505. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will request the City of Dublin Education and Training Board to meet representatives of the Target project in Donaghmede in Dublin 13 to discuss the restoration of a dedicated literacy co-ordinator; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43812/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): This is an operational matter for the City of Dublin Education and Training Board. I understand that CDETb will be contacting the group in question to arrange a meeting.

School Funding

506. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the

funding provided to primary and post-primary schools for capital works, by county, from March 2011 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43824/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The capital funding that issued over the period 2011 to date on a county basis is provided to the Deputy in the following table. The funding in respect of the primary and post-primary sectors is presented separately.

County	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total Primary Capital	289,425,884	204,427,959	234,189,853	276,941,634	243,757,971
Carlow	6,335,933	7,671,516	6,779,416	2,559,141	2,391,366
Cavan	3,823,077	2,302,538	3,702,844	4,546,822	4,407,736
Clare	3,410,891	3,120,761	8,857,067	4,149,970	2,496,210
Cork	24,756,719	23,778,375	31,136,800	37,447,841	19,555,367
Donegal	7,554,715	8,078,672	6,374,112	4,828,346	6,028,845
Dublin	81,336,973	60,619,640	53,669,631	74,756,240	62,040,825
Galway	12,600,679	8,449,613	12,587,090	13,692,834	10,662,217
Kerry	9,679,948	5,979,392	3,910,003	6,826,319	8,388,024
Kildare	26,166,168	10,873,603	9,068,890	19,310,953	18,455,720
Kilkenny	4,228,505	1,188,281	4,771,503	5,570,539	2,393,239
Laois	6,449,748	6,144,631	12,110,869	2,764,193	4,975,008
Leitrim	1,296,961	349,394	435,266	597,544	620,756
Limerick	11,613,802	4,021,955	5,389,619	10,894,306	8,734,919
Longford	1,747,642	631,410	2,871,632	4,447,488	4,265,079
Louth	15,674,365	9,044,282	6,861,708	4,640,756	10,025,694
Mayo	7,428,810	4,555,214	3,805,247	3,012,739	4,176,383
Meath	16,164,114	10,125,249	23,311,792	20,410,773	17,068,566
Monaghan	3,798,130	6,710,601	2,321,177	3,085,482	3,742,265
Offaly	5,454,955	4,572,444	2,828,985	8,821,408	6,454,999
Roscommon	2,174,704	972,585	1,305,402	1,957,614	1,285,173
Sligo	2,541,051	3,510,567	3,350,827	1,991,444	2,023,066
Tipperary	7,319,568	3,566,783	4,625,364	6,668,422	5,371,036
Waterford	6,949,972	1,851,291	4,000,580	12,342,575	10,634,076
Westmeath	4,757,621	1,536,748	2,608,001	6,470,703	6,948,826
Wexford	6,585,824	9,811,776	7,532,124	8,365,398	10,974,468
Wicklow	8,326,091	3,277,403	9,671,162	6,226,957	9,295,850
Not Catego- rised	1,248,917	1,683,234	302,741	554,826	342,260

County	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total Post Primary Capital	165,648,043	142,450,255	127,184,365	161,484,670	220,030,219
Carlow	971,361	1,551,135	1,776,735	5,186,547	5,224,942
Cavan	5,814,219	6,502,514	895,501	2,371,474	2,535,847
Clare	1,357,874	355,623	108,610	622,991	1,108,996
Cork	6,437,607	7,049,387	14,233,430	16,217,651	34,782,579
Donegal	6,338,434	1,998,270	894,225	2,007,778	5,372,518

County	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Dublin	39,596,362	21,128,936	32,740,788	48,265,397	48,389,715
Galway	4,467,845	5,233,110	13,992,356	11,599,073	17,237,124
Kerry	3,010,711	5,703,622	1,126,734	5,866,677	9,679,283
Kildare	25,231,433	2,259,867	4,529,178	12,449,133	3,672,386
Kilkenny	2,379,392	3,222,198	6,219,054	1,526,462	5,991,664
Laois	2,247,981	164,704	237,041	412,044	497,527
Leitrim	671,382	98,252	969,996	735,172	249,682
Limerick	4,570,533	5,293,675	7,302,636	1,835,053	2,444,132
Longford	880,295	602,165	459,209	448,370	1,639,184
Louth	4,143,951	6,958,746	5,410,173	11,099,570	12,602,278
Mayo	2,267,621	1,214,490	2,465,840	6,410,674	4,349,089
Meath	5,809,983	9,797,573	17,947,022	3,661,478	11,758,125
Monaghan	2,802,799	27,599,800	967,642	2,282,543	4,113,444
Offaly	7,079,857	1,086,412	718,415	2,742,759	5,143,841
Roscommon	1,776,072	921,915	144,702	456,007	804,291
Sligo	3,240,497	7,479,291	1,392,697	786,333	1,182,423
Tipperary	7,783,492	15,044,581	5,926,169	6,444,628	7,342,559
Waterford	6,551,599	2,168,196	600,010	1,429,390	1,011,191
Westmeath	3,360,418	4,234,853	1,899,603	1,367,215	1,328,309
Wexford	9,718,661	1,576,682	1,180,453	3,359,497	5,674,333
Wicklow	5,829,339	2,138,399	2,346,304	8,008,136	24,495,854
Not Catego- rised	1,308,324	1,065,859	699,841	3,892,616	1,398,904

School Accommodation Provision

507. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if additional capacity will be provided at a school (details supplied) in County Galway to cater for the many students who wish to enrol there from September 2016, especially as it is planned to commence a new school building in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43837/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department is working closely with Galway County Council to acquire a permanent site for the school to which the Deputy refers. Recent correspondence received by the Department from the Board of Management with regard to the project is currently under consideration. Matters will be kept under review with a view to the progressing of the building project as soon as possible. I also wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has recently been in contact with the school in question in relation to its accommodation needs. As my Department is satisfied that there are sufficient school places in the area in question to cater for the overall pupil demand, the school was advised that my Department was not in a position to provide further additional accommodation.

Apprenticeship Programmes

508. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the recently announced proposals regarding new apprenticeships by the Apprenticeship Council will

be operational; if and when there will be a further announcement regarding other apprenticeships; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41420/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Apprenticeship Council is currently engaging with the consortia advancing the 25 new apprenticeships on the detail of their project plans for the development stage. The Council will be approving a number of the plans in January, which will include delivery timeframes. The Council will work with consortia to commence enrolments on as many of the new apprenticeships as possible in 2016. There are no immediate plans for an announcement on further apprenticeships but the Council will be engaging with the submitters of Category 2 and 3 proposals to advise on how their proposals can be further advanced.

School Accommodation Provision

509. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the replacement of 58 prefabrications by a school building in Croom in County Limerick, the cost to her Department and to Limerick and Clare Education and Training Boards for the purchase of the site in 2009, and the moneys her Department and Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board have paid to consultants in relation to all planning applications for the site, to date. [43890/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The delivery of a new school building in Croom has been devolved to Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB) under a Service Level Agreement. Full planning permission was granted by Limerick County Council in April 2014 but was subsequently refused following an appeal to An Bord Pleanála. LCETB are working closely with the Local Authority with a view to submitting a new planning application shortly. The purchase price of the 22 acre site was €2.087m and in addition, the total costs incurred to date for the complete design of the school up to and including approved Stage 2a inclusive of professional fees, site surveys, statutory fees, specialist reports, and planning applications is €416,688.00.

Schools Building Projects Status

510. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if grant aid or funding is available for the purchase and erection of security fencing around a school and for the purchase of additional land adjacent to a school; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43905/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I wish to advise the Deputy that applications for funding for fencing works are appropriate to the Summer Works Scheme (SWS). In that regard, the Deputy may be aware that applications for the 2016 and 2017 SWS closed on 2nd December last. In addition, primary schools may prioritise improvement works to school buildings and grounds, including fencing, using their Minor Works grant which all primary schools received last month. In the case of sites, I wish to advise the Deputy that there is no specific grant scheme for the purchase of sites or site extensions. In general, the acquisition of a site is a matter for the Patron. However, in cases where new schools are required to meet demographic demand, the purchase of a site by my Department would be considered as part of the overall project.

Third Level Fees

511. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she is aware that an apprentice attending a Forás Áiseanna Saothair course is required to pay €1,000 to Cork Institute of Technology (details supplied) for a nine-week period to complete phase 4 training for the trade of motor mechanic and that this fee was not in existence when this apprentice initially began the course; if this fee will be reversed given the person's low income while on an apprentice scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43910/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Damien English): An Annual Student Contribution is levied on students attending Institutes of Technology. This contribution has been levied by Institutes of Technology in respect of apprentices since 2004, with FÁS/SOLAS paying 70% of the contribution and apprentices themselves paying the remainder. As part of Budget 2014, SOLAS ceased making this payment and the apprentices pay the Annual Student Contribution themselves. Apprentices pay the same rate of contribution as students but this is apportioned for the time they spend in the Institutes.

Unlike students, apprentices are paid a training allowance by SOLAS for phases of their training spent in Institutes of Technology. This allowance is equivalent to the wages they receive from their employers for on the job phases.

Third Level Funding

512. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the expert group's report on the future of higher education funding in Ireland will be published; if the continued funding for the National University of Ireland Maynooth to ensure staffing levels will increase in line with plans to expand the student population and resources; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43919/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): In light of continued pressures on the higher education system, former Minister Quinn established an expert group to examine future funding of higher education under the independent chairmanship of Peter Casells. The objective is to identify a range of approaches that, combined, will achieve a sustainable funding base to address the continual expansion of the sector while protecting the quality of education. I understand that the Group is in the final stages of its deliberations and I expect to receive its report shortly. The position in relation to the funding of higher education institutions, such as the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, is that my Department allocates recurrent funding to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for direct disbursement to the HEA designated higher education institutions. The HEA allocates the funding to Universities via a Recurrent Grant Allocation Model on the basis of student numbers in each institution and it is then a matter for the individual institution as to how that funding is allocated internally.

Special Educational Needs Data

513. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary level and secondary level students in Dublin north-east and Dublin north-west inner city seeking special needs assessments by school in tabular form, and the number of these assessments completed and the allocation of resources as a result of submitted needs assessments by school. [43920/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Deputy will be aware that additional resources are provided to pupils/students with particular special educational needs based on the submission of supporting documentation and assessment reports from a number of sources. These include assessment reports not only from staff from my Department’s National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) but also from a range of professional staff within the HSE (Clinical Psychologists, Occupational/Speech Therapists, Psychiatrists, etc) and their private sector counterparts. Application for resources in support of individual pupils are submitted by school authorities to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) using the assessment reports furnished by the forgoing agencies as support the application.

My Department’s NEPS service provides educational psychology service to all primary and post primary schools through an assigned NEPS psychologist and in some cases through the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments (SCPA). Under this scheme schools can have an assessment carried out by a member of the panel of private psychologists approved by NEPS, and NEPS will pay the psychologist the fees for this assessment directly.

NEPS does not keep waiting lists for assessments of children but in common with many other psychological services and best international practice, NEPS has adopted a consultative model of service. The focus is on empowering teachers to intervene effectively with pupils whose needs range from mild to severe and transient to enduring. Psychologists use a problem solving and solution oriented consultative approach to maximise positive outcomes for these pupils. NEPS encourages schools to use a continuum based assessment and intervention process whereby each school takes responsibility for initial assessment, educational planning and remedial intervention for pupils with learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Teachers may consult their NEPS psychologist should they need to at this stage in the process. Only in the event of a failure to make reasonable progress, in spite of the school’s best efforts in consultation with NEPS, will the psychologist become involved with an individual child for intensive intervention. This system allows psychologists to give early attention to urgent cases and also to help many more children indirectly than could be seen individually. It also ensures that children are not referred unnecessarily for psychological assessment and/or intervention. When a NEPS psychologist becomes involved with an individual pupil it is for the purposes of identifying that pupil’s special educational needs and the appropriate interventions to be put in place to meet those needs. These interventions commonly have relevance to the work of the existing class teacher, learning support staff, the provision of advice on alternative placement, as well as the provision of additional Resource Teaching or SNA support.

While NEPS maintains a client database of its involvement with individual students this structure was developed to track the history of NEPS involvement with the student during the course of their school careers, it was not designed to record their eligibility for additional resources. Individual school authorities are responsible for and retain records of the range of applications to NCSE for such additional resources. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for allocating Resource Teaching Support and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) to schools to support children with special educational needs. The NCSE has published details of all of the allocations which have been made to primary and post primary schools for the 2015/16 school year, including schools in Dublin North East Inner City and Dublin North West Inner City, on its website www.ncse.ie.

School Enrolments

514. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she

has reviewed the adequacy of places in south Dublin city, particularly in Dublin 4, 6 and 14, for junior infants for the 2016-2017 school year, if she is aware of the large waiting lists in the schools in these areas for children living in the various school catchments, the steps she will take to address this impending crisis; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43932/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): My Department has recently completed demographic analyses at primary and post-primary level, using the Department’s Geographical Information System, to identify the areas under increased demographic pressure nationwide. The system uses data from the Central Statistics Office, Ordnance Survey Ireland, the Department of Social Protection and local authorities, in addition to information from the Department’s own databases. The outcome of these demographic analyses was that on 17 November last I announced the establishment of 4 new primary schools and 9 new post-primary schools to open in 2017 and 2018, including a new primary school which will open in September 2018 to serve the Dublin South City Centre area. In addition, the new primary school to serve the Goatstown Stillorgan area, which I announced in February this year and which will open in September 2016, will provide additional capacity. As part of my Department’s School Capital Investment Programme, a number of building projects in the areas referred to by the Deputy are being progressed, including St Mary’s and St Brigid’s Primary School, Haddington Road, St Mary’s National School, Donnybrook and Shellybanks Educate Together National School, which will also provide for increased capacity in the area.

My Department will keep the demographic data for the area under ongoing review, taking into account updated enrolment data and the impact of ongoing and planned expansion of capacity. It is open to a school, should additional teaching posts be allocated, to apply to my Department for additional accommodation to meet any immediate accommodation needs.

Schools Amalgamation

515. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Education and Skills why a new school name and roll number were issued (details supplied), given the detrimental effect on the support provided to children attending the school; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43933/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I wish to advise the Deputy that the school to which he refers is a new school established in September 2011 as a result of an amalgamation of two schools. The amalgamation was initiated by the school authorities in question and was the subject of local consultation and agreement. In the case of an amalgamation, the schools amalgamating are closed to form a new school having a new roll number and a new school name. In the case of the school referred to, the school authority advised the Department of the proposed name.

Schools Amalgamation

516. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the advice given to schools regarding the retention of delivering equality of opportunities in schools status prior to their amalgamation, if it was explained that the amalgamation would result in the loss of this status, resulting in pupils coming from nine national schools with this status attending a secondary school (details supplied) without this status; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43935/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I wish to advise the Minister

that proposals for school amalgamations are a matter for the Patron/Trustees of the schools in question and are subject to approval by the Minister for Education and Skills. Schools proposing to amalgamate are invited to meet with relevant sections of my Department to inform their decision-making process. In accordance with the approach adopted for amalgamations involving DEIS and non-DEIS schools, additional non-teaching resources are provided in respect of eligible pupils from the former DEIS school by way of continued support for the targeted cohort of pupils as a transitional measure.

In the case of a post primary school, these supports continue to be provided for 6 years following the amalgamation. In the case of the school in question, the DEIS supports provided are scheduled to continue until the end of the 2016/17 school year. As the Minister will be aware, a review of the DEIS Programme which will inform future policy in relation to educational disadvantage is currently being undertaken by my Department.

While this process is underway, I do not intend to make any changes to the current programme.

Schools Administration

517. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to provide the governance manual for primary schools 2015 to 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43936/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2015-2019 is published on my Department’s website at www.education.ie. In addition 10 copies of the manual are being distributed to each primary school. Each person appointed to the new Boards of Management should receive a manual with the remaining two copies to be provided to the Parents’ Association. Schools that have yet to receive their manuals will do so in the coming days.

School Curriculum

518. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills for a copy of the consultation paper regarding education on religion, belief and ethics in primary schools; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43937/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The paper to which the Deputy refers was launched last month and is available on the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment’s website at: http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Early_Childhood_and_Primary_Education/Primary-Education/Primary_Developments/ERB-and-E/Developments/Consultation/Consultation.html. The consultation process is part of the ongoing implementation of the recommendations of the Report of the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector. The outcome of the process will inform the development of a programme in Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics in primary schools.

Schools Building Projects Applications

519. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when schools will be notified if their applications have been successful under the summer works programme 2016; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43938/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I wish to advise the Deputy that commensurate with the level of funding available for the Summer Works Scheme, applications will be assessed on a top down basis in accordance with the prioritisation criteria outlined in the governing Circular Letter for the Scheme. This Circular Letter (0055/2015), is available on my Department’s website www.education.ie. It is my intention to publish a list of successful applicants at the end of February/early March 2016.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

520. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will expedite a clinical and educational assessment for a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43949/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I have made enquiries with my Department’s National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) in relation to the child referred to in the Deputy’s question and can inform him she was the subject of an educational assessment by the NEPS psychologist assigned to her school earlier this year. The resulting assessment report, its findings and the psychologist’s recommendations for action in relation to the child’s support in school have been forwarded to and discussed with both parents and school authorities. This process of support is being actioned at school level and is subject of ongoing review by the NEPS psychologist in relation to the interventions put in place. I am also informed that the child in question is the subject of referral to HSE clinical services which fall within the province of my colleague the Minister for Health to whom the Deputy might direct his enquiries in this connection.

Student Grant Scheme Appeals

521. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied) in County Longford to a decision on an application for a grant by Student Universal Support Ireland; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43950/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): As part of a comprehensive customer service and communications strategy provided by Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI), to ensure that all necessary avenues are open to applicants to receive the information they need, a dedicated email and phone line service is provided by SUSI for Oireachtas members. This was established to meet an identified need for applicants who choose to engage the assistance of their public representatives in making enquiries about their grant applications. This service compliments the established channels provided by SUSI which include online application tracking, a dedicated website, a telephone helpdesk, email and social media, including Facebook and Twitter. Enquiries may be emailed direct to SUSI at oireachtas@susi.ie. Staff in SUSI are responding to email queries within a matter of days. If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant or that the rate of grant awarded is not the correct one, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI. Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down in writing by SUSI and remains of the view that the scheme has not been interpreted correctly in his/her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board within the required timeframe.

Third Level Fees

522. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will introduce a fee waiver for independently managed community education providers for Quality and Qualifications Ireland re-engagement. [43954/15]

523. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills why organisations already accredited by the four bodies that are being amalgamated into Quality and Qualifications Ireland, QQI, are being asked to apply for accreditation with QQI, thereby having to pay an additional fee, and if she will waive this fee. [43955/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 522 and 523 together. Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established on 6th November 2012 by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 through an amalgamation of four predecessor agencies - the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) and the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB). The charging of fees to providers is enabled by the 2012 Act and is integrally linked with how QQI is implementing its quality assurance and quality improvement role. The policy informing QQI’s application of fees was subject to extensive consultation and provides that fees will be comprehensive, coherent and reflect the amount and complexity of the work undertaken by QQI. Fees had always been applied to providers in the higher education and training sector and QQI introduced fees for providers in the further education and training sector, thereby applying its policies equitably. In 2013 QQI published its policy for re-engagement with all education and training providers that had a quality assurance agreement with a predecessor agency. Accreditation, including that provided by some of the predecessor agencies, is, by its nature, time-limited and subject to renewal. It is not a permanent status attributed to a provider. Re-engagement with such ‘legacy’ providers involves agreeing revised quality assurance procedures in accordance with specified requirements set down in the 2012 Act and in QQI policy. The one-off re-engagement fee to be applied to legacy providers seeking to re-engage with QQI has yet to be determined. Regarding providers in the Community and Voluntary Sector specifically referred to by the Deputy, it was agreed at a meeting hosted by my Department in December 2014 that 2015 would be a lead-in time for the re-engagement process and that the issue of fees for community and voluntary providers would not arise until 2016. QQI established a Joint QQI /Community and Voluntary Working Group, which is facilitated by an independent facilitator with extensive experience in the community voluntary sector. The working group has met on 5 occasions this year, with a further meeting scheduled this month. The working group also jointly hosted a consultative event on QQI’s quality assurance guidelines and criteria relevant to this sector on 30th June 2015. Through these initiatives, QQI and the community and voluntary sector are engaging on a range of operational, developmental and strategic matters in the specific context of quality assurance and re-engagement. The work of the group will assist QQI in clarifying its operational requirements for future re-engagement with community and voluntary sector organisations.

School Enrolments

524. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the Education (Admissions to Schools) Bill 2015 will be brought before the Houses of the Oireachtas. [43956/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I published the Education

(Admission to Schools) Bill in early April of this year. The Bill is on the Government's legislative programme for enactment in this session. The Bill provides an over-arching framework to ensure that how schools decide on who is enrolled and who is refused a place in schools is more structured, fair and transparent.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

525. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills why the resource hours of a person (details supplied) were withdrawn at the start of this school year and if these will be re-instated for the coming school year. [43957/15]

526. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills why a person with multiple special needs (details supplied) in Dublin 22 was not allocated a special needs assistant at the start of this school year and if she will consider providing this allocation to the person for the coming school year. [43958/15]

527. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the process by which persons with multiple diagnoses are assessed for resource hours or special needs assistants and if a person with the following diagnoses (details supplied) in Dublin 22 will be allocated resource hours or a special needs assistant on the grounds of the multiple diagnosis. [43959/15]

533. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied) in Dublin 22 against the withdrawal of resource hours for the current school year and why the original deciding officer is overseeing the appeal despite this being in contravention of the National Council for Special Education rules. [44031/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 525 to 527, inclusive, and 533 together. I wish to advise the Deputy that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for allocating resource teachers and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) to schools to support children with special educational needs. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support. The criteria by which SNA support is allocated to pupils is set out in my Department's Circular 0030/2014. The criteria in relation to the allocation of resource teaching hours to support pupils with special educational needs in primary schools is sent out in my Departments Circular SP ED 02/05.

It is important to note that each school's allocation of SNA support can change from year to year and may be increased or decreased as students who qualify for SNA support enrol or leave a school. New students with care needs may, or may not, enrol to replace students who have left, for example, or SNA allocations may be decreased where a child's care needs have diminished over time. The deployment of SNAs within schools is then a matter for the individual Principal/Board of Management. SNAs should be deployed by the school in a manner which best meets the care support requirements of the children enrolled in the school for whom SNA support has been allocated. It is a matter for schools to allocate support as required, and on the basis of individual need, which allows schools flexibility in how the SNA support is utilised. In relation to resource teaching support, resource teaching support is provided for pupils with special educational needs in primary schools, either through the schools General Allocation Model, or through an additional allocation to the school by the NCSE to support a low incidence special educational need, as set out in Sp Ed 02/05. All schools were asked to apply for SNA and Resource Teaching support for the 2015/16 school year by 18th March 2015. The NCSE also con-

tinued to accept applications after this date in recognition that enrolments may not have been completed or where assessments were not completed. The NCSE has now published details of allocations made to schools for the 2015/16 school year on its website. Details of the manner in which a school or parent may appeal the level of SNA or resource teaching allocation which has been made to support a child in school, to the NCSE, is set out at www.ncse.ie. As these questions relate to an allocation for an individual child, and also to the manner in which the NCSE has operated its appeal process, I will arrange to have these matters referred to the NCSE for their attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Educational Disadvantage

528. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the additional spending provided in a calendar year to primary schools with delivering equality of opportunity in schools status, including a breakdown of how this money has been spent; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43963/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table.

The expenditure provided by my Department to the DEIS programme at Primary level in 2014 was approximately €70m. The allocated funding for 2015 is also approximately €70m.

DEIS Expenditure 2014

Description	Expenditure 2014
DEIS Teaching Posts - Primary Level	33.1
HSCL Coordinators	13.7
Support Teacher Posts	2.6
DEIS Book Grant Primary Level	1
DEIS Grant - Primary Level	10.8
DEIS Literacy & Numeracy Initiatives *	4.4
Other Continued Professional Development *	4.2
Educational Research Centre *	0.059
Total	69.859

* Expenditure covers Primary and Post Primary Level

SOLAS Training and Education Programmes Certification

529. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills why the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund funded training courses are not recognised by SOLAS and if she will reconsider this policy. [43964/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I am not aware of any specific issues relating to the matter raised. If the Deputy would like to write to me with more detail I will revert to her as soon as possible.

Schools Mental Health Strategies

530. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if funding is available to assist schools to pay for the delivery of programmes on positive mental health and emotional health, given the extent of such issues among adolescents; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43983/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): My Department is strongly supportive of the promotion of positive mental health awareness in both primary and post-primary schools and provides support and resources in this area. The Department adopts a holistic and integrated approach to supporting the work of schools in promoting positive mental health and to supporting those with a broad range of problems, behavioural emotional and social.

The process spans the curriculum in schools, whole-school ethos, quality of teaching, learning and assessment, student support and pastoral care and the provision of professional development for teachers. It also involves other supports such as educational psychological services and guidance and counselling services, and the interface with other agencies, both nationally and locally.

Schools are assisted by *Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (2012)*, which was developed to implement Action 2.1 of *Reach Out: the National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention 2005-2014 (HSE, 2005)*.

The Guidelines are for all members of the school community, boards of management and in-school management teams who play a central leadership role in mental health promotion. They are also useful for parents’ associations, student councils, health and other personnel who are seeking an understanding of how to work in and with schools.

It is also important that this message is conveyed to pupils at an early age. To this end, *Wellbeing Guidelines for Primary Schools* have been recently produced by my Department in conjunction with the Department of Health and the Health Service Executive. The guidelines are informed by consultation with key Education and Health partners and by the findings of current research. They provide practical guidance to schools on how they can promote mental health and well-being in an integrated school-wide way and they also provide evidence-based advice on how to support young people who may be at risk of suicidal behaviour.

The Guidelines build on the significant work already taking place in primary schools, including through the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum, the whole-school guidance plan, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) continuum of support model and the HSE, Health Promoting Schools Process. Information is also provided on how to access support from the SPHE Support Service and other external agencies and support services.

The new Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) also places a clear emphasis on overall student health and well-being. This Framework is underpinned by eight principles, one of which is “Well-being”. It also has eight key skills which are to be embedded in every new Junior Cycle subject and short course including the key skills of “Managing Myself” and “Staying Well”. In addition, the 24 ‘Statements of Learning’ that a student should experience during their Junior Cycle programme involve the student taking action to safeguard and promote their own well-being and that of others.

One of the innovative features of the Junior Cycle Framework is the introduction of short courses that schools can choose to implement. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has developed a new short course in SPHE, which may be delivered for certification purposes and will involve an increase in the time allocation for SPHE at Junior Cycle up to 100 hours over the three year cycle. The new short course is now available to implement

in post-primary schools, should they wish to do so, as part of their Junior Cycle programme. It includes strands such as “Minding Myself and Others” and “My Mental Health”, and deals with issues such as mental health and mental ill-health, dealing with tough times, loss and bereavement.

My Department is also working with the Department of Health to promote participation by primary and post-primary schools in the ‘Health Promoting Schools’ initiative, which is supported by the Department of Health. This European-wide programme aims to strengthen schools’ capacity to be a healthy setting for learning and working by focusing at whole-school level on all the conditions that affect health and well-being.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

531. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will review a decision by Student Universal Support Ireland to refuse an application for a grant from a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44019/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): As part of a comprehensive customer service and communications strategy provided by Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI), to ensure that all necessary avenues are open to applicants to receive the information they need, a dedicated email and phone line service is provided by SUSI for Oireachtas members. This was established to meet an identified need for applicants who choose to engage the assistance of their public representatives in making enquiries about their grant applications.

This service complements the established channels provided by SUSI which include online application tracking, a dedicated website, a telephone helpdesk, email and social media, including Facebook and Twitter.

Enquiries may be emailed direct to SUSI at oireachtas@susi.ie. Staff in SUSI are responding to email queries within a matter of days.

If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant or that the rate of grant awarded is not the correct one, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI.

Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down in writing by SUSI and remains of the view that the scheme has not been interpreted correctly in his/her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board within the required timeframe.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

532. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills why a person (details supplied) in County Dublin is losing an entitlement to a special needs assistant; if she will re-instate this entitlement; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44029/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I wish to advise the Deputy that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for allocating resource teachers and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) to schools to support children with special educational needs. The NCSE operates within my Department’s criteria in allocating such support. The criteria by which SNA support is allocated to pupils is set out in my Department’s Circular 0030/2014.

It is important to note that each school's allocation of SNA support can change from year to year and may be increased or decreased as students who qualify for SNA support enrol or leave a school. New students with care needs may, or may not, enrol to replace students who have left, for example, or SNA allocations may be decreased where a child's care needs have diminished over time.

In considering applications for SNA support from post primary schools the NCSE will take into account the importance of the requirement to allocate necessary care supports with the right of a child to acquire personal independence skills.

The deployment of SNAs within schools, once allocated, is then a matter for the individual Principal/Board of Management. SNAs should be deployed by the school in a manner which best meets the care support requirements of the children enrolled in the school for whom SNA support has been allocated. It is a matter for schools to allocate support as required, and on the basis of individual need, which allows schools flexibility in how the SNA support is utilised.

All schools were asked to apply for SNA support for the 2015/16 school year by 18th March 2015. The NCSE has also continued to accept applications after this date in recognition that enrolments may not have been completed or where assessments were not completed. The NCSE has published details of SNA allocations for schools for the current school year on its website.

Details of the manner in which a school or parent may appeal the level of SNA or resource teaching allocation which has been made to support a child in school, to the NCSE, is set out at www.ncse.ie.

All schools have the contact details of their local SENO, while Parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child's special educational needs, using the contact details available on www.ncse.ie.

As this question relates to an allocation for an individual child, I will arrange to have the matter referred to the NCSE for their attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Question No. 533 answered with Question No. 525.

School Accommodation Provision

534. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the decision not to grant approval for funding for temporary classroom accommodation to a school (details supplied) in County Dublin; if this decision will be reversed, given that enrolment at this school has doubled in recent years, that the school was approved funding for permanent classroom accommodation and that temporary accommodation will be required during construction; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44059/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I can confirm that the school referred to by the Deputy was approved devolved funding earlier this year to build two mainstream classrooms, to meet its 2015/16 accommodation needs.

The school subsequently contacted my Department to request provision of interim temporary accommodation until the devolved permanent accommodation project is complete. The school's application for temporary accommodation was examined and the Department is satisfied that the level of school accommodation is adequate to cater for the teaching requirements of the school until the devolved permanent extension is complete, particularly in the context of the short term temporary nature of the arrangements in place.

Teaching Qualifications

535. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the situation of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; if she is aware of such difficulties facing teaching graduates; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44066/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Teaching Council is the professional body for teaching in Ireland. It was established on a statutory basis under the Teaching Council Act, 2001 in March 2006. One of its functions is to establish and maintain the Register of Teachers. Conditional Registration may be granted when an applicant for registration has not fulfilled all of the Teaching Council’s registration requirements. If Conditional Registration is granted, the Council informs the teacher of the conditions imposed, the measures required to meet them, and the timeframe within which they must be met.

If a registered teacher is unable to complete the requirements of a registration condition within the specified period, he or she may apply to the Council for an extension. This application must be made in the year in which the specified period is due to expire. The teacher must outline the difficulties and/or extenuating circumstances preventing the completion of the required measures in the time specified. Each application for an extension is evaluated by the Council on its merits.

The teacher, to whom the Deputy refers, may apply for an extension by completing the Extension Request Form which is available on the Teaching Council website at the following link - <http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Publications/Registration/Documents/Application-EXT-01.pdf>

Pension Provisions

536. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an application by a teacher (details supplied) for retirement pension and lump sum can be expedited; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44068/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The person referred to by the Deputy has made an application in November 2015 for retirement with pension on grounds of ill-health.

A decision to award or refuse a pension on such grounds must be grounded on a detailed assessment of the medical evidence in the case. To this end, the opinion/recommendation of an appropriately qualified medical adviser retained by my Department as part of the Occupational Health Strategy for school staff must be obtained.

I understand that the person concerned has been seen by the Occupational Health Service provider and their opinion/recommendation in the case is awaited.

Once the recommendation is received from the Occupational Health Service provider, the case will be completed as promptly as possible and a decision will be conveyed to the applicant.

School Transport Applications

537. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry who has applied for school bus trans-

port; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44069/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Damien English): The child referred to by the Deputy is eligible for school transport under the terms of my Department's School Transport Scheme for Children with Special Educational Needs.

Bus Éireann, which operates the school transport scheme, has been requested to establish a service for this child and it is expected that the service will commence this week.

The family should liaise with their local Bus Éireann office at 066-7164750 if they have any further queries.

Teaching Qualifications

538. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will review the circumstances of teachers being probated and if these teachers can carry their probationary period over two years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44071/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Under the Teaching Council Act the Teaching Council has statutory authority to establish procedures and criteria for probation of teachers including periods of probation. Currently, the Council allows three years for the completion of probation for registration purposes.

I have referred this query to the Teaching Council for direct reply to the Deputy.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

539. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Education and Skills why the term unit is used to describe special needs classes; if this term is seen by many families as suggesting that their children should be contained or kept separate from other children; if she will change this term; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44075/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I wish to advise the Deputy that the policy of my Department is that children with special educational needs, including children with autism, should be included, where possible and appropriate, in mainstream school placements with additional supports provided. In circumstances where children with special educational need require more specialised interventions, special school or special class places are also available.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has recently submitted their Policy Advice on Educational Provision for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

In developing this policy advice, the NCSE has consulted widely with parents, professionals and other stakeholders and interested parties while also conducting research. The NCSE has advised that during this consultation process stakeholders raised concerns in relation to the use of the term "unit" in relation to ASD classes.

The policy advice is currently under consideration in my Department. My officials will consider and report to me on any recommendations in the report which relate to the issue raised by the Deputy.

In the interim I will continue to keep this issue under review.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

540. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application for a special needs assistant by a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44168/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), for allocating Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) to schools to support children with special educational needs. The NCSE operates within my Department’s criteria in allocating such support, which is set out in my Department’s Circular 0030/2014.

Circular 0030/2014 sets out the policy of allocating SNA support for a newly enrolling Junior Infant who has clear and obvious need for such support e.g. a child who has a significant additional care need arising from an intellectual, sensory or physical disability.

For those children where it is not yet clear whether difficulties will manifest in a classroom environment, the Circular states that, in general, it is expected that all primary school pupils having their first school experience will have been enrolled and will have commenced attending school before any application for SNA support will be made. Particularly in relation to possible anticipated behavioural difficulties, it is more appropriate to wait until the child begins school in order to see how they have been able to engage in the classroom.

In considering applications for SNA support from post primary schools the NCSE will take into account the importance of the requirement to allocate necessary care supports with the right of a child to acquire personal independence skills.

The deployment of SNAs within schools, once allocated, is then a matter for the individual Principal/Board of Management. SNAs should be deployed by the school in a manner which best meets the care support requirements of the children enrolled in the school for whom SNA support has been allocated. It is a matter for schools to allocate support as required, and on the basis of individual need, which allows schools flexibility in how the SNA support is utilised.

All schools were asked to apply for SNA support for the 2015/16 school year by 18th March 2015. The NCSE has also continued to accept applications after this date in recognition that enrolments may not have been completed or where assessments were not completed. The NCSE has published details of SNA allocations for schools for the current school year on its website.

Details of the manner in which a school or parent may appeal the level of SNA or resource teaching allocation which has been made to support a child in school, to the NCSE, is set out at www.ncse.ie.

All schools have the contact details of their local SENO, while Parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child’s special educational needs, using the contact details available on www.ncse.ie.

As this question relates to an allocation for an individual child, I will arrange to have the matter referred to the NCSE for their attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Disadvantaged Status

541. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills why a school (details supplied) in County Mayo does not have delivering equality of opportunity status, de-

spite assurances to the contrary being given when two local schools, one with this status and one without it, were amalgamated; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44220/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The school in question was established on 1st September 2011 following the amalgamation of a DEIS post-primary school and Non DEIS post-primary school. In line with all such amalgamations, the new school continues to receive the current level of supports in respect of the number of eligible pupils from the former DEIS school until that pupil cohort have left the school. In the case of a post primary school, these supports continue to be supplied for 6 years following the amalgamation.

I am not aware of any assurances in relation to DEIS status of the newly amalgamated school given to the two local schools by my Department.

As you are aware the review of the DEIS Programme is currently underway in my Department. This process involves a number of strands and is being undertaken over the course of the current school year. It will consider all issues pertaining to educational disadvantage.

I hope to be in a position to make an overall proposal for the delivery of future interventions to tackle educational disadvantage after that. While this process is underway, I do not intend to make any changes to the current programme.

Question No. 542 answered with Question No. 503.

Psychological Assessments

543. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will be assessed and considered for possible learning supports. [44234/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I can inform the Deputy that my Department’s National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) provides educational psychology service to all primary and post primary schools through an assigned NEPS psychologist and in some cases through the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments (SCPA), full details of which are on the Department’s website. Under this scheme schools can have an assessment carried out by a member of the panel of private psychologists approved by NEPS, and NEPS will pay the psychologist the fees for this assessment directly.

In common with many other psychological services and best international practice, NEPS has adopted a consultative model of service. The focus is on empowering teachers to intervene effectively with pupils whose needs range from mild to severe and transient to enduring. Psychologists use a problem solving and solution oriented consultative approach to maximise positive outcomes for these pupils. NEPS encourages schools to use a continuum based assessment and intervention process whereby each school takes responsibility for initial assessment, educational planning and remedial intervention for pupils with learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Teachers may consult their NEPS psychologist should they need to at this stage in the process. Only in the event of a failure to make reasonable progress, in spite of the school’s best efforts in consultation with NEPS, will the psychologist become involved with an individual student for intensive intervention or assessment.

This system allows psychologists to give early attention to urgent cases and also to help many more students indirectly than could be seen individually. It also ensures that children are not referred unnecessarily for psychological intervention.

I would advise that if there are concerns in relation to the educational development of the student referred to in Deputy's question these should be raised, in the first instance, with the Principal of the school he is attending, with a view to Principal discussing the situation with the assigned NEPS psychologist.

Institutes of Technology Staff

544. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of staff who reached a financial settlement and then retired or terminated their employment and the number who paid arrears relative to their retrospective contracts or to contracts of indefinite duration from 2010 to date; if sick pay is paid to permanent part-time cleaning staff and the status of negotiations between management and SIPTU and IMPACT relative to this issue; if management has appointed permanent health and safety officers with the necessary qualifications and if management provides adequate training in health and safety to all staff in the Cork Institute of Technology, including its Bishopstown campus and the Rubicon Centre, the Crawford Art Gallery and the National Maritime College of Ireland. [44238/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Based on information supplied to the Department by Cork Institute of Technology, the position in respect of the matters raised in the Deputy's question is as set out below.

Four employees of the Institute have received redundancy or severance payments since 2010.

Arrears payments are not an uncommon feature of payroll systems, and the Institute is no different to others in this regard. It would therefore place an unreasonable administrative burden on the Institute to ask it to account for every payroll arrears payment over a period of years. However, in that context my Department has been assured that no employees have been subjected to undue delay of payroll arrears.

The Institute has recently been engaged in discussions with trade union representatives regarding the issue of sick pay for cleaning staff who are permanent part-time employees, and those discussions have concluded with agreement reached on a mutually satisfactory basis.

The Institute has a health and safety officer who is appropriately qualified, and appropriate and relevant health and safety training is provided as needed by the Institute to all staff on an ongoing basis.

School Accommodation Provision

545. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she is aware of the cramped and inadequate facilities at a school (details supplied) in Cork city; if she will expand the facilities on the current site or move the school to new accommodation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44250/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I can confirm to the Deputy that my Department is aware of the current situation at the school in question. My Department recently approved funding for the provision of additional accommodation and for roof works to be carried out for the school.

My Department is liaising with the school, in question, in relation to its long term accommodation requirements.

Departmental Legal Costs

546. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the total cost to her Department, and those bodies under its aegis, for the procurement of legal services in the State from 2011 to 2015 in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44571/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The total legal costs incurred by my Department for legal services procured by it during the years in question are as follows:

2011 - €21,039.83

2012 - €1,414.50

2013 - €25,009.14

2014 - €35,819.05

2015 - €36,975.50 (Up to end November 2015).

Leader Programmes Funding

547. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the status of Leader funds for Louth Leader Partnership; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43831/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): Under the LEADER elements of the Rural Development Programme 2007 - 2013, €7.23 million has been expended to date by Louth Leader Partnership. The EU rules and regulations governing the programme allow for expenditure to end 2015. In this regard, Local Action Group contracts expire on 31 December 2015 and accordingly all projects must be completed, claimed and paid to the promoter by this date. All project promoters have been advised by Local Action Groups of this date.

My Department recently notified Local Action Groups, including Louth Leader Partnership, that it will provide transitional administration funding from January to March 2016 to allow for the orderly closure of the current programme. It is expected that the 2014 - 2020 LEADER local development strategy selection process will be completed in the majority of areas by March 2016 and that the new Programme will be operational thereafter.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Funding

548. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason for the delay in approving an application by Mayo County Council for funding for a group water scheme (details supplied); if it will be expedited, given an approaching deadline at the end of 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43901/15]

549. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason for the delay in approving an application by Mayo County Council for funding for a group water scheme (details supplied); if it will be expedited, given an approaching deadline at the end of 2015. [43902/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 548 and 549 together.

As outlined in my reply to Question No. 11 of 5 November 2015, my Department is continuing to engage with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on the future funding of group water schemes, including those in CLÁR funded areas. I hope to announce details of future funding arrangements for such schemes very shortly.

Community Development Initiatives

550. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to set out the number of persons who progressed into employment or self-employment as a result of local community development programme interventions by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43984/15]

551. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to set out the number of long-term unemployed persons who take up employment following intervention through local community development programme within six months of completion by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43985/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 550 and 551 together.

The aim of my Department's Local and Community Development Programmes was to tackle poverty and social exclusion in disadvantaged communities. The programme provided funding of €281 million to communities during the period January 2010 to end March 2015, when the new Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) was rolled out across communities, following a competitive tendering process.

The details requested by the Deputy in relation to the number of persons who progressed into employment or self-employment as a result of Local Community Development Programme interventions on a county basis are set out in the following table.

County	Number of participants that progressed into employment from 1 January 2010 – 31 March 2015	Number of participants that progressed into self-employment from 1 January 2010 – 31 March 2015
Carlow	112	397
Cavan	142	748
Clare	98	658
Cork	1019	1505
Donegal	492	1057
Dublin	1826	7820
Galway	346	2395
Kerry	457	1335
Kildare	144	1204
Kilkenny	102	230
Laois	152	318
Leitrim	281	437

County	Number of participants that progressed into employment from 1 January 2010 – 31 March 2015	Number of participants that progressed into self-employment from 1 January 2010 – 31 March 2015
Limerick	357	1306
Longford	38	404
Louth	126	1466
Mayo	169	907
Meath	137	957
Monaghan	35	410
Offaly	276	300
Roscommon	251	319
Sligo	79	451
Tipperary	181	148
Waterford	173	598
Westmeath	247	653
Wexford	182	849
Wicklow	197	676
MFG Cumas Teoranta & Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta Teoranta (Cross County)	18	80
Totals	7637	27628

In relation to the Deputy's request for details in respect of the number of long-term unemployed persons who took up employment following intervention through the Local Community Development Programme within 6 months of completion, this information is not available. However, insofar as SICAP is concerned, this information is being recorded and will be available in due course.

Rural Development Programme

552. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to set out the number of full-time jobs created in enterprises supported under the rural development programme Ireland 2011 to 2015 by country in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43986/15]

553. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of villages and communities benefiting from capital enhancement works under the Rural Development Programme Ireland 2011 to 2015 by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43987/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 552 and 553 together.

The number of full-time jobs supported through LEADER in the period 2011 to 2014, by county, is detailed in the following Table 1. The number of villages and communities benefitting from capital enhancement works is detailed in the following Table 2.

Questions - Written Answers

As the Deputy will note, some of the Local Action Groups cover more than one county. 2014 statistics for Meath are not currently available. In relation to the Deputy's request for data in respect of 2015, these data will not be available until early 2016.

Table 1: Number of full-time jobs created under Rural Development Programme (LEADER)

County	LAG	2011	2012	2013	2014
Carlow	Carlow County Development Partnership Ltd	7	15	14	9
Cavan and Monaghan	Cavan-Monaghan LEADER	12	7.5	14	7.5
Clare	Clare Local Development Company Ltd.	9	21	15	18
Cork	South and East Cork Area Dev Ltd.	35	12	140	14
Cork	Avondhu Blackwater Partnership	11	14	17	8
Cork	West Cork Development Partnership Ltd.	7	6	19	70
Parts of Cork and Kerry	IRD Duhallow Ltd.	76	23	130	159
Donegal	Donegal Local Development Company Ltd.	26	36	22	13
Donegal	Inishowen Development Partnership	28	5	54	62
Dublin	Fingal LEADER Partnership Co.	3	18.5	30	44
Galway	Galway Rural Development Company	8	8	11	19
Galway	FORUM Connemara Ltd.	5	7.5	6	43.5

County	LAG	2011	2012	2013	2014
Kerry	North East Kerry LEADER Partnership Teo	8	3	20	25
Kerry	South Kerry Development Ltd.	1.5	4.5	27	27
Kildare	Cill Dara Ar Aghaidh Teo	10	7	9	6
Kilkenny	Co Kilkenny LEADER Partnership	24	17.5	22	7
Laois	Laois Community and Enterprise Dev	7.5	21.5	19	29.5
Leitrim	Leitrim Integrated Development Co Ltd	7	8.5	24	28
Limerick	West Limerick Resources Ltd	17	10	11	14
Parts of Limerick and Cork	Ballyhoura Development Ltd.	25	15	20	33
Longford	Longford Community Resources Ltd	16	2	7	10
Louth	Louth LEADER Partnership	6	0	111	237
Mayo	Mayo North East LEADER Partnership Co.	12	7	8	9
Mayo	South West Mayo Development Company Ltd	60.5	32.5	28	16
Meath	Meath Community Rural and Social Dev.	24.5	126	133	-

Questions - Written Answers

County	LAG	2011	2012	2013	2014
Offaly	Offaly Integrated Local Dev Co. Ltd.	13	24	25	11.5
Roscommon	Roscommon Integrated Development Company	6.25	12	9	29
Sligo	Co. Sligo LEADER Partnership Company Ltd	38	28	39.5	70.5
Tipperary	North Tipperary LEADER Partnership	9	5	4	11
Tipperary	South Tipperary Local Development Co Ltd	8	24	9	5.5
Waterford	Waterford LEADER Partnership Ltd.	8.5	3	24	33
Wexford	Wexford Local Development	34	8	75.5	28.5
Wicklow	Co Wicklow Community Partnership	5	11	9	24.5
Westmeath	Westmeath Community Development Ltd	58	16	8	9
Islands off Cork, Donegal, Galway and Mayo *	Comhar na nOileán Teoranta	8	9	7	17
-	-	633.75	568	1,121	1,148

*Since 2012 Comhar na nOileán has responsibility for the Galway gaeltacht.

Table 2: Number of Villages/ Communities benefitting from enhancements

County	LAG	2011	2012	2013	2014
Carlow	Carlow County Development Partnership	11	19	13	25

County	LAG	2011	2012	2013	2014
Cavan and Monaghan	Cavan-Monaghan LEADER	21	22	26	19
Clare	Clare Local Development Company Ltd.	9	28	13	14
Cork	South and East Cork Area Dev Ltd.	18	84	83	76
Cork	Avondhu Blackwater Partnership Ltd.	18	8	26	3
Cork	West Cork Development Partnership Ltd.	17	12	48	29
Parts of Cork and Kerry	IRD Duhal-low Ltd.	33	25	17	22
Donegal	Donegal Local Development Company Ltd.	35	98	56	31
Donegal	Inishowen Development Partnership	7	7	4	9
Dublin	Fingal LEADER Partnership Co.	7	11	14	72
Galway	Galway Rural Development Company	37	20	25	13
Galway	FORUM Connemara Ltd.	9	18	11	10
Kerry	North East Kerry LEADER Partnership Teo	8	9	8	15
Kerry	South Kerry Development Ltd.	19	14	42	24

Questions - Written Answers

County	LAG	2011	2012	2013	2014
Kildare	Cill Dara Ar Aghaidh Teo	17	16	33	16
Kilkenny	Co Kilkenny LEADER Partnership	26	16	33	31
Laois	Laois Community and Enterprise Dev	37	101	71	171
Leitrim	Leitrim Integrated Development Co Ltd	21	26	242	191
Limerick	West Limerick Resources Ltd	13	21	12	14
Parts of Limerick and Cork	Ballyhoura Development Ltd.	73	66	111	40
Longford	Longford Community Resources Ltd	5	10	18	13
Louth	Louth LEADER Partnership	11	17	60	14
Mayo	Mayo North East LEADER Partnership Co.	22	38	5	6
Mayo	South West Mayo Development Company Ltd	27	5	5	12
Meath	Meath Community Rural and Social Dev.	1	148	107	-
Offaly	Offaly Integrated Local Dev Co. Ltd.	38	70	37	17
Roscommon	Roscommon Integrated Development Company	9	3	2	15

County	LAG	2011	2012	2013	2014
Sligo	Co. Sligo LEADER Partnership Company Ltd	11	15	1	19
Tipperary	North Tipperary LEADER Partnership	22	42	20	35
Tipperary	South Tipperary Local Development Co Ltd	28	31	28	15
Waterford	Waterford LEADER Partnership Ltd.	16	5	10	19
Wexford	Wexford Local Development	5	8	45	10
Wicklow	Co Wicklow Community Partnership	7	27	49	33
Westmeath	Westmeath Community Development Ltd	9	16	9	13
Islands of Cork, Donegal, Galway and Mayo*	Comhar na nOileán Teoranta	11	14	17	25
-	-	658	1,070	1,301	1,071

Since 2012 Comhar na nOileán has responsibility for the Galway gaeltacht also.

Local Government Audit Service

554. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to make a statement on the findings of the critical review on merging the local government audit service into the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General. [44153/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): In accordance with the Public Service Reform Plan, a critical review on merging the Local Government Audit Service (LGAS) into the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (OCAG) was initiated in 2012 in the context of consideration of agency rationalisation generally. The work of the Group was overtaken by a Government decision in October of that year that the LGAS and the OCAG should not be merged. In light of the Government's definitive policy position, the work of the review group was brought to a conclusion in advance of reporting.

The Government's finalised policy approach in relation to local government reform, as set

out in Putting People First – Action Programme for Effective Local Government, provided for major changes to structures, roles, functions, funding, governance and accountability in local government taking account, *inter alia*, of the appropriate interplay between local, regional and national policy considerations, including the establishment of a new National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC). Arising from work on these matters, new arrangements were agreed for enhanced cooperation between the LGAS and the OCAG, taking account of their separate independent statutory responsibilities.

Local Authority Housing Provision

555. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to set out the amount of taxpayer money being spent on paying a mortgage on a derelict house in Mountshannon in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43536/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): A proposed social housing project at Mountshannon House, Co Clare, was submitted to my Department as part of a prioritised list of proposals from Clare County Council, for funding under the Capital Assistance Scheme. In July 2015, I announced funding approval of over €150 million under the Scheme nationally, to deliver over 1,000 new social housing units. This included 31 new units across 3 projects that were prioritised by Clare County Council, at an overall cost of €2.416 million. While the project in question was not announced for funding approval at that time, it remains under consideration. My Department has sought clarification in relation to a number of aspects of the project and it will be further considered when responses are received.

To date my Department has not provided funding for the acquisition or re-development of Mountshannon House, which is owned by Respond Housing Association and any payments being made are a matter for Clare County Council and Respond Housing Association.

Building Regulations

556. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if buildings (details supplied) in County Kerry are insured appropriately; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43561/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): I have no function in relation to the buildings referred to by the Deputy.

Lobbying Data

557. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to set down in tabular form the number of meetings requested by private external lobby groups and the number held; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43598/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The information sought by the Deputy is not routinely compiled by my Department but will be forwarded to him as soon as possible.

Ministerial Expenditure

558. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to set down his Department's photography costs since he came into office, inclusive of costs incurred from use of the Ministerial allowance, by year, in tabular form; the occasions for which photographers were booked; the photographers used; the costs associated with each occasion; the policy in place regarding the booking of photographers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43630/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The information sought by the Deputy is not routinely compiled by my Department but will be forwarded to him as soon as possible.

Public Relations Contracts Data

559. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to provide details of his Department's use of external public relations firms since he came into office by year in tabular form; the uses of these firms and the policy regarding employing them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43646/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): My Department has not engaged any external public relations firms since I became Minister.

In relation to my Department's policy for the engagement of external expertise, this is generally only considered where the issues involved require expert skills or capabilities that are not readily available within my Department.

Departmental Contracts Data

560. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to provide details in tabular form on the reports he commissioned from external consultants since March 2011 by year, title, cost, date published and company. [43662/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The information requested is set out in the following table.

Year Commissioned	Consultant/Author etc.	Name/Description of Report/Review/Study	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Amount Spent Since March 2011
2011	ARUP Consulting Engineers	Study in respect of provision of fire detection and alarms systems in dwellings.	Not intended for publication. It is a technical report, to inform work in the Department.	€29,935

Questions - Written Answers

Year Commissioned	Consultant/Author etc.	Name/Description of Report/Review/Study	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Amount Spent Since March 2011
2011	Barrow Archaeological Services	Archaeological reports on Met Éireann site at Valentia.	The report is not intended to be published as it is a technical report relating to a site on Valentia Island where Met Éireann are building an Air Monitoring Facility.	€1,210
2011	Building Research Establishment Ltd	Retrofitting Code of Practice.	Published March 2014.	(1) €21,190
2011	Certification Europe Ltd.	Compost Quality Assurance Scheme.	Published October 2012.	€139,142
2011	Dr. Eoin O'Sullivan, Trinity College Dublin	Review of the Homeless Strategy 2008-2013.	Published November 2012.	€6,000
2011	Housing & Sustainable Communities Ltd.	Toolkit for Local Authorities on regeneration.	Not intended for publication. This was a report intended to provide assistance to Local Authorities in drawing up proposals for the regeneration of their areas.	€12,300
2011	Indecon	Regulatory Impact Analysis of proposed regulations for household food waste.	Published June 2012.	€24,725

Year Commissioned	Consultant/Author etc.	Name/Description of Report/Review/Study	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Amount Spent Since March 2011
2011	Malachy Walsh & Partners	EIS Screening Report for site at Valentia.	The report is not intended to be published as it is a technical report relating to a site on Valentia Island where Met Éireann are building an Air Monitoring Facility.	€6,336
2011	Marine Institute	Marine Strategy Framework Directive (1) Initial Assessment; (2) Development of a Monitoring Programme; and (3) Development of a Programme of Measures necessary to achieve Good Environmental Status in Irish Marine Waters.	(1) Initial Assessment - The technical report was published on the Department's website in Q2 2013 and the summary report was published in Q4 2013. (2) Monitoring Programme – sent to the EU Commission in April 2015. (3) Drawing up of programme of Measures to be completed Q1 2016	(2) € 2,731,979
-	-	-	-	-
2011	Mr. David Lovegrove	2011 Report of the Dormant Accounts Board.	Published July 2012.	€9,689
2011	Murtagh & Partners	Review of Dublin Region Homelessness Services and Funding in 2011.	Published October 2011.	€27,800
2011	National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI)	Audit reports for ISO9001:2008 in 2011 and 2012.	Not intended for publication.	€6,699

Questions - Written Answers

Year Commissioned	Consultant/Author etc.	Name/Description of Report/Review/Study	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Amount Spent Since March 2011
2011	Pembroke Communications	Advise on, and assist tendering process for, Tidy Towns sponsorship.	No formal report due for publication.	€4,560
-	-	-	-	-
2011	Price Waterhouse Coopers	Independent assessment on establishment of National Water Utility.	Irish Water - Phase 1 report and appendices published January 2012. Implementation Strategy published December 2012.	€179,584
2011	Pyrite Panel	Report of the Pyrite Panel - Independent report to provide options for the Minister to deal with the pyrite problem.	Published July 2012.	€22,719
2011	RPS Group	Provision of expertise concerning Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment techniques for the evaluation and revision of Regional Waste Management Plans.	No formal document due for publication. The work comprises principally advice, guidance documents and technical expertise.	€45,223
2011	Secretariat to the National Economic and Social Council of Ireland	Analysis on national climate policy.	Interim report released October 2012; final report released in February 2013.	Nil
2011	SKM Enviro	Irish Recycled Plastic Waste Arisings Study.	Published September 2011.	€37,566

Year Commissioned	Consultant/Author etc.	Name/Description of Report/Review/Study	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Amount Spent Since March 2011
2011	Tobin Consulting Engineers	National Litter Pollution Monitoring System - 2011 Report.	Published April 2012.	€61,077
2011	White Young Green	Annual Dust Impact Assessment Report (2011) at the Former Irish Steelworks Site, Haulbowline, Cobh, Co. Cork.	Published March 2012.	(3) See footnote
2012	AECOM	Cost optimal study for non-domestic buildings.	Published March 2013.	€53,517
2012	Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA)	Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas report on how to support the economic development of rural Ireland.	Published April 2014.	(4) €20,702
-	-	-	-	-
2012	DKM Economic Consultants	Review of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000.	Published July 2013.	€39,690
2012	Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)	Analysis of Property Tax Options - a report to the Interdepartmental Expert Group on Property Tax.	Published December 2012.	€60,280
2012	Fehilly Timoney & Company	Bulky Waste Reuse Best Practice - Feasibility Study.	Published July 2013.	€55,289

Questions - Written Answers

Year Commissioned	Consultant/Author etc.	Name/Description of Report/Review/Study	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Amount Spent Since March 2011
2012	Flynn Furney Consultants Ltd.	Environmental Management Services re: review of CEMP at Valentia Site (Method Statement).	The report is not intended to be published as it is a technical report relating to a site on Valentia Island where Met Éireann are building an Air Monitoring Facility.	€3,167
2012	Glas Ecology	Environment Management Plan (Breeding Chough and Peregrine Survey, Valentia Island, Co. Kerry).	The report is not intended to be published as it is a technical report relating to a site on Valentia Island where Met Éireann are building an Air Monitoring Facility.	€4,920
2012	Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency	Review of leasing model.	It is intended that the report will be published during 2015.	€1,937
2012	Indecon	Feasibility study on a Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme.	Published November 2012.	(5) € 42,706
2012	Inter-Departmental Group	Design of a Local Property Tax – Report of the Inter-Departmental Group.	Published December 2012	Nil
2012	Mr. David Lovegrove	2012 Report of the Dormant Accounts Board.	Published March 2013.	€1,120
2012	Mr. Hendrik W van der Kamp	Independent Evaluation of the Planning Review Report 2012.	Published January 2013.	€12,096

Year Commissioned	Consultant/Author etc.	Name/Description of Report/Review/Study	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Amount Spent Since March 2011
2012	Mr. Seamus Woulfe SC	Review of the management by the Department of an application by Wicklow County Council for loan approval in respect of the compulsory purchase of land at Charlesland, Co. Wicklow - Phase 1.	Published March 2012.	€19,680
2012	Mr. Seamus Woulfe SC	Review of the compulsory acquisition of land by Wicklow County Council at Charlesland, Co. Wicklow - Phase 2.	Published April 2013.	€49,200
2012	Munster Archaeology	Report on archaeological investigation/survey of Met Éireann site at Valentia.	Not Intended for publication. Report for internal use only.	€47,289
2012	Padraic Thornton Planning & Environmental Consultancy	Preparation of EIA Guidelines.	Published March 2013.	€7,200
2012	RPS Group	All Island Used Tyre Survey.	Published March 2013.	(6) € 17,673
2012	RPS Group	Review of the Producer Responsibility Model in Ireland.	Final report published in July 2014.	€292,306
2012	Tobin Consulting Engineers	National Litter Pollution Monitoring System - 2012 Report.	Published April 2013.	€58,271
2012	Version 1	Evaluation of ICT Disaster Recovery configuration and capability.	Not intended for publication.	€9,363

Questions - Written Answers

Year Commissioned	Consultant/Author etc.	Name/Description of Report/Review/Study	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Amount Spent Since March 2011
2013	AP Env Econ Limited/National Economic and Social Council (NESC)	Ireland's Environmental Data: Inventory, Assessment and Next Steps.	Published April 2014.	€35,178
2013	Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)	Affordability aspects of the provision of water services in Ireland and subsequent analysis.	Published in May 2014 as Appendix 2 and Appendix 5 of the "Report of the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Affordability Measures".	€57,655
-	-	-	-	-
2013	Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) & University College Cork (UCC)	Technical support on developing low carbon sector roadmaps for Ireland.	The project relates to technical support, with no formal document due for publication.	€107,552
2013	Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) & University College Cork (UCC)	Technical support for the purposes of advising Government on the proposed 2030 EU Framework for Climate and Energy Policies.	This report was published in June 2015 as part of the consultation on the National Mitigation Plan to transition Ireland to a low carbon economy by 2050.	€67,768
2013	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Article 29(2) Report on Progress on Implementation of the EC (Good Agriculture Practices for the Protection of Waters) Regulations 2010.	Published April 2014.	Nil

Year Commissioned	Consultant/Author etc.	Name/Description of Report/Review/Study	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Amount Spent Since March 2011
2013	Garrett Fennell Solicitor	Independent Review of the registration arrangements for Architects under the Building Control Act 2007.	Published on the Department's website.	Nil (report produced on a pro-bono basis)
2013	Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency	Review of CALF assessment process.	It is intended that the report will be published before the end of 2015.	€11,675
2013	Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency	Business Process Design of the Housing Assistance Payment.	Date of publication to be decided	€54,938
2013	Indecon	Assessment of Potential Merits of New Initiative re Purchase of Local Authority Houses by Existing Tenants.	Not intended for publication.	Nil (report produced on a pro-bono basis)
2013	KW Research & Associates	NTACC Research into why Travellers leave Traveller-specific accommodation.	Published on the Department's website April 2014.	€11,938
2013	RPS Group	Public consultation process on the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and producing a report.	Published November 2013.	€9,000
2013	SLR Environmental Consulting (Ireland) Ltd/National Economic and Social Council (NESC)	Wind Energy in Ireland: Building Community Engagement and Social Support.	Published July 2014.	€50,451

Questions - Written Answers

Year Commissioned	Consultant/Author etc.	Name/Description of Report/Review/Study	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Amount Spent Since March 2011
2013	Tobin Consulting Engineers	National Litter Pollution Monitoring System - 2013 Report.	Published June 2014.	€52,014
2013	Userneeds	Usage survey on the Met Éireann website.	Not intended for publication - this was a report volunteered to Met Éireann by the survey company on a 'sample' basis.	Nil - provided as a 'free sample'
2014	Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)	Socio-Economic Impact of a nuclear accident in the UK.	The intention is that the report will be published, but the specific date is not yet known.	€79,950
2014	Glas Ecology	Environment Management follow up Report (Breeding Chough and Peregrine Survey, Valentia Island, Co. Kerry).	The report is not intended to be published as it is a technical report relating to a site on Valentia Island where Met Éireann are building an Air Monitoring Facility.	€1,599
2014	Institute of Public Administration (IPA)	Peer review of Met Eireann's Operational and Strategic Review.	This report is not intended for publication.	€4,920
2014	MacCabe, Durney Barnes	Independent Planning Review.	Expected to be published by end 2015.	€94,521
2014	National Institute for Public Health and the Environment - Netherlands (RIVM)	Electromagnetic Fields in the Irish Context.	Expected to be published in Q1 of 2016	(7) See footnote

Year Commissioned	Consultant/Author etc.	Name/Description of Report/Review/Study	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Amount Spent Since March 2011
2014	National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG)/National Economic and Social Council (NESC)	Environmental Policy Integration: Case Studies Research.	Report is being considered by the NESC Council with publication expected to be later in 2015.	€38,222
2014	National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG)/National Economic and Social Council (NESC)	Sustainable Urban Development	Published July 2015.	€20,303
2014	Padraic Thornton Planning & Environmental Consultancy	Independent Review of Draft S31 Directions in Westmeath.	Published May 2014.	€5,000
2014	Patricia Thornton Tom Philips Associates	Independent Review of Draft S31 Directions in Limerick.	Published August 2014.	€4,151
2014	Ricardo-AEA	NSMC Residential Solid Fuel Study.	Expected to be published before the end of 2015	(8) €16,475
2014	Tobin Consulting Engineers	National Litter Pollution Monitoring System - 2014 Report.	Published July 2015.	€52,014
2014	University College Cork (UCC)/National Economic and Social Council (NESC)	Review of Environmental Social Policy Literature.	Published July 2015.	€4,305
2015	AECOM	Additional cost optimal calculations for domestic and non-domestic buildings.	Not intended for formal publication.	€33,683
2015	Behaviour & Attitudes Ltd.	Market Survey to determine weather forecast consumption behaviour of the Irish public.	Not intended for publication. Extracts may be published in the future.	€19,865

Questions - Written Answers

Year Commissioned	Consultant/Author etc.	Name/Description of Report/Review/Study	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Amount Spent Since March 2011
2015	Deloitte	Business Case Review for the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)	Date of publication to be decided	€28,939
2015	Dr. Dagmar Stengel	Best practice in relation to the sustainable exploitation and management of intertidal seaweed resources.	Not intended for publication.	€14,391
-	-	-	-	-
2015	ILC Sports and Recreation	Review of Comhairle na Tuaithe and the implementation of the National Countryside Recreation Strategy	January 2016	€15,341
2015	IT Executive Focus	Review of the Structure and Delivery Model of the ICT Services for the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government	Not intended for publication.	Nil
2015	Mazars Consulting	Independent Review of Homeless Services (2015)	Expected to be published on the Department's website in early 2016	Nil
2015	RPS Group	Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) services on the National Mitigation Plan	November 2016	(9) € 23,191

Year Commissioned	Consultant/Author etc.	Name/Description of Report/Review/Study	Date or Expected Date of Publication	Amount Spent Since March 2011
2015	Steering Group on Fire Safety Review (Chaired by Martin Riordan)	Review of Fire Safety arrangements in multi-unit developments where concerns arise regarding non-compliance with statutory requirements.	Date of publication to be decided.	Nil
2015	Tobin Consulting Engineers	National Litter Pollution Monitoring System - 2015 Report.	Expected to be published July 2016.	€24,539

(1)The contract was in conjunction with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland. Total cost of the study is €169,302 (inclusive of VAT). My Department's contribution was €21,190 (inclusive of VAT) with the balance met by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (i.e. €148,112 inclusive of VAT).

(2)This report, monitoring programme and programme of measures arise from a broader process connected with Ireland's obligation to implement the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). The work primarily consists of a determination of the status of Ireland's marine waters, the measures necessary to achieve, or maintain, the required Good Environmental Status by 2020 and a programme to monitor this. The preparation of a draft Initial Assessment (under Art. 8 of the MSFD) including proposals for Good Environmental Status (Art. 9) and for draft Environmental Targets (Art.10) is underpinned by a suite of monitoring measures to measure the maritime environment against these targets (Art. 11). Where human activities are preventing these targets from being met, a Programme of Measures will be drawn up to mitigate the effect of these activities, or halt them as appropriate (Art.13).

(3)My Department previously provided funding to Cork County Council to support the production of an annual Dust Impact Assessment Report at the former Irish Steel site at Haulbowline Island. Following a Government Decision in June 2011, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine assumed the lead role in relation to the remedial works necessary to be undertaken on the site. Accordingly, funding provided to Cork County Council for the annual Dust Impact Assessment Report 2011 and subsequent years is a matter for the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

(4)This report has been co-funded by my Department, Teagasc and the Western Development Commission. The cost to my Department of €20,702 represents 40% of the overall expenditure.

(5)This report was co-funded by my Department and the Private Residential Tenancies Board. The cost to my Department of €42,706 represents 50% of the total cost.

(6)Survey jointly commissioned and funded by Department of the Environment in Northern Ireland and my Department.

(7)The cost of this project, which is estimated at €66,950, will be met by the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

(8) This report has been commissioned by my Department under the auspices of the North South Ministerial Council and in conjunction with the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland. The cost is being evenly split and the final charge to my Department is estimated at €40,000.

(9) The Report will cost €90,440 in total (including 23% VAT) and is being co-funded on an equal share basis by the Departments of Transport, Energy and Agriculture.

Ministerial Advisers Data

561. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to provide details of the number of special advisers on his staff and their yearly salary from 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43678/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): Since my appointment as Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government in July 2014 I have appointed two Special Advisers in accordance with Section 11 of the Public Service Management Act 1997. Both were appointed to the Principal Officer (Standard) Scale. There is a temporary replacement *in situ* for one of those Advisers who is absent on unpaid long term sick leave. The total salary costs for these Advisers for 2014 was €90,298.08 and to date in 2015 is €185,860. No Special Advisers were appointed in respect of my colleagues, Ministers of State Coffey or Phelan at my Department.

Previous to my appointment, my predecessor Minister Phil Hogan, who served as Minister from March 2011 to July 2014, appointed two Special Advisers. In addition, as a Minister of State who regularly attended Cabinet, the then Minister of State, Jan O'Sullivan also appointed two Special Advisers.

The following table sets out the total salary costs for all Special Advisers appointed to my Department from 2011 to date.

Total Salary Costs for Special Adviser 2011 – 2015

Year	Salary Costs*
2011	€194,963
2012	€339,348
2013	€393,867
2014	€385,036
2015	€185,860

*Includes Employers PRSI

Local Authority Housing Provision

562. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government why local authorities have turned down the offer of 4,000 houses offered by the National Asset Management Agency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43719/15]

596. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will clarify the position regarding local authorities turning down 4,000 houses offered by the National Asset Management Agency for social housing, the reason for

this and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44217/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 562 and 596 together.

Since December 2011, my Department and the Housing Agency have been engaged with the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) identifying properties that might potentially be suitable for social housing purposes. Of the total 6,574 units identified nationally, 4,048 are no longer available for social housing purposes for a variety of reasons. 2,469 of these properties were considered by local authorities to be unsuitable for social housing because of sustainable planning and housing policy issues associated with the units, or the units were located in areas with no social housing demand. A further 1,579 units originally identified as available for social housing were subsequently discovered by NAMA to be unavailable.

Since the process began, up to end of September 2015, a total of 1,600 NAMA residential properties have been delivered for social housing use, comprising of 1,241 completed properties, with a further 359 that have been contracted and where completion work is on-going. A further 486 properties are considered as being active transactions whereby terms are agreed or active negotiation is on-going by all parties concerned or where a detailed appraisal is being carried out. An additional 440 properties are to be further appraised.

The process of reviewing units previously deemed unsuitable by local authorities is on-going. Local Authorities, particularly those in high demand areas, are continually reviewing the list of available NAMA properties to see if they are suitable to be brought into use as social housing.

Overall, I expect that in excess of 2,000 units for social housing purposes will be secured from the engagement with NAMA.

Full details of units offered and delivered under this process including a breakdown by Local Authority is available on the website of the Housing Agency at www.housing.ie/NAMA.

Seniors Alert Scheme

563. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 522 of 10 November 2015, if the meeting he held with representatives of an organisation (details supplied) during the tendering process for Telecare has been investigated by Pobal. [43731/15]

564. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 522 of 10 November 2015 why an organisation (details supplied) was not excluded from the procurement process on the basis of clause 6.7 of the tender document, which states that canvassing will disqualify. [43732/15]

565. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to set out details on the members of the panel who decided on the award of the Telecare contract, including their academic and technical qualifications relevant to adjudicating on tenders for such a contract. [43733/15]

566. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government why Muintir na Tíre has been permitted to work in conjunction with Pobal in administering the senior alert scheme, given the close links between Muintir na Tíre and a company (details supplied), and the potential conflicts involved. [43734/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 563 to 566, inclusive, together.

My Department is responsible for the Seniors Alert Scheme which encourages community support for vulnerable older people in our communities by providing grant assistance towards the purchase and installation of personal monitored alarms to enable older persons, of limited means, to continue to live securely in their homes with confidence, independence and peace of mind.

The scheme is administered by local community and voluntary groups with the support of Pobal, who took over this role in September 2015 given that organisation's significant experience delivering programmes on behalf of Government.

The assessment of the tenders for the Seniors Alert Scheme, including the award of contracts, was managed separately by Pobal, an independent company, following a public advertisement on eTenders on 20 October 2014. This process was conducted in a robust manner consistent with EU and national Procurement Guidelines.

Membership of the panel established for the tender evaluation process comprised four staff members of Pobal with experience in tender evaluation and grant administration and one representative from my Department who has experience in EU procurement, particularly in relation to IT contracts. The panel's evaluation report was submitted to Pobal senior management, who ultimately decided on the matter and approved the recommendations therein.

It should be noted that Pobal was supported in its work by external independent experts in procurement. Pobal has clearly indicated that there was no interference with the tender process or its outcome by any third party. Accordingly, the organisation referred to was not excluded from the process.

As part of the roll out of the new service model, Pobal, in conjunction with my Department, organised a number of information meetings in relation to the transition of the scheme to Pobal. I understand that a number of individuals and groups, including Muintir na Tire, are continuing to engage with and work in collaboration with Pobal on the new service model in order to continue to provide support to the community groups who provide an excellent service for the elderly.

Housing Adaptation Grant Funding

567. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to detail the funding provided in each of the years 2011 to date under the housing adaptation grant scheme for persons in receipt of a payment under the disability scheme, in tabular form, the funding allocated for 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43748/15]

568. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to detail the funding provided in each of the years 2011 to date under the housing aid for older persons scheme in tabular form as well as the funding allocated for 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43749/15]

569. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to set out the funding provided in each of the years 2011 to date under the mobility aid scheme in tabular form as well as the funding allocated for 2016; and if he will

make a statement on the matter. [43750/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 567 to 569, inclusive, together.

My Department provides funding under the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability. There are three separate grants available and local authorities receive an overall allocation, with the responsibility for the apportionment between the three grants being a matter for each authority.

Information on the exchequer funding provided by my Department to each local authority for these grants is available on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.environment.ie/en/Publications/StatisticsandRegularPublications/HousingStatistics/>, by selecting 'Social and Affordable Housing', 'Housing Adaptation Grants by Area 2008 to date'. Information on the 2015 allocations are contained on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.environment.ie/en/GeneralNews/MainBody,41581,en.html>.

Allocations for 2016 will be notified to local authorities in the New Year.

Local Authority Housing Data

570. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to set out the average cost of the construction of completed social housing units in each of the years 2011 to date in tabular form as well as the estimated future average cost; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43752/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The averages for the all-in construction costs for a local authority house from 2011 up to 2013, which is currently the last full year for which this analysis is available, are set out in the following Table.

Year	Average Cost Nationally
2011	€162,305
2012	€162,500
2013	€167,375

In general terms, the cost of delivering a social housing unit is dependent on a wide range of factors, including the type, size and geographic location of the units and on the contractual arrangements leading to its procurement. Social housing is procured in accordance with the relevant EU and domestic legislative and policy requirements as determined by the National Public Procurement Policy Guidance and Capital Works Management Framework published by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

The prevailing economic conditions at present suggest that housing costs, including social housing costs, are more likely to rise rather than fall during 2016. This is due to the fact that housing supply currently falls significantly short of housing demand and construction input costs are subject to inflationary pressures, as the construction industry transitions from under-activity over an extended period to significant growth in all sectors (i.e. residential, commercial and civil construction).

It is not possible, however, to state the estimated future average cost of construction of social housing units given the range of factors that apply. Over and above cost issues, the nature

of the social housing units that might be developed in any one year, as well as their location and various other factors, will all impact on such a figure. Value for money is and will remain a critical and inherent objective of the process to develop future social housing.

Pyrite Incidence

571. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the status of homes and buildings in County Mayo which are subjected to pyrite issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43767/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): In March of last year, my Department met with a number of private homeowners from County Mayo whose homes are affected by structural problems. The problems appear to concern approximately 15 private houses and the period of construction for the houses involved was 1997 to 2002. My Department was also made aware of problems associated with the cracking of concrete blocks in approximately three local authority estates in County Mayo involving some 17 dwellings. Additional information has been sought from the Council by my Department with regard to these estates.

While building defects are, in the first instance, matters for resolution between the relevant contracting parties, i.e. the homeowner, the builder, the supplier and/or their respective insurers, I recently announced my intention to set up a small expert group, with a strong technical background, to establish, in so far as it is possible, the number of affected dwellings in Mayo and Donegal, the root cause of the problems and the technical solutions for remediation.

In this regard, the expert group will have the following terms of reference:

(i) To identify, insofar as it is possible, the numbers of private dwellings which appear to be affected by defects in the blockwork in the Counties of Donegal and Mayo;

(ii) To carry out a desktop study, which would include a consultation process with affected homeowners, public representatives, local authorities, product manufacturers, building professionals, testing laboratories, industry stakeholders and other relevant parties, to establish the nature of the problem in the affected dwellings;

(iii) To outline a range of technical options for remediation and the means by which those technical options could be applied; and

(iv) To submit a report by 31 May 2016.

Arrangements are now underway within my Department to identify a suitable chair for the expert group and I will be seeking nominations shortly from a number of professional bodies for suitable persons to participate on the group.

Rent Controls

572. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government how he will combat rent increases, if and when he will introduce rent controls, what these rent controls will be; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43772/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): The Residential Tenancies Act 2004 regulates the landlord-

tenant relationship in the private rented residential sector and sets out the rights and obligations of landlords and tenants. Section 19 of the Act provides that in setting the rent under a tenancy, whether at the outset or by way of a review, the rent must not be greater than the market rent. Section 20 provides for the frequency with which rent reviews may occur.

On 10 November 2015, Government approval was given to a package of measures to address rent stability and housing supply. In relation to rent stability, the measures were given effect by the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2015, enacted on 4 December 2015. This Act provides, inter alia, that the minimum period between rent reviews for tenancies is being increased from 12 to 24 months and this new provision will apply for a four year period. In addition, the minimum period of notice of new rent is increased from 28 days to 90 days and longer notice periods for the termination of long-term tenancies have been introduced. Each of these new provisions commenced on enactment.

Further amendments in the Act regarding rent and tenancies will be the subject of commencement orders. Details of the full package of new rent stability and housing supply measures are available at the following link:

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Housing/FileDownload,43556,en.pdf>

Ultimately, the key to addressing rising rents is increasing the supply of housing and Government is addressing this on a number of fronts, including Construction 2020; A Strategy for a Renewed Construction Sector and the Social Housing Strategy 2020. The package of measures announced on 10 November will act to stabilise rents in the short to medium term while the additional supply of housing comes on stream.

Housing Provision

573. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the funding allocation announced recently for redevelopment works at Erne Dale in Ballyshannon in County Donegal will be made available to Donegal County Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43862/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): My Department issued provisional approval for funding in relation to the acquisition and refurbishment of eleven housing units at Erindale Heights, Ballyshannon, on 15 June 2015. This approval grants 30% support under the Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF) amounting to €292,155 to an approved housing body for the completion of this work. In addition, approval was also issued for support under the Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme in respect of an annual availability payment of €54,648 over a period of 30 years.

My understanding is that a programme of works is being finalised by the approved housing body, and on that basis, a recoupment claim has yet to be received by my Department from Donegal County Council in respect of this project.

Clár Bonneagair agus Infheistíochta Caipitil

574. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Comhshaoil, Pobail agus Rialtais Áitiúil cén uair a bheifear i dteagmháil le Comhairle Contae na Gaillimhe maidir leis an airgead atá curtha ar fáil faoina Roinn chun cé Inis Oírr a fhorbairt; an mbeidh ar an gComhairle Contae

sciar den chostas a chur ar fáil le hÍoc as forbairt na cé agus más amhlaidh go mbeidh, cén cé-atadán a bheidh i gceist; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [43887/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): Is féidir liom a dheimhniú go bhfuil soláthar €8 milliún curtha ar fáil ag an Rialtas faoin gClár Bonneagair agus Infheistíochta Caipitil, 2016-2021 d'fhorbairt na cé ar Inis Oírr, Oileáin Árann. Tá sé mar chuspóir lárnach ag an Rialtas go leanfaidh pobail bhríomhara, inmharthana ag cur fúthu ar na hoileáin agus is léir go rachaidh an togra tábhachtach seo go mór chun tairbhe pobal Inis Oírr.

Beidh mé ag dul i mbun comhráití go luath faoin togra le mo chomhleacaí, an tAire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta, Heather Humphreys T.D., a bhfuil príomhfhreagracht ag a Roinn as forbairt na n-oileán. Pléifear na mionsonraithe cuí maidir leis an togra tábhachtach seo a chur i gcrích ag an bpointe sin.

Housing Adaptation Grant Expenditure

575. **Deputy Colm Keaveney** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the expenditure on the housing adaptation grant scheme and the mobility aid scheme from 2011 to date; the cost of restoring these to their 2011 levels; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43939/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): My Department provides funding under the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability. There are three separate grants available and local authorities receive an overall allocation, with the responsibility for the apportionment between the three schemes being a matter for each authority.

Information on the exchequer funding provided by my Department to each local authority for these grants is available on my Department's website at the following link:<http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/StatisticsandRegularPublications/HousingStatistics/>, by selecting 'Social and Affordable Housing', 'Housing Adaptation Grants by Area 2008 to date'. Information on the 2015 allocations is on my Department's website at the following link:<http://www.environ.ie/en/GeneralNews/MainBody,41581,en.html>.

The total funding allocation of €50.5m nationally for these grants that I announced in May 2015 represents an increase of some 10% over the 2014 funding. As the funding provided in 2011 was €76m, additional funding of €25.5m would be required to restore funding to that level. I am aware of the social benefit accruing from these schemes in terms of facilitating the continued independent occupancy of their own homes by older people and people with a disability and a further funding increase of 10% is proposed for the grants in 2016.

In addition, some changes were introduced to the grants in January 2014 following a review carried out in 2013. These changes are spreading the benefits of the grants as widely as possible and improving fairness and value for money in their operation. This approach, combined with the additional funding being provided, will see over 8,500 households benefit from the grants in 2016.

Private Residential Tenancies Board

576. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and

Local Government the status of tenants with landlords who are not registered with the Private Residential Tenancies Board; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43960/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): The Residential Tenancies Act 2004, as amended, regulates the tenant-landlord relationship in the private rented residential sector. The Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) was established as an independent statutory body under the Act to operate a national tenancy registration system and to facilitate the resolution of disputes between landlords and tenants. The Act applies to every dwelling that is the subject of a tenancy, subject to a limited number of exceptions which are set out in section 3(2) of the Act. Where a dwelling is occupied by a person under an arrangement or agreement which is not a tenancy or under a tenancy to which the Act does not apply, such as instances where a *bona fide* licensing arrangement exists, the PRTB does not have any function in the registration of such agreements or arrangements.

In circumstances where it is unclear as to whether a particular rental agreement is a tenancy or a licence, the PRTB can adjudicate on the question and has done so in the past.

Where it finds that a tenancy is unregistered due to the landlord's wrongful claim of licence, the PRTB can serve a notice requiring registration and failure to comply is an offence.

Leader Programmes Administration

577. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of completed plans received under the Leader programme to date, including the names of the applicants and the sub-regional areas they relate to; the number of outstanding plans still awaited and the sub-regional areas they relate to; the number of groups successful at stage 1 of the process that have now indicated that they will not be submitting a plan under stage 2, and the sub-regional areas they relate to; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43975/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): As the Deputy is aware, Ireland is conducting a two stage process for the selection of local development strategies to support the delivery of the LEADER elements of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

Stage one of the process is complete and those successful at stage one have moved to stage two of the process, which is the preparation of local development strategies in each of the 28 sub-regional areas.

There were 42 successful submissions to the expression of interest phase of the process, with 7 of these subsequently withdrawing their interest as follows:

Expression of Interest Withdrawn	Sub-Regional Area
Carlow County Development Partnership Ltd	Carlow
West Cork Development Partnership	South Cork
North & East LEADER Partnership Teoranta	Kerry
South Kerry Development Partnership Ltd	Kerry

Questions - Written Answers

Expression of Interest Withdrawn	Sub-Regional Area
South Tipperary Development Company Ltd	Tipperary (South Tipperary)
South Tipperary Development Company Ltd	Tipperary (County Tipperary)
Tipperary Leader	Tipperary

A minimum period of six months to end-January 2016 has been allowed for the submission of strategies by all Local Action Groups, with the majority expected to submit strategies within that timeframe.

To date, six local development strategies have been received as follows:

Local Development Strategy Received	Sub-Regional Area
Waterford LCDC	Waterford
North Cork LCDC	North Cork
Offaly LCDC	Offaly
Roscommon LCDC	Roscommon
Limerick LCDC	Limerick
Sligo LCDC	Sligo

A further twenty nine local development strategies are awaited in respect of twenty two sub-regional areas as follows:

Local Development Strategy Awaiting Submission	Sub-Regional Area
Carlow LCDC	Carlow
Cavan LCDC	Cavan
Clare LCDC	Clare
Clare Local Development Company	Clare
Donegal LCDC	Donegal
Dublin Rural LCDC	Dublin
Forum Connemara	Galway
Galway LCDC	Galway
Kerry LCDC	Kerry
County Kildare Local Action Group (Kildare LCDC / County Kildare LEADER Partnership)	Kildare
Kilkenny LCDC	Kilkenny
Kilkenny Leader Partnership	Kilkenny
Laois LCDC	Laois
Leitrim LCDC	Leitrim
Longford LCDC in partnership with Longford Community Resources	Longford
Louth LCDC	Louth
Mayo LCDC	Mayo
IRD Kiltimagh	Mayo
Moyvalley Resources	Mayo

Local Development Strategy Awaiting Submission	Sub-Regional Area
Meath LCDC	Meath
Monaghan LCDC	Monaghan
South and East Cork Area Development Partnership	South Cork
South Cork LCDC	South C ork
Tipperary LCDC	Tipperary
West Cork Development Partnership	West Cork
West Cork LCDC	West Cork
Westmeath LCDC	Westmeath
Wexford LCDC	Wexford
County Wicklow LCDC/County Wicklow Partnership	Wicklow

Building Regulations

578. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the investigation panel to examine the MICA issue will be established and functioning; what the process will be for those home owners affected by MICA in notifying the panel of the details of their homes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43989/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): In order to assist the parties directly involved in reaching a satisfactory resolution to their difficulties, I recently announced my intention to establish an expert group to investigate the problems that have emerged in the concrete blockwork of certain dwellings in both Donegal and Mayo.

While building defects are, in the first instance, matters for resolution between the relevant contracting parties, i.e. the homeowner, the builder, the supplier and/or their respective insurers, a small expert group, with a strong technical background, will be set up to establish, insofar as it is possible, the number of affected dwellings in Donegal and Mayo, the root cause of the problems and the technical solutions for remediation.

In this regard, the expert group will have the following terms of reference:

(i) To identify, insofar as it is possible, the numbers of private dwellings which appear to be affected by defects in the blockwork in the Counties of Donegal and Mayo;

(ii) To carry out a desktop study, which would include a consultation process with affected homeowners, public representatives, local authorities, product manufacturers, building professionals, testing laboratories, industry stakeholders and other relevant parties, to establish the nature of the problem in the affected dwellings;

(iii) To outline a range of technical options for remediation and the means by which those technical options could be applied; and

(iv) To submit a report by 31 May 2016.

Arrangements are now underway within my Department to identify a suitable chair for the expert group and nominations will be sought shortly from a number of professional bodies for

suitable persons to participate on the group.

Once established the expert group will decide upon the means by which they will carry out their investigations, including the means by which they will interact with affected homeowners on the issues concerned.

Fire Service

579. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of times the fire service from a station (details supplied) in County Longford was called to assist at serious road accidents in each of the years 2012 to 2014. [44010/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The number of times the fire service from the station referred to in the Question was called to assist serious road traffic accidents in each of the years 2012 to 2014 is set out in the following table.

Year	Amount
2012	10
2013	24
2014	19

Planning Issues

580. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is aware of an enforcement order issued by Westmeath County Council in respect of a company (details supplied) in County Westmeath; and if he can provide an update in respect of the implementation of Order. [44080/15]

581. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if a company (details supplied) was in receipt of Leader funding in 2013 after an enforcement order was issued against it; the reason for this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44081/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 580 and 581 together.

Responsibility for planning enforcement under the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, is a matter for the relevant local authority, in this case Westmeath County Council. Under section 30 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 Act, I am specifically precluded from exercising any power or control in relation to any particular case, including a matter of planning enforcement, with which a planning authority or An Bord Pleanála is or may be concerned.

Westmeath Community Development Ltd. are contracted to deliver the LEADER element of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 (RDP) in Westmeath and are the decision-makers in relation to the allocation of project funding. This is in line with the 'bottom up' approach to rural development. The decision to award funding to the project referred to by the Deputy was taken by Westmeath Community Development Ltd. on 29 March 2012, with funding of €13,387 paid on 26 July 2013.

The provision of LEADER funding is subject to compliance with both EU and national regulations and rules at all times. In relation to the marina referred to by the Deputy in the details supplied, I am advised that funding was awarded and paid in respect of a feasibility study, which inter alia examined the project promoter's existing business and potential business opportunities. No funding was provided for the development of the marina per se. Accordingly, I am satisfied that the enforcement order from Westmeath County Council was not breached by the LEADER funded project.

Energy Efficiency

582. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the type of energy efficiency measures attended to by Mayo County Council on its social housing stock pursuant to funding from his Department between 2011 and 2014; how many housing units benefitted, by year; how many housing units remain in need of energy efficiency measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44088/15]

583. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the energy efficiency measures attended to by Mayo County Council on its social housing stock pursuant to funding from his Department between 2011 and 2014, how many housing units had installed an oil-fired central heating system; how many had solid fuel ranges and back boilers removed in the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44089/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 582 and 583 together.

My Department provides funding for certain programmes to support local authorities in the development and improvement of social housing, including improving energy efficiency. An ambitious programme of insulation retrofitting for the least energy efficient social houses was introduced in 2013, with €77 million funding being provided by my Department from 2013 to 2015. This has resulted in improved Building Energy Ratings and comfort levels in over 30,000 local authority homes, benefitting those at risk of fuel poverty and making a significant contribution to Ireland's carbon emissions reduction targets and energy efficiency targets for 2020.

A programme of remediation and energy efficiency measures in vacant social housing was implemented from 2009-2012, under which improvements were carried out to over 7,700 social units nationally. In 2014, a new programme to remediate vacant properties was introduced with over €50 million funding being provided by my Department in 2014-2015. Nearly 5,000 vacant units are being remediated nationally between 2014 and 2015, with a particular focus on upgrading their thermal efficiency.

The number of social housing units in Mayo that have been retrofitted under Departmental energy efficiency programmes in 2011-2014 is as follows:

Vacant units retrofitted 2011	Vacant units retrofitted 2012	Fabric upgrade programme 2013	Fabric upgrade programme 2014	Vacant units retrofitted 2014
62	26	193	131	80

Currently my Department is not supporting any programme to remove solid fuel cookers and heating systems in existing social houses. A previous programme operated over the years 2004 to 2009 and saw local authorities upgrade the central heating of 27,750 social houses, at a cost to the exchequer of €140 million.

I understand that approximately 600 social housing units that are the responsibility of Mayo County Council remain to have their insulation retrofitted. The number of units that had an oil fired central heating system installed, or had solid fuel ranges and back boilers removed in the process, are not known in my Department and are matters for Mayo County Council.

Housing Adaptation Grant

584. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the status of home grants for the elderly (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44092/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): A total funding allocation for 2015 of €50.5m nationally was made available for the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability, an increase of 10% on the previous year.

At local level, the detailed administration and processing of the grants, including the assessment, approval and payment of individual grants to applicants, is the responsibility of the relevant local authority.

Emergency Services Personnel

585. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government who co-ordinates the emergency service teams in County Longford that are called to the scene of serious road accidents; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44101/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): *A Framework for Major Emergency Management* sets out the arrangements by which the principal response agencies will work together in the management of large-scale incidents. In the event of serious road accidents, An Garda Síochána are the designated lead agency under this framework.

Fire Service

586. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government how many hoax calls Cork City and Cork County Fire Service were called out to in each of the years 2013 to date, the cost of responding to these calls; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44150/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The number of false alarm incidents attended by Cork City Fire Service and Cork County Fire Service in 2013 and 2014, broken down by malicious and good intent, is set out in the following tables. The information for 2015 will not be available until early next year.

Cork City

Year	Malicious	Good Intent	Total
2013	69	196	265

Year	Malicious	Good Intent	Total
2014	85	162	247

Cork County

Year	Malicious	Good Intent	Total
2013	162	460	622
2014	107	474	581

The cost incurred as a result of these calls is a matter for the local authority concerned, and is not collected by my Department.

Waste Disposal

587. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has discussed its grievances on the workings of the tyre working group and some of the practices and recommendations that have resulted from its deliberations, with the Independent Tyres Wholesalers and Retailers Association. [44166/15]

588. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will review the prescribed solution of a full producer-responsibility initiative, with the suggested loss of jobs, distortion of trade and imposition of a new tax on the consumer, given that the tyre industry claims that the tyre working group process was flawed. [44167/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 587 and 588 together.

Extensive discussions with the tyre industry through the establishment of a Tyres Working Group have taken place since the publication of the PRI Review Report on Tyres and Waste Tyres over two years ago in November 2013. The Tyres Working Group was, and continues to be, an open and transparent arrangement through which stakeholders have an opportunity to shape the future of the tyre sector in Ireland. However, the Independent Tyre Wholesalers and Retailers Association (ITWRA) withdrew from the Group shortly after I announced my decision to establish a full PRI for tyres and waste tyres in January 2015. My Department has been in occasional contact with the organisation since their decision to withdraw. The ITWRA continue to receive all Tyres Working Group related correspondence and on several occasions I have urged them to re-join the process and to embrace the opportunity to influence the shape of the new structures.

Prior to the adoption of the current 2007 Regulations, my Department made it very clear that this was the last opportunity for the tyre industry to embrace environmental compliance and take responsibility for the waste it produces. It stated that if the required improvement did not happen a full Producer Responsibility Initiative (PRI) model would be introduced. The Producer Responsibility Initiative report on Tyres and Waste Tyres published in November 2013 looked at the operation of the system introduced in 2007 and found:

- A non-compliance rate with the Tyre Regulations of 46%,
- A lack of consistent and accurate data on tyres,
- The system was not tracking data flows well, and

- Between 25% and 50% of waste tyres were not accounted for.

In summary, this system, which has resulted in between 15–20 million tyres being dumped illegally around our country, is failing to provide a proper waste management system for tyres and cannot be allowed to continue. The tyre industry is now being asked to do what operators in other areas such as WEEE, packaging, batteries, and farm plastics have been doing for years; that is, to take responsibility for managing the waste that they produce. Economic operators who are in compliance with the Regulations have nothing to fear from the new structures.

The model that is being introduced will formalise a charge that tyre retailers already apply to purchases of new tyres by consumers and ensure that the fee consumers pay actually goes towards its stated purpose, which is to support the environmental treatment of waste tyres. This charge varies across the country from around €1.75 to as much as €3.50 per tyre. As things stand, the consumer, in effect, pays twice – first, when they purchase new tyres and then, again, through their taxation when local authorities remove illegal tyre stockpiles across the country. The new system is therefore very positive from the perspective of the consumer.

Repak ELT, which has already replaced TRACS as the sole compliance scheme for tyres as of 1 November 2015, already has almost 200 members and the model that I am developing, which mirrors arrangements in place in 20 other EU Member States, will, I am confident, enjoy the full support of all members of the European Tyre and Rubber Manufacturers Association, who make up approximately 50% of the Irish tyre market.

As I have previously stated, I urge both the Irish Tyre Industry Association (ITIA) and the Irish Tyre Wholesalers & Retailers Association (ITWRA) to re-join the process and re-engage with my Department in finalising the details for the new regulatory regime. In addition, my Department and Repak ELT continue to engage with representatives from the farming, construction and haulage sectors on the new arrangements.

Local Authority Housing Provision

589. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of local authority housing unit builds completed by county in 2015 to date, in tabular form. [44193/15]

590. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of local authority housing units builds commenced but not completed by county in 2015 to date, in tabular form. [44194/15]

592. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of new social housing units and the scheme under which they have been delivered, in 2015 to date, in tabular form. [44196/15]

593. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of local authority units that will be built and commenced by county in 2016, in tabular form. [44197/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 589, 590, 592 and 593 together.

Information on all new social housing units constructed and acquired in respect of all local authorities and approved housing bodies is published on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/StatisticsandRegularPublications/Housing->

Statistics/FileDownload,15291,en.xls.

In addition, information supplied to my Department by local authorities identifies 112 construction ‘starts’ over the 9 month period to the end of September 2015 in respect of local authority contracted projects; I expect projects involving further significant local authority ‘starts’ to be reported in due course for Q4 2015. Equivalent information in relation to ‘starts’ in respect of Approved Housing Body projects in the same period is not readily available.

On 1 April 2015, I announced provisional funding allocations totalling €1.5 billion for all local authorities, to meet the delivery target of circa 22,900 social housing units out to 2017 of the Government’s Social Housing Strategy 2020. Details of the individual targets set for local authorities can be found on my Department’s website at: <http://www.environ.ie/en/DevelopmentHousing/Housing/News/MainBody,41016,en.htm>.

In line with the targets, a major social housing construction and acquisition programme was kick-started as part of announcements of new local authority and approved housing body projects in May and July of this year. These projects will see the delivery of almost 3,000 new housing units at a value of almost half a billion euros, covering all 31 local authorities; full details can be found on my Department’s website at the following links: <http://www.environ.ie/en/DevelopmentHousing/Housing/News/MainBody,41340,en.htm>

<http://www.environ.ie/en/DevelopmentHousing/Housing/News/MainBody,42225,en.htm>.

It will be these projects, in addition to projects announced by my Department in March 2014, details of which are available at <http://www.environ.ie/en/DevelopmentHousing/Housing/News/MainBody,36901,en.htm>, that will be the construction projects to commence and complete in 2016. It is not possible to confirm the exact breakdown of local authority units to be commenced in 2016 on a county by county basis given that all projects must undergo planning and this and other factors can have a direct impact on the timing for the advancement of construction projects.

Housing Assistance Payments Data

591. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of housing assistance payment tenancies in operation and yearly cost of these tenancies to the State by county in tabular form. [44195/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The implementation of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme is a key priority for Government and a major pillar of the Social Housing Strategy 2020. To date, the HAP scheme has been introduced incrementally to 18 local authority areas, with over 5,200 households being supported by the scheme across those pilot local authority areas. Dublin City Council is also implementing a HAP pilot scheme for homeless households in the Dublin region on behalf of all four Dublin local authorities. Initially, for the purposes of the HAP statutory pilot, Limerick City and County Council have been nominated by the City and County Management Association (CCMA) as the lead authority in respect of the HAP project and are providing a transactional shared service hub for all local authorities operating HAP during the pilot phase. All HAP financial transactions, including the collection of differential rent from tenants and the payment of HAP rents directly to landlords, are being made by the transactional shared services hub. To date in 2015, there has been expenditure of €10.3m on the HAP scheme, which comprises landlord and administration recoupment payments to Limerick City and County Council.

Funding for HAP has been increased to €47.7 million in 2016, in order to meet the con-

tinuing costs of HAP households supported at end 2015, and the costs of an additional 10,000 households to be supported by the scheme in 2016.

I am pleased with the operation of the HAP scheme and I would like to commend the local authorities on their engagement with the scheme to date. The information requested on households supported by HAP is set out in the following table.

Local Authority	Commencement Date of HAP Scheme	Active HAP Tenancies (30/11/2015)
Carlow CC	29/06/2015	70
Clare CC	29/06/2015	184
Cork City Co	29/06/2015	87
Cork CC	15/09/2014	824
Donegal CC	25/05/2015	360
Dublin City Co*	18/12/2014	42
Dun- Rathdown CC*	18/12/2014	1
Fingal CC*	18/12/2014	6
Galway CC	16/11/2015	1
Kildare CC	02/11/2015	6
Kilkenny CC	01/10/2014	494
Limerick City & Co	15/09/2014	1013
Louth CC	01/10/2014	622
Monaghan CC	01/10/2014	168
Meath CC	02/11/2015	6
Offaly CC	15/06/2015	71
South Dublin CC**	01/10/2014	523
Tipperary CC	29/06/2015	155
Sligo CC	16/11/2015	1
Waterford City & Co	15/09/2015	628
Total		5262

* Dublin City Council is operating HAP Homeless pilot on behalf of the four Dublin local authorities.

** Includes some households supported through the HAP Homeless pilot.

Questions Nos. 592 and 593 answered with Question No. 589.

Local Authority Housing Data

594. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the amount spent on the construction of local authority housing in each of the years 2011 to date, in tabular form, and the estimate for 2016 [44198/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The amount spent on the construction of local authority housing in the years 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 is outlined in the following table.

Year	Amount
2011	€58.512m

Year	Amount
2012	€51.707m
2013	€29.620m
2014	€24.623m

To date in 2015, €11.33 million has been spent on direct Exchequer investment in the construction of local authority housing. In addition, a further €43 million has been invested by certain local authorities in the delivery of local authority housing so far this year; this amount has been self-financed from Local Property Tax proceeds in lieu of Exchequer funding and has supported both the construction and acquisition of social housing.

Investment in housing infrastructure has been given priority in Budget 2016 with exchequer investment of almost €811 million across a range of housing programmes. In addition, local authorities will fund a range of housing services from their own resources to the value of over €112 million, bringing the total Housing provision in 2016 to €923 million. This funding will facilitate an investment of over €180 million in the construction and acquisition of social housing.

Rental Accommodation Scheme Data

595. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of former rental accommodation scheme tenants who have been evicted or who have had their tenancies terminated in each of the years from 2011 to date. [44199/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The information requested is not available in my Department. The administration of the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) is a matter for each local authority.

Question No. 596 answered with Question No. 562.

Voluntary Housing Sector

597. **Deputy Noel Coonan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the status of an application for funding by a housing group (details supplied) in County Tipperary, if and when funding will be provided to it; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44230/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The project in question was submitted to my Department as part of a prioritised list of proposals from Tipperary County Council, for funding under the Capital Assistance Scheme. In July 2015, I announced funding approval of over €150 million nationally under the Scheme, to deliver over 1,000 new social housing units. This included 27 new units across 6 projects that were prioritised by Tipperary County Council, at an overall cost of €3.637 million. While the project in question was not announced for funding approval at that time, it remains under consideration. My Department has sought clarification in relation to a number of aspects of the project and it will be further considered when responses are received.

Traveller Accommodation

598. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason housing specifically designed for occupation by Travellers, where more than one house or dwelling is provided, is excluded from sale under SI No. 483 of 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44235/15]

599. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government where an applicant has adequate funding to purchase a house or a family member is willing to make the money available to the applicant, the reason under SI No. 483 of 2015 a minimum annual income is required; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44236/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 598 and 599 together.

The new incremental tenant purchase scheme for existing local authority houses will come into operation on 1 January 2016 and will provide opportunities for tenants to become homeowners, while also promoting sustainable communities and generating additional funding from sale proceeds for local authorities to refurbish and replenish its housing stock.

The scheme will be open to tenants, including joint tenants, of local authority houses that are available for sale under the scheme, and who have been in receipt of social housing support for a minimum period of one year and who have a minimum reckonable income of €15,000 per annum.

This minimum reckonable income under the new scheme is the same as that which exists for the incremental purchase scheme for certain new local authority houses and is considered appropriate, both as a means for determining the discount to be applied to the market value of the house and also to ensure that the tenant is in a position to meet the ongoing costs of maintaining the house for the period of the incremental purchase charge.

Similar to other incremental purchase model schemes currently operating, the scheme involves progressive discounts for purchasers linked to household income, with the housing authority placing an incremental charge on the house equivalent to the discount given.

A tenant may fund the purchase price of the house from one or a combination of the tenant's own resources, including savings, contributions from family members or from a mortgage.

The exclusion of houses that have been specifically designed in a group setting for occupation by Travellers will ensure that the social housing units provided under these schemes to date will remain within the ownership and control of local authorities and will therefore be available on an on-going basis to meet the specific housing needs of Travellers.

Departmental Legal Costs

600. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the total cost to his Department, and agencies under his aegis, for the procurement of legal services in the State from 2011 to 2015, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44572/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The information requested in relation to my Department is being compiled and will be forwarded as soon as possible. The information sought regarding the agencies under the aegis of my Department is an operational matter for each agency.

Warmer Homes Scheme Eligibility

601. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the status of the review of criteria to include persons in receipt of partial capacity in the eligibility criteria for the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland's warmer home grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43545/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme delivers a range of energy efficiency measures to low income households who meet the defined eligibility criteria and who are vulnerable to energy poverty. Recipients of the scheme do not receive grants but have measures installed free of charge. In 2012 the eligibility criteria for the Better Energy Warmer Homes scheme were broadened in an attempt to capture more households at risk of energy poverty. To be eligible for the Warmer Homes scheme now a person must be in receipt of just one of the following;

- Fuel Allowance as part of the National Fuel Scheme;
- Job seekers allowance for more than six months and with children under 7;
- Family Income Support.

In 2015, I published a consultation paper on developing a new Government strategy on affordable energy and this consultation paper sought views on whether the eligibility criteria for the Warmer Homes Scheme were adequate. The responses received from this consultation are under consideration and I expect to release a new Affordable Energy Strategy in January 2016.

Trading Online Voucher Scheme

602. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will continue the trading online voucher scheme in 2016. [43768/15]

603. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of applications for the trading online voucher scheme; and the number of vouchers awarded in 2015 to date. [43769/15]

604. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the policies he has introduced in 2015 to encourage and increase the number of indigenous micro businesses and small businesses trading online. [43770/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 602 to 604, inclusive, together.

The Government's National Digital Strategy (NDS) recognises the importance of enabling all citizens and businesses to realise the full social and economic potential of the digital world. My Department's Trading Online Voucher Scheme, which was launched nationally on 1 July 2014, is a key initiative under the enterprise strand of the NDS and the Action Plan for Jobs.

The scheme, which is administered in partnership with Enterprise Ireland and the 31 Local Enterprise Offices (LEO), offers financial assistance of up to €2,500, coupled with training, mentoring and networking supports by the LEOs to small and micro enterprises to develop their trading online presence. Applications are received directly by individual LEOs who award the vouchers to qualifying businesses, following evaluation by an expert panel.

Trading Online Vouchers are activating small businesses from across a wide range of sectors

including, retail, manufacturing, professional services, food, craft/design, tourism and leisure. By November 2015, some 1,500 businesses had completed, or were in the process of completing, their trading online projects. In addition, it is estimated that more than double that number of businesses have benefitted from advice and peer-to-peer support through their participation in the information sessions delivered by the LEOs. The roll-out of vouchers to reach the initial target of 2,000 continues nationwide.

In July last, I published a report into the enterprise impacts of the scheme which is available on my Department's website at www.dcenr.ie. The report revealed that businesses that moved online experienced an average increase in sales of 21%. Some 40% of businesses had customer interactions from new markets overseas, and over 70% of businesses surveyed expect to recruit new staff. With the potential creation of an average 1.4 new jobs per company – in businesses that employ ten staff or less – trading online is making a tangible impact on jobs and economic activity in Ireland.

The Government is committed to rolling out the scheme to more interested businesses, and to this end, I have allocated funding of €3 million to deliver an additional 1,000 vouchers in 2016.

Product Labelling

605. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he is aware that there is inadequate enforcement of what is known as the Dim2/Erp legislation in respect of the import and sales of non-compliant LED lamps; his plans to improve enforcement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44095/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): My Department currently has Market Surveillance responsibilities for Energy Labelling and Ecodesign. We have become aware of potential issues relating to allegedly non-compliant LED lamps. My officials have liaised with market players to elicit more information on this matter and they have discussed it with counterparts in other Market Surveillance Authorities. We have, on foot of this, looked at LED lamps in a number of stores scheduled for inspection recently and no issues were identified. The next step would be to carry out a series of inspections on importers and authorised representatives. The Market Surveillance function is in the process of being transferred from my Department to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland who are more suited to discharging such operational functions and should be able to avail of synergies with some of their other functions. It has been agreed to effect this transfer in early 2016 and budgetary provision has been made.

Over the coming weeks as my Department is discussing arrangements for this transfer with SEAI, officials will brief them on the LED issue so that they can make arrangements at the earliest opportunity to consider and follow up as appropriate.

Ministerial Meetings

606. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of meetings requested by private external lobby groups and the number held, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43595/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): As the Deputy will appreciate, in view of the range of my remit as Minister I receive represen-

tations, including requests for meetings from a broad range of sources, including members of the Oireachtas, local and voluntary groups and private individuals and companies. Since my appointment as Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources on 11 July 2014 I have attended some 892 meetings with a range of individuals and groups, including meetings with representatives of those bodies under the aegis of my Department, and other public representatives. This does not include informal unscheduled meetings that might arise from time to time. In the time available, it has not been possible to break this figure down between the different categories of meetings listed in the Question.

The Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 was enacted by the Oireachtas earlier this year and commenced on 1 September 2015. The Act provides that the Standards in Public Office Commission (the Standards Commission) will establish and maintain an online register of lobbying and oversee compliance with the legislative provisions. The purpose of the register will be to make information available to the public on the identity of those communicating with designated public officials. Persons lobbying will have to register with the Standards Commission and will be required to submit returns on their lobbying activities. Under the Act, I am a designated public official.

Departmental Expenditure

607. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his Department's photography costs since he came into office, inclusive of costs incurred from use of the ministerial allowance, by year and in tabular form; the occasions for which photographers were booked; the photographers used; the costs associated with each occasion; the policy in place regarding the booking of photographers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43627/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The information requested in the question is set out in the following table:

Company	Event Date	Event	Cost
Maxwell Photography	13/06/2011	Government convenes Next Generation Broadband Taskforce	340.92
Maxwell Photography	27/07/2011	Age Action Silver Surfer Launch (pre shoot)	274.97
Maxwell Photography	23/09/2011	Minister Rabbitte stock photos available for widespread media use	409.58
Maxwell Photography	24/10/2011	Minister Rabbitte welcomes EU Commission Telecoms specialists to Dublin	552.67
Maxwell Photography	(1) 27/11/11	Publication of the Government's Affordable Energy Strategy	

Questions - Written Answers

Company	Event Date	Event	Cost
	(2) 16/11/11	Launch of Irish Anti Botnet Website (anti cyber crime initiative)	1,052.70
Fennell Photography	09/12/2011	Cunningham Awards, Geological Survey of Ireland, University Geology Project Competition Awards	510.75
2011 Total			3141.59
Jason Clarke Photography	10/01/2012	Launch of Community Outreach Campaign - Digital TV Switchover	492
Jason Clarke Photography	13/01/2012	Launch of the SMS 112 emergency service	492
Jason Clarke Photography	06/02/2012	Nationwide rollout of high speed broadband to second level schools	492
Jason Clarke Photography	01/03/2012	Minister Rabbitte welcomes 23 Digital Outreach Champions	492
Maxwell Photography	02/05/2012	Next Generation Broadband Taskforce launch	485.85
Jason Clarke Photography	28/05/2012	Launch of the Renewable Energy Strategy Report	492
Jason Clarke Photography	22/08/2012	Third Central & North Atlantic Conjugate Margins Conference	492
Jason Clarke Photography	30/08/2012	Launch of the National Broadband Plan	492
Jason Clarke Photography	15/10/2012	Minister Rabbitte visits Kippure TV mast for Digital Switchover with media	492
Phocus	08/11/2012	Minister Rabbitte inspects high speed broadband in St. Colman's School	359.78

Company	Event Date	Event	Cost
Jason Clarke Photography	17/12/2012	Announcement of Ireland's Digital Champion	492
2012 Total			5273.63
Jason Clarke Photography	24/01/2013	Signing of Energy MoU with Britain	492
Maxwell Photography	28/02/2013	Launch of National Energy Efficiency Action Plan	499.38
Maxwell Photography	05/03/2013	Announcement of phase II of Schools Broadband in Warrenmount School	361.62
Maxwell Photography	11/07/2013	Launch of the National Digital Strategy	327.18
Maxwell Photography	26/11/2013	Appointment of the New Chairman and Commissioners in Comreg	137.76
2013 Total			1817.94
Maxwell Photography	12/05/2014	Launch of Energy Green Paper	327.18
Hany Marzouk (freelance photographer)	25/04/2014	Announcement of National Broadband Plan state intervention	230
Maxwell Photography	11/06/2014	Launch of the Trading Online Voucher Scheme with Local Enterprise Offices	309.96
Maxwell Photography	24/06/2014	Launch of the report of the Internet Content Governance Advisory Group	309.96
JMAC Photography	26/06/2014	100,000th participant receiving digital training under BenefitIT scheme – Arranmore Island	227
Mr Kieran Clancy (freelance photographer)	24/11/2014	National Broadband Plan Mapping Consultation, Doolin, Co Clare	282
Maxwell Photography	22/12/2014	National Digital Strategy Award of Grants to Benefit IIII projects	499.38

Questions - Written Answers

Company	Event Date	Event	Cost
Fennell Photography	26/06/2014	National Digital Strategy Showcase, Dublin Castle	411.50
2014 Total			2596.98
Photography Costs – 1 January 2015 – 3rd December 2015			
Maxwell Photography	02/02/2015	Post Office Network Business Development Group – press event at Rathangan Post Office	533.82
Maxwell Photography	01/07/2015	National Broadband Plan	447.72
Maxwell Photography	15/07/2015	1000th Trading Online Voucher	551.04
Fennell Photography	16/09/2015	Tellus Project Data Launch	230.00 (ex vat)
Mac Innes Photography	October 2015	Senior management head shots for use on www.whodoeswhat.gov.ie	1,536.01
2015 Total			3298.59
Total			16128.73

Payments from Ministerial allowances are not a charge on the Vote of the Department and therefore my Department does not hold information on these allowances.

Photographers are booked for the purpose of recording key events attended by Ministers, such as the launch of schemes and programmes, new initiatives and visits by inward delegations. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, following an EU-level advertised procurement process, has established a Framework Agreement comprising five firms for the provision of photography services. The Framework was established in February 2012 and is open for use by all Government Departments and Offices. My Department avails of this Framework Agreement for photography needs.

Public Relations Contracts Data

608. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his Department's use of external public relations firms since he came into office by year and in tabular form; the uses of these firms and the policy regarding employing them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43643/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): My Departmental remit includes complex policy areas, oversight of State regulation and service provision across key strategic services such as energy and public broadcasting, and regulation of sectors such as mining and hydrocarbon exploration. Given the technical complexity, economic significance and community interest in these areas, there is a requirement to disseminate information and address specific issues as they arise. The Department, therefore, necessarily incurs some expenditure on public relations from time to time. In procuring these services, my

Department always seeks to ensure value for money and to keep expenditure to the minimum necessary.

The information which the Deputy requested is outlined in the following table:

Company	Spent on Public Relations					Amount	Purpose of Consultancy
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015 (to date)		
Morrow Communications Ltd	€40,514	€19,538	€18,318	€28,221	€44,415	Provision of services in relation to outreach in rural communities with respect to a geophysical and geochemical soil survey using low flying aircraft .	
Murray Consultants	€8,349	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Media Services to the Department.	
McConnells Advertising Agency	€32,670	€86,933	n/a	n/a	n/a	Public information campaign on the Digital Switchover.	
Communications Consultants Ireland	n/a	n/a	€1,797	n/a	n/a	Management of two Public Information Meetings on new Inland Fisheries Legislation	
TOTAL	€81,533	€106,471	€20,115	€28,221	€44,415		

Public Relations Contracts Data

609. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural

Resources the reports he commissioned from external consultants since March 2011 by year, title, cost, date published and company, in tabular form. [43659/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): My Department administers a very diverse, complex and technical brief across critical and strategic sectors of the Irish economy. While it has a total complement of around 250 full time equivalent staff of whom a number are technical personnel, the technical, commercial, legal complexity and evolving nature of sectors with which the Department deals requires access to external professional expertise to assist in discharging its functions. In procuring these specialised services, my Department always seeks to ensure value for money and that these services contribute to project delivery and informed, robust and evidence based policy making. The bulk of the studies are technical and specialist in nature and were necessary to address specific issues as they arose and enable the Department to discharge its policy and project responsibilities in the areas concerned.

Details of the external reports commissioned by my Department are set out in the following table:

Consultancy Name	Title	Cost	Date of commission	Date or expected date of publication
Environ UK Limited	Corrib gasfield project – monitoring compliance with the Conditions of the Department’s Letter of Consent dated 25 February 2011	€890,448*(to date)	June 2011	On-going
Dr Michael Johnson	Silvermines Vegetation Study	€5,848	August 2011	This Report will not be published until completion of land purchase
Camp Dresser McKee CDM	Sampling of Gortmore and Silvermines Vegetation	€13,890	July 2011	This Report will not be published until completion of land purchase
Purvin & Gertz	Strategic Case for Oil Refining requirements	€193,997	August 2011	July 2013

Consultancy Name	Title	Cost	Date of commission	Date or expected date of publication
PA Consulting Group	National Digital Research Centre	€29,040	July 2011	This report was not published. The report is commercially sensitive as it is a Strategic Review of the NDRC to inform decisions about the future of the NDRC after the Concession Agreement expires in 2013.
OHH Energy Ltd	Independent Commission on Meath Tyrone Power Line	€41,120	July 2011	17/1/2012
Elimark	Independent Commission on Meath Tyrone Power Line	€38,786	July 2011	17/1/2012
2B Energy	Independent Commission on Meath Tyrone Power Line	€32,284	July 2011	17/1/2012
SLR Consulting	Core Library Holdings Review	€39,688	Sept 2011 – Dec 2011	Jan 2012
Jenny Deakin	Preparation for the Graigue Group Water Scheme Report	€1,750	April 2011 – Sept 2011	Sept 2011
Indecon Economic Consultants	Economic/ Socio-Economic Analysis of options for rollout of next generation broadband	€28,167	May 2012	This Report will not be published as it is commercially sensitive and may impact on Government procurement in Broadband provision.

Questions - Written Answers

Consultancy Name	Title	Cost	Date of commission	Date or expected date of publication
Analysys Mason	Analysis of options for potential State intervention in the rollout of next generation broadband	€30,522	May 2012	This Report will not be published as it is commercially sensitive and may impact on Government procurement in Broadband provision.
Thornton's Chartered Surveyors	Provision of land valuation and negotiation services	€3,690	July 2012	This Report will not be published until completion of land purchase.
Indecon International Economic Consultants	Assessment of Economic Contribution of Mineral Exploration and Mining in Ireland	€53,690	October 2012	Published September 2013.
Indecon (Ireland)	Provision of a Macro-Economic Research Exercise under the National Digital Strategy to Determine the Value of Internet/Digital to the Irish Economy	€72,474	November 2012	Published July 2013
CDM Smith Ireland Limited	Environmental Monitoring at former mining areas of Silvermines, Co. Tipperary and Avoca, Co. Wicklow	€435,399	December 2012	On completion of scheduled reports
AMEC Earth & Environmental (UK) Ltd	Expert Services to Monitor Mining Activities and Compliance with terms of State Mining Leases/Licences.	€108,864	December 2012	This Report will not be published as it is commercially sensitive

Consultancy Name	Title	Cost	Date of commission	Date or expected date of publication
Pricewaterhouse Coopers Ltd	Scheduled review of INFO-MAR Project	€59,505	Dec 2012 – May 2013	Published September 2013
BEC consultants	Assistance with statutory assessment of Environmental Statements and Natura Impact Statements accompanying applications for (1) a 2D regional seismic survey and (2) an offshore exploration well (Dunquin) (2 reports received)	€11,211	February 2013	Reports published on the Department's website
Det Norske Veritas	Expert technical advice to the Department in connection with offshore drilling	€52,088	March 2013	Not published. Commercially sensitive
Neary Marketing & Communications	Review of Irish Geoscience Sector	€10,000	March 2013 – June 2013	This Report will not be published as it is commercially sensitive.
BEC consultants	Assistance with statutory assessment of Environmental Statements and Natura Impact Statements accompanying applications for geophysical surveys including 2D/3D offshore Seismic Surveys and exploration drilling applications (six reports completed in 2013)	€18,266 (€3,044 fee payable for each report received)	April 2013	Reports published on the Department's website

Questions - Written Answers

Consultancy Name	Title	Cost	Date of commission	Date or expected date of publication
Norcontel (Ireland) Ltd	Market analysis of backhaul infrastructure in Mayo and Galway	€10,500	May 2013	Published June 2013
Selgovia Limited	Offshore exploration well technical assessment	€4,429	July 2013	Not published. Commercially sensitive
Doyle Kent Planning Partnership Ltd.	To provide draft Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report for the Renewable Energy Policy and Development Framework	€95,940	September 2013	This report has not been published but is expected to be published shortly.
Environ UK Ltd	Establishment of an Administrative Framework for the Conduct of an Irish Offshore Strategic Environmental Assessment	€23,247	November 2013	Not published. Commercially sensitive
Environ UK Ltd	Establishment of an Administrative Framework for the Acquisition of Baseline Information on Marine Species	€21,973	November 2013	Not published. Commercially sensitive
AECOM Ltd.	Economics and Financial Consultancy	€52,988	November 2013	This Report will not be published as it remains confidential.
Indecon (Ireland)	Economic Analysis of the Advertising Market in Ireland	€71,438	December 2013	Report published on the Department's website

Consultancy Name	Title	Cost	Date of commission	Date or expected date of publication
BEC consultants	Assistance with statutory assessment of Environmental Statements and Natura Impact Statements accompanying applications for geophysical surveys including 2D/3D offshore Seismic Surveys and exploration drilling applications.	€66,124(€3,653 fee payable for each report received)	February 2014	Reports published on the Department's website
Wood Mackenzie	Review of Ireland's Oil and Gas Fiscal System	€212,873	12/03/2014	Published June 2014
Neary Marketing & Communications	Review of Geoscience Ireland Business Cluster	€5,000	March 2014 – July 2014	This Report will not be published as it is commercially sensitive.
PA Consulting	Post Project Evaluation of the Tellus Border project	€24,750	March 2014- July 2014	Published July 2014
Perspective Associates Ltd	The provision of independent expert advice relating to the identification of an appropriate framework for determining whether a compilation of programme material offered by a contractor under s.71 of the Broadcasting Act 2009 has the 'character of a public service'.	€5,000	18/07/2014	Report published on the Department's website

Questions - Written Answers

Consultancy Name	Title	Cost	Date of commission	Date or expected date of publication
Environ UK Ltd	Assistance with the Production of the Irish Off-shore Strategic Environmental Assessment (IOSEA) 5	€289,438 (to date)	October 2014	Ongoing
KN Network Services	To provide a due diligence assessment on the current status of the Galway-Mayo telecoms duct.	€62,500	2014	The report will not be published, it will be used to assist with the appointment of a Management Services Entity for the duct.
Gemserv	To provide an interim privacy impact assessment on the implementation of the National Postcode System	€59,340	August 2014	Interim report and the process is ongoing
Ricardo - AEA	REFIT 3 Review	€4,500	2014	This document remains part of the deliberative process and contains commercially sensitive information.
Doyle Kent Planning Partnership Ltd.	Assistance with the screening of the National Broadband Intervention Strategy for Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment.	€4,500	25/08/2014	This report will be published on completion of the consideration of the SEA/AA assessments.

Consultancy Name	Title	Cost	Date of commission	Date or expected date of publication
Ramboll Environ UK Ltd	Environmental Consultancy Services for Gap Assessment on Application for Corrib Pipeline Consent to Operate.	€70,000	August 2015	Ongoing
RPS Group Limited	To undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment/ Appropriate Assessment on the Draft Bioenergy Plan	€54,930	September 2015	March 2016
Indecon International Economic Consultants	Review of Designated Events of Major Importance to Society under the Broadcasting Act 2009.	€37,223.43 (to date)	23 October 2015	January 2016
Tekenable	Provision of TV Licence Database and System Review.	€13,177.13(to date)	29 October 2015	January 2016
Compass Informatics	Scoping Study for a National Geological Data Centre	€29,625	October 2015	December 2015

* These costs are recouped from the Operator of the Corrib gasfield project.

Ministerial Advisers Data

610. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of special advisers on his staff and their yearly salary from 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43675/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table:

Year	Minister	No of Advisors	Total Salary paid including employers PRSI (2011-2015 to date)
2011	Mr Eamonn Ryan TD (1/1/11-23/1/11)	2	28,682.30
	Mr Conor Lenihan TD (1/1/11-9/3/11)	1	28,363.52
	Mr Pat Rabbitte TD (10/3/11 -31/12/11)	2	131,547.10
2012	Mr Pat Rabbitte TD	2	200,181.22
2013	Mr Pat Rabbitte TD	2	178,563.05
2014	Mr Pat Rabbitte TD (1/1/14-12/7/14)	2	121,088.60
	Mr Alex White TD (18/7/14 – 31/12/14)	2	55,474.62
2015	Mr Alex White TD	2	192,693.60*

*2015 figure is for the period 1 January - 8 December

Broadband Service Provision

611. **Deputy Gabrielle McFadden** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the purpose of the national broadband plan team's recent meeting with Center Parcs; the date of the meeting; if it will help accelerate the provision of high speed broadband in County Longford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43995/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): In the last 18 months, the Department has received enquiries from a variety of owners and operators of small, medium and large scale (existing and proposed) leisure and other facilities. The nature of the enquiries has focussed mainly on the likely impact of roll-out of the Intervention Strategy on specific areas in Ireland. Officials from the Department facilitated a meeting request from Center Parcs on 14 October 2015 to discuss the likely provision of broadband in the Longford area. The meeting was held for information sharing purposes and will not have any direct impact on the roll-out strategy for the proposed State led intervention under the NBP.

The meeting afforded officials from my Department an opportunity to outline the scope and detail behind the National Broadband Plan (NBP), which encompassed both commercial investment and investment under the proposed State led intervention.

Representatives from Centre Parcs presented its proposed plans along with the likely de-

mand for the provision on high quality broadband services in Longford to their proposed development.

More specifically I can confirm that high speed broadband has been extended to serve 7,100 premises to date in County Longford with a further 3,700 expected to be served over the next 18 months. The remaining 11,600 premises in county Longford will be covered by further commercial investment or the NBP intervention.

The Government is determined to ensure that the network is built out as quickly as possible and engagement with industry stakeholders has indicated that this could be achieved within 3-5 years of the contract award.

In this context, the NBP proposes that through the combination of commercial investment and State intervention, 85% of addresses in Ireland will have access to high speed services by 2018 with an ambition of 100% coverage by end of 2020.

Environmental Protection Agency Expenditure

612. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources how much has been spent to date on the study commissioned by the Environmental Protection Agency on the environmental impact of unconventional gas exploration and extraction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44077/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Joe McHugh): While the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is co-ordinating the Joint Research Programme into the potential environmental impacts of Unconventional Gas Exploration & Extraction (UGEE), the research programme is being co-funded by the EPA, my own Department and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). The costs of the first phase of the Joint Research Programme were estimated at just over €1m. The three commissioning bodies committed approximately €1.25m in funding to the research project. While my own Department has committed €0.5m to the project, these funds have not been paid out as yet.

Environmental Protection Agency Reports

613. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will suspend the study commissioned by the Environmental Protection Agency on the environmental impact of unconventional gas exploration and extraction, given the concerns raised in relation to the potential conflicts of interests of the lead consultants in the assessment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44078/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Joe McHugh): I assume that the focus of the Deputy's question is recent public comment relating to the role of the lead consultant in the multi-agency trans-boundary programme of research on the potential impacts on the environment and human health from Unconventional Gas Exploration and Extraction projects. This research programme is administered by the EPA and co-funded by the EPA, my Department and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, with oversight from a broad based Steering Committee that includes my Department.

As is usual in major and broad ranging projects such as this, the project team involves a wide range of expert institutions and companies. CDM Smith is the lead consultant in the con-

sortium engaged to carry out the programme of research and that consortium includes the British Geological Survey, University College Dublin, Ulster University, AMEC Foster Wheeler and Phillip Lee Solicitors, each offering a particular specialism required by the project scope.

I understand that the contract for this programme of research was awarded following a robust evaluation process in compliance with public procurement guidelines, where the tender submitted by the CDM Smith headed consortium was evaluated as being the strongest bid.

I am aware that there has been some comment on the fact that internationally CDM Smith has provided expert advice to oil companies involved in the development of unconventional gas resources. I should point out that CDM Smith has also provided advices to State bodies and regulatory agencies across its area of expertise.

As I am sure the Deputy will appreciate, it is common that a broad range of parties will seek to draw on the specialist expertise available from a firm such as CDM Smith. The fact that disparate entities seek to draw on such expertise, is generally seen as an indicator of a company's recognised experience.

Environmental Protection Agency Investigations

614. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he is aware that Queen's University Belfast has confirmed it is not involved in the study commissioned by the Environmental Protection Agency on the environmental impact of unconventional gas exploration and extraction; the date upon which he became aware of this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44079/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy may be aware, staff from Queens University Belfast were intended to contribute to the Unconventional Gas Exploration and Extraction (UGEE) Joint Research Programme (JRP) Project A1 (Groundwater, Surface Water & Associated Ecosystems). Specifically,

- Three researchers in the Queens University Belfast Groundwater Group were proposed to work on a number of Project A1 tasks (leading tasks 2 & 7 and supporting other tasks); and

- A full time Queens University Belfast academic was nominated as part of the technical review team (internal review process carried out by a Consortium comprising of CDM Smith, the British Geological Survey, University College Dublin, Ulster University, AMEC Foster Wheeler and Phillip Lee Solicitors, before submission to the UGEE JRP Steering Committee) for Project A1.

Upon appointment, Queens University Belfast decided that the three researchers would not be able to fulfil their agreed responsibilities on project A1. However, a full time academic from Queens University Belfast has undertaken a review role in full on Project A1 as proposed in the tender.

While an internal review process is carried out by the Consortium as a Quality Control process before submission of any interim/final deliverables of the UGEE JRP, all outputs are reviewed by a Technical Review Group which includes the UGEE JRP Steering Committee and other external experts such as the Environmental Protection Agency; the Geological Survey of Ireland; An Bord Pleanála; Northern Ireland Environment Agency; ETH Zürich and University College Cork. The Technical Review Group process is fully independent of the internal quality control process put in place by the Consortium.

Renewable Energy Generation Targets

615. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the progress in meeting the overall renewables targets by 2020 under the Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC, including the progress on meeting the targets for the contribution of renewables and biofuels to gross electricity consumption, transport energy and heat since this Government came to office. [44188/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The 2009 EU Renewable Energy Directive sets Ireland a legally binding target of meeting 16% of our energy requirements from renewable sources by 2020. Ireland is committed to achieving this target through meeting 40% of electricity demand, 12% of heat and 10% of transport from renewable sources of energy. Figures provided by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) show that, in 2014, 8.6% of Ireland's overall energy requirements were met from renewable sources. More specifically, the SEAI has calculated that 22.7% of electricity, 6.6% of heat and 5.2% of transport were from renewable sources. Biofuels represented 1.9% of gross electricity consumption in the same year.

The following table summarises the progress made in meeting these targets since the Government came into office.

	2011	2014	2020 Target
Overall Renewables Contribution	6.5%	8.6%	16.0%
RES-E	17.3%	22.7%	40.0%
RES-H	4.9%	6.6%	12.0%
RES-T	3.8%	5.2%	10.0%
Biofuels (biomass, landfill gas & biogas) as a % of gross electricity consumption	1.2%	1.9%	None

The SEAI publication *Energy in Ireland 1990-2014* provides further information on progress made in relation to the use of renewable energy in Ireland and is available at the following link:

http://www.seai.ie/Publications/Statistics_Publications/Energy_in_Ireland/Energy-in-Ireland-1990-2014.pdf

Energy Policy

616. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his Department's expenditure on subsidies for energy production, on research and development into thermal energy and wind, wave and tidal power, and on the peat public service obligation in each of the years 2011 to date, in tabular form. [44189/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The overarching objective of the Government's energy policy is to ensure secure and sustain-

able supplies of competitively priced energy to all consumers.

The Public Service Obligation (PSO) Levy, which is a charge on all electricity customers, is determined by the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER). Details of the levy in the CER PSO Decisions papers at www.cer.ie

This PSO levy has two very important objectives. Firstly, it supports electricity generation which was constructed for security of supply purposes, including peat generation. Secondly, its support for the development of renewable electricity is important for both security of supply and for reducing carbon emissions from electricity generation. The levy is designed to compensate electricity suppliers for the additional costs they incur by purchasing electricity generated by these producers. It has been in place since 2001.

Currently the Renewable Electricity Feed-in-Tariff (REFIT) and the Alternative Energy Requirement (AER) schemes are the means through which renewable electricity is supported in Ireland. These schemes are supported through the PSO levy and in turn support electricity generated from a range of renewable sources, including small scale hydro, biomass combustion, biomass combined heat and power, landfill gas and onshore wind and full details are available on my Department's website, www.dcenr.ie

It is recognised that other technologies may be needed to meet our renewable energy ambitions and diversify our renewable generation portfolio over the period to 2030, and a recent initial public consultation on a new support scheme for renewable electricity sought views to inform a decision on the technologies to be supported. There will be two further opportunities to contribute at key stages in the design of any new scheme. Subject to Government approval and State Aid clearance from the European Commission, the new scheme would become available in 2016.

Energy Research also plays an integral part in Ireland's energy policy. A successful research environment will help develop the tools required for the transition to a sustainable, low carbon environment.

DCENR has key responsibility for setting energy policy and exerts a coordination function in energy research through sitting on a number of national and international groups including, Research Prioritisation Action Group; International Energy Research Centre Board, SET-Plan Steering Group and the INTERREG Programme Committee. There are a number of agencies involved in funding energy research including:

- Science Foundation Ireland (SFI)
- Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland (SEAI)
- Enterprise Ireland (EI)
- The Irish Research Council (IRC)
- The Higher Education Authority (HEA)
- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

SEAI produces an annual inventory of energy research projects, and the latest Review "Energy in Ireland 1990 - 2014," is available on its website at www.seai.ie highlights that energy RDD&D in Ireland is conducted across a wide range of institutions – Universities, Institutes of Technology, Research Institutions, Research Centres, technology centres, as well as public bodies, state owned companies, and commercial organisations.

In the period 2011 to date some €34 million has been spent on energy research programmes funded under my Department's Vote. This includes support for ocean energy research, development and demonstration including the development of the offshore energy test sites in counties Mayo, Galway and Cork. The programmes also support the Prototype Development Fund operated by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland. This fund supports and grant aids ocean energy companies, helping projects progress up the technology readiness level development path. Almost €7.7m has been grant aided to 43 Ocean projects since 2011.

Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan

617. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will enhance or incentivise the development of offshore wind energy, including the level of subsidy; and if he has considered proposals for floating offshore wind farms. [44190/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The 2014 Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDPA) sets out Government policy in relation to the sustainable development of Ireland's abundant offshore renewable energy resource.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment carried out for the OREDPA found that 4,500 MW of offshore wind and 1,500 MW of wave and tidal generation could be sustainably developed in Irish waters, and the Plan identifies policy actions and enablers that are key to the development of this sector.

Ireland has made good progress in relation to our legally binding targets under the 2009 EU Renewable Energy Directive. To date, onshore wind energy, as the most cost effective technology available to Ireland, has been the largest driver of growth in renewable electricity.

It is recognised, however, that this must be complemented by other technologies to meet our renewable energy ambitions. In addition to our onshore wind resource, bioenergy, solar, offshore wind and other technologies may play a critical role in diversifying our renewable generation portfolio over the period to 2030, and a recent initial public consultation on a new support scheme for renewable electricity sought views to inform a decision on the technologies to be supported. There will be two further opportunities to contribute at key stages in the design of any new scheme. Subject to Government approval and State Aid clearance from the European Commission, the new scheme would become available in 2016.

The development of Ireland's abundant offshore renewable energy resource will be an increasingly important element of Ireland's future energy policies. Offshore renewable energy has the potential to generate carbon free renewable electricity, reduce our dependence on imported fossil fuels, enhance our security of energy supply, and deliver green growth and jobs to the economy.

Departmental Legal Costs

618. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the total cost to his Department, and those bodies under his aegis, of the procurement of legal services in the State from 2011 to 2015, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44569/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White):

The information requested by the Deputy in relation to my Department is being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible. In relation to bodies under the aegis of my Department, this is an operational matter for each body. My Department will ask the bodies in question to supply the information directly to the Deputy.

Reachtaíocht um Thrácht ar Bhóithre

619. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Iompair, Turasóireachta agus Spóirt an bhfuil sé sásta go bhfuil córas nua á chur i bhfeidhm faoina ndéanfar tairiscint ghníomhach i ngach cás chun rogha a thabhairt idir seirbhísí i nGaeilge nó i mBéarla maidir leis na gairis tástála anála; agus an aontaíonn sé go dtabharfar an chinnteacht a theastaíonn maidir leis an gceist seo má dhéantar na torthaí scríofa a sholáthar ar fhoirmeacha dátheangacha. [43885/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Sula freagraím an tsubstaint den cheist seo, is gá dom roinnt míthuiscintí a chur i gceart. Bhí an tsaincheist seo i dtrácht rialú na hArd-Chúirte den dáta 2 Deireadh Fómhair, 2015 i dtaobh le foirm na dtuarascálacha clóite de chuid gairis Tástáil Fhianaiseach Anála (TFA) i stáisiúin na nGardaí.

Éilíonn na hAchtanna um Thrácht ar Bhóithre gearis TFA tuairiscí i bhfoirm a bheidh forordaithe a phriontáil. Bunaíodh an fhoirm amach in IR Uimh 541 de 2011, a chuir leaganacha Béarla agus Gaeilge araon. Cuireadh cláraithe na ngearis a bheidh in ann a phriontáil oiread.

Bhí an rialú na hArd-Chúirte bunaithe ar léirmhíniú ar an fhoclaíocht IR 541. an Chúirt a chinneadh go, mar gheall ar an mbealach a bhí foclaíocht na rialachán, bhí siad a léiriú go gciallaíonn an bhfoirm fhorordaithe comhdhéanta de na Béarla le leanúint ag an nGaeilge, in áit ná teanga amháin nó an cheann eile. Ba é seo an rialú go hiomlán bonn ar léirmhíniú na rialacháin, agus ní raibh ar bhealach ar bith a bhaineann le cearta teanga. I ndiaidh an rialú, chúlghairm mé IR 541 agus chuir mé rialacháin nua ina hionad a stáit cad a bhí i gceist i gcónaí, ie go raibh dhá leaganacha den bhfoirm, ceann i nGaeilge agus ceann i mBéarla. Bhí an ceart ag daoine I gcónaí a dtuarascáil i gceachtar teanga, agus leanann sé seo a bheidh ar an cás. Murab ionann agus an toimhde sa Cheist, níl aon gléasanna nua, agus aon nósanna imeachta nua ag teastáil.

Parking Regulations

620. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if legislation will be amended for disc parking areas (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44026/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The legislation governing parking on public roads empowers road authorities to make bye-laws governing the type of paid parking systems they wish to employ (e.g. disc parking) and to control the charges and conditions which apply. Road authorities may provide residents with parking permits which give them an exemption from the need to pay for parking on roads where they live. The criteria for the granting these permits, the fees (if any), and any other conditions are matters for each road authority. What the legislation does not allow is a system where individuals would be given proprietary rights to specific parking spaces on public roads.

The issue of legislating for residents-only parking has arisen a number of times over the years. However, the legal issues arising are significant. There is a principle that the public road is public property and exists for the benefit of all the public. It is highly possible that any

attempt to limit the use of part of a public road to a particular class of individuals (such as residents) would be open to legal challenge.

There is also the problem that, if residents-only parking were to be introduced, real proprietary issues and matters of legal liability might arise. This could see residents liable to maintenance costs, and/or facing legal liability if people were, for example, to be injured on a section of the road reserved for them.

In the light of these concerns, I have no plans to change the laws or regulations in relation to residents' parking.

Civil Aviation Regulation

621. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the law on the use of drones by private citizens. [44085/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Irish Aviation Authority has statutory responsibility, under the Irish Aviation Authority Act 1993, for the regulation of aviation safety standards for civil aviation in Ireland. This includes remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS), or as they are more commonly known, Drones. The IAA published its policy and national legislation on the use of RPAS in October 2012. An update in the form of an Aeronautical Notice was published in April 2014. Details of this are available on the IAA's website at *www.iaa.ie*.

The European Commission has recently indicated that a suite of European regulations governing the use of drones is being fast-tracked and is expected to be in force by end of 2016. My Department is committed under the National Aviation Policy 2015 to continue to contribute to the EU rule making and regulatory process concerning RPAS.

In the meantime, the current safety regulation of drones in Ireland is detailed under powers in the Rockets and Small Aircraft Order of 2000 and associated guidance material. This Order is currently being updated to include new technology aircraft, including small unmanned aircraft, i.e. drones, and is expected by year-end 2015. The new regulations will take account of the likely provisions in next year's expected EU legislation.

Sports Organisations

622. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding Sport Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43550/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): This is a matter for Sport Ireland and I have referred the Deputy's question to Sport Ireland for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within ten days.

Ministerial Meetings

623. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of meetings requested by private external lobby groups and the number held, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43607/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy can appreciate, I receive a very large number of requests from a variety of sources including external bodies, Departmental officials, Oireachtas Members and members of the public. Due to the vast number of requests involved it would not be practicable, or a good use of limited resources, for my Office to keep a register of all these requests. However, if the Deputy wishes to submit a more detailed question in terms of a particular group my Office can look at collating and providing the relevant details.

Also, since the commencement of the Lobbying Act 2015 from 1 September 2015, all lobbyists who come under the Act are required to register and to provide information regularly about their lobbying activities.

Departmental Expenditure

624. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his Department's photography costs since he came into office, inclusive of costs incurred from use of the ministerial allowance by year in tabular form; the occasions for which photographers were booked; the photographers used; the costs associated with each occasion; the policy in place regarding the booking of photographers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43639/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Photography costs incurred by my Department are on its website at the following link: <http://www.dttas.ie/corporate/english/photography-costs>. It is the policy of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport that photography costs are kept to a minimum and services are provided in-house by staff. Where services are contracted, best value is sought and a number of quotes are obtained. Services are contracted out on an exceptional basis only.

Public Relations Contracts Data

625. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his Department's use of external public relations firms since he came into office by year in tabular form; the uses of these firms and the policy regarding employing them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43655/15]

626. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reports he commissioned from external consultants since March 2011, by year, title, cost, date published and company in tabular form. [43671/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 625 and 626 together.

Details of all consultancy payments by the Department are available on my Department's website at <http://www.dttas.ie/corporate/english/expenditure-external-services>.

It is the policy of the Department in the exercise of its functions to use internal resources as far as possible. Consultants are hired occasionally in circumstances where particular expertise is not available internally and where it is deemed to add value and independence to the overall work of the Department.

Ministerial Advisers Data

627. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of special advisers on his staff and their yearly salary from 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43687/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I have two special advisers on my staff since I took up my current Office in July 2014. The pay per annum for each special adviser is as approved by Government.

The combined pay for the two special advisers referred to is set out in the following table for 2014 and 2015 (to end November).

Year	Pay
2014	€48,547
2015	€144,235

Public Transport Provision

628. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport why a valid travel pass holder (details supplied) in County Kilkenny is unable to avail of the Bus Éireann 2028 service from Mooncoin to Limerick to see a specialist at University Hospital Limerick, due to the lack of appropriate accessibility for physically disabled persons on buses catering this route; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43730/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The issue raised is a matter for Bus Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

I have also sent a copy of the Deputy's question to the National Transport Authority for information.

Road Improvement Schemes

629. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has received any submissions from Mayo County Council for a project (details supplied) in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43801/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads, including the R312 is the statutory responsibility of Mayo County Council, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from the Council's own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the Council.

My Department received an application this year respect of the R312 under the Strategic Grant Programme. In order to protect funding for road maintenance and repair, the Strategic Grant Programme has had to be curtailed. Mayo County Council was notified in July 2015 that the Department was not in a position to provide an allocation for the scheme.

Road Improvement Schemes

630. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has received any submissions from Mayo County Council on a project (details supplied) in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43802/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Mayo County Council has submitted an application for grant funding to my Department under the 2016 Low Cost Safety Scheme. The application which list projects in order of priority includes the provision of a footpath and public lighting on the LP1124 at Church Road, Ballina Co. Mayo.

Allocations under the 2016 Low Cost Safety Scheme will be on the basis of the budget available to my Department. It is expected the 2016 regional and local road allocations will be announced within the first two months of the new year.

Departmental Agencies Funding

631. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the return the State has received from its ongoing investment in the Dublin Airport Authority and the financial dividend it received from the authority's surplus profit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43817/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware, the daa operates under a commercial mandate, is entirely funded from its own resources (including borrowings) and receives no Government funding supports.

daa last made a dividend payment to the Exchequer in 2009 in the sum of €19.4 million and it is anticipated that the company will resume dividend payments in 2016 in line with the return to profitability of its core airport business.

Public Transport Subsidies

632. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the subvention paid to Córas Iompair Éireann for 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43823/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Road Improvement Schemes

633. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if and when he has received an application from Mayo County Council for a specific road grant for the improvement of the road between Cross and Cong in County Mayo, and when it will be decided upon; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43977/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Mayo County Council has submitted an application to my Department for funding in respect of improvement works on the R346 Cross-Cong in 2016. The application was received on 20 November and is under consideration by my Department taking into account the available capital budget for

regional and local roads. The 2016 Regional and local road allocations will be announced early in the new year.

Sports Facilities Provision

634. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of a new stadium for Finn Harps Football Club in County Donegal; if there is an additional urgency within the Department for the development of the new stadium, given the club's promotion to the premier division of the League of Ireland and the requirements that will be imposed on it regarding minimum standards for stadium facilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44030/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): I and officials from the Department are working with Finn Harps and the FAI to try to progress this matter. In that regard the officials met with Finn Harps and the FAI two weeks ago.

Road Projects Status

635. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a section of roadway (details supplied) in County Kerry will be prioritised for funding in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44086/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects, including the N70 is a matter for the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (formerly known as the NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with Kerry County Council concerned.

Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Appointments to State Boards

636. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if any persons with a disability have been appointed to the board of any transportation companies or organisations that provide public transportation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44093/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The application process for membership of State Boards operated by the Public Appointments Service (PAS) does not identify or require disclosure of a disability. The Department therefore does not hold the information requested by the Deputy.

The Department of Transport Tourism and Sport is however advancing accessibility improvements to public transport services in the context of *Transport Access for All*, the Transport

Sectoral Plan under the Disability Act 2005. The Plan is premised on the principle that through accessibility improvements to the public transport system for people with disabilities, access for all people will be improved. To date, there has been a significant increase in the numbers of accessible vehicles together with improved access to much of the public transport infrastructure. Even so, much remains to be done and work in that regard is on-going. The Department's Accessibility Consultative Committee, which includes representatives of people with disabilities, has a key role in monitoring implementation of the Plan. In addition, each of the main public transport companies has a Disability Users Group to advise on accessibility matters at a company level.

Rail Services

637. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport why Iarnród Éireann has decided to change the timetable for the commuter trains at Howth junction (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44094/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The issue raised is a matter for Iarnród Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Air Services Provision

638. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport following confirmation that the British Department for Transport has agreed to co-fund the re-instatement of the Derry to Dublin air connection and further to his response to previous Parliamentary Question No. 1148 of 3 November 2015, if he will support the application from the City of Derry Airport to co-fund this air link in acknowledgement of the massive infrastructure deficits in linking Donegal and Derry to Dublin, in comparison with other major cities and regions. [44139/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Since PQ No. 1148 of 3 November last, I have responded on this matter to the Chairman of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. In that response, I pointed out that while I would very much welcome this proposed new route, we do not have any schemes similar to the UK Government's Regional Air Connectivity Fund and there is no Exchequer funding available to support new route start-ups. The only Exchequer funding currently available to support air services is that devoted to our two remaining PSO routes, namely Donegal/Dublin and Kerry/Dublin.

However, I pointed out that the daa has a Short Haul Route Support Scheme which may be applicable to the proposed new Derry/Dublin route and I suggested that the prospective air carrier, Citywings, should discuss the potential for support from this source with the daa. I also suggested, however, that Citywings should check with the UK authorities as to whether any additional supports for this route could impact on the level of support from the UK's Connectivity Fund.

Freedom of Information Requests

639. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he is satisfied with the manner of Sports Ireland's engagement with the Information Commissioner in a case (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44158/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The case mentioned by the Deputy relates to an FOI request made to the then National Sports Campus Development Authority, now Sport Ireland, which is a body under the aegis of my Department. Sport Ireland, and previously the National Sports Campus Development Authority, is a public body for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act and is responsible for the processing of FOI requests relating to the body, including any necessary engagement with the Information Commissioner. I have no role in that process. As the Deputy is aware, the case is the subject of a recent decision by the Information Commissioner. I have referred the Deputy's question to Sport Ireland for direct response on this matter. I would ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within 10 days.

Rail Services

640. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to upgrade the Dublin to Westport rail service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44207/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The issue raised is a matter for Iarnród Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Taxi Regulations

641. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the arrangements in place for persons with literacy issues and difficulties who wish to make complaints to the Taxi Regulator, and he will allow persons to submit complaints orally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44210/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The regulation of the small public service vehicle industry is the responsibility of the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the provisions of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013.

I have therefore referred your question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Public Transport Subsidies

642. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount of subvention provided to Córas Iompair Éireann, Luas and other companies providing public transport in each of the years from 2007 to date, in tabular form, and the estimated subvention for 2016. [44211/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy is aware, Exchequer subvention is provided in respect of Public Service Obligation (PSO) public transport services. The Luas does not receive any such subvention funding.

Since 2010, the award of PSO contracts and disbursement of subvention funding falls under the independent statutory remit of the National Transport Authority (NTA) which has direct responsibility for this area. Prior to that, the Department directly provided the allocated subvention to the transport operators.

Regarding the subvention for 2016 to CIÉ the figure is €236.6m. This is a 13% increase on the 2015 figure. The NTA is currently finalising the allocations for each individual company.

The total PSO subvention provided to transport operators by both this Department and the NTA (since 2010) in the years 2007 to 2015 is as follows:

Schedule of Exchequer Subvention to CIÉ: 2007 to 2015

Year	Iarnród Éireann €000	Bus Éireann €000	Bus Átha Cliath €000	Other Operators €000	TOTAL €000
2007	189,910	36,595	80,078	-	306,583
2008	181,152	41,846	85,629	-	308,627
2009	170,624	49,365	83,199	-	303,188
2010	155,137	45,039	75,682	-	275,858
2011	148,689	43,410	73,042	-	265,141
2012	166,412	36,882	74,766	-	278,060
2013	126,888	34,476	64,902	27	226,293
2014	117,409*	34,399	60,054	174	212,036
2015	117,409**	31,899	60,054	228	209,590

*Included in this amount is €10.66m paid to Iarnród Éireann under the Infrastructure Manager Multi Annual Contract (IMMAC).

** Included in this amount is €19.17m paid to Iarnród Éireann under the Infrastructure Manager Multi Annual Contract (IMMAC).

Sports Capital Programme Eligibility

643. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide grant support through the sports capital grant programme or, following the closure of the local authority swimming pool programme, if he will relocate those funds to allow for the immediate upgrade of the University of Limerick arena facility in County Limerick, therefore ensuring the future of the sport of swimming and aquatics in Munster and Connacht. [44237/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The works referred to by the Deputy are not funded under the Sports Capital Programme, and, as the Deputy has mentioned, the Local Authority Swimming Pools Programme is not open for applications. I would also advise the Deputy that while I have received a number of representations on behalf of the University of Limerick swimming pool, the University of Limerick has not expressed any concern about this matter to me. Sport Ireland, which is funded by my Department, is the statutory body with responsibility for the promotion, development and co-ordination of sport. Sport Ireland provides an annual subsidy to the University of Limerick for the operation of the 50 metre pool. I have referred the Deputy's question to Sport Ireland for direct response on this matter. I would ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within 10 days.

Road Projects Status

644. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of plans to build a bridge linking north County Louth and south County Down at Narrow Water, the steps he has taken to progress this, the estimated cost; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44246/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As outlined in the 'A Fresh Start - Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan', the Government remains committed to the concept of the Narrow Water Bridge. Under the Agreement, the Northern Ireland Executive and the Government have agreed to undertake a review of the project with a view to identifying options for its future development, for consideration by the North South Ministerial Council in June 2016.

Road Projects Status

645. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the Blackburn Bridge project located on the N15 road route approximately 1 km south of Ballybofey in County Donegal, the road safety measures in place to ensure that road users are adequately protected during the completion of phase 1, when phase 2 will proceed to construction, if he is aware of the need to expedite this project in order to enhance road safety along this road section; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44247/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects, including the N15 is a matter for the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (formerly known as the NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Road Safety

646. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will address road safety issues on the N56 national secondary route, if he is aware of the high frequency of road traffic incidents that have occurred along the section of road way between the towns of Termon and Creeslough in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44248/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects, such as the N56 is a matter for the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (formerly known as the NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question regarding the N56 to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Commemorative Events

647. **Deputy Helen McEntee** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the context of the commemorative projects in 2016 that will reflect on the lives and deaths of 3,500 Irish soldiers who died in combat at the Somme in northern France in 1916, if the industrial-scale slaughter at the Battle of the Somme demonstrates the vital need for institutions that facilitate and strengthen peace and unity in Europe, if her planned commemorations for 1916 will account for this sad lesson of history; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43508/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Since its inception in 2012, the Decade of Centenaries has been engaged in delivering a balanced chronological commemorative programme with selected focused events in each year. There is a commitment to marking each milestone in a way that is inclusive, tolerant and respectful, and the events and activities undertaken have been aimed at fostering such an approach in conjunction with the various partners involved in these projects

The Government has recently published a programme for next year to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Somme in 1916, which it regards as an important event to be marked both in Ireland and at the Somme.

The programme includes 4 strands:

- Ceremonial;
- Historical and Educational Reflection;
- Cultural; and
- Community Participation.

It is important that each generation has that opportunity to become aware of the past and the ways in which history can shape our present and influence our future. It is my hope that the commemorative events and activities being planned for 2016 at home and in Europe will go some way to achieving this and that the range of planned activities, including exhibitions, discussions, cultural activities and youth engagement, will help new generations explore the impacts and implications of the catastrophic events at the Battle of the Somme.

Archaeological Sites

648. **Deputy Helen McEntee** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the impact of archaeological and heritage policy on the ambitions of the community that is deemed to be in the buffer zone of a significant heritage site (details supplied) in County Meath, if local families share custody of that heritage and archaeological legacy with the wider nation, if that policy should take account of the views of local communities and natural justice; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43509/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): A new Management Plan for the site referred to by the Deputy is currently being finalised by my De-

partment. This follows a public consultation process on the draft Plan. All submissions received will be taken into account before the Plan is advanced to a stage where it is ready for submission to the relevant authorities for approval. The new Management Plan will acknowledge the rights of local people and communities, who have actively participated in the successful conservation, preservation and promotion of the site with regard to sustainable socio-economic growth and development. It will also acknowledge the need for the Plan itself to assist communities to sustain and develop social cohesion and the local economy.

Actions envisaged for the new Plan in that context include:

- establishing a Community Forum to discuss issues relating to the site in general and to make observations on the implementation of the Plan;
- working with the local authorities to develop a guidance document which provides advice on siting and design in relation to residential and agricultural development within the area of the site;
- working with the local authorities to facilitate consultation with applicants regarding the siting and design of developments affecting the site and the scope of any necessary impact assessments;
- working with the local authorities and other relevant agencies to promote and encourage sustainable economic development in the area, particularly in tourism and agriculture.

In this way, the Plan will seek to meet, in a mutually supportive way, the provisions laid down by the relevant authorities for securing the management aims for sites of this nature, while, at the same time, ensuring that local communities and residents have an active and participative role.

I should emphasise that the main instrument for regulating and controlling physical planning within a county is the development plan which, under the Planning and Development Acts, must be renewed every 6 years, following approval by the elected members. The legislation provides for extensive consultation with the general public, who are offered the opportunity to make submissions or observations on draft development plans which must be considered by the planning authority. As set out above, the Management Plan will itself seek to create effective mechanisms to assist and facilitate local residents in their interactions with the planning system.

Architectural Heritage

649. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the various initiatives identified in the recently launched historic houses action plan that will support the owners and custodians of historic houses in securing a sustainable future for their houses; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43519/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, I am aware of the growing risk to the sustainable future of the remaining stock of Irish Historic Houses in private ownership, where owners have consistently struggled, throughout the last century, to find sustainable alternative means of meeting the on-going costs of their maintenance. I have also recognised that these Houses are often a hugely important resource for local communities and a vital attraction for tourists, which can and do contribute significantly to the local economy. It is within this context that I had the *Action Plan for Irish Historic Houses in Private Ownership* developed and secured Government approval for it. I was very pleased, therefore, to subsequently launch the Action

Plan on 30 November last.

The objective of the Action Plan is to assist historic houses in general with their on-going protection, management and promotion into the future. Specific actions include:

- working with the local authority to develop a more streamlined, partnership approach with the local economy;
- seeking to optimise the provision of existing supports and fiscal incentives; and
- seeking to develop new initiatives that might help to establish priorities by way of targeted support mechanisms.

Heritage Sites

650. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht why she has ceased negotiations on the purchase of Granard Motte, despite Longford County Council having made a significant contribution towards the purchase cost, and given the huge benefit of having a national monument in State ownership, if she will re-open negotiations with a view to bringing this to a satisfactory conclusion, even if this means going down the route of a compulsory purchase order; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43562/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Question No. 665 of 23 June 2015. Unfortunately, negotiations with the owner on behalf of my Department and Longford County Council had recently to be suspended in the absence of agreement on a purchase price for the monument, having regard to value for public money and the official valuation of the property.

I have, however, informed the Council that I would be happy for my Department to re-engage in further negotiations in the event of there being any indications that such discussions might have a prospect of success and that the Council should advise my Department accordingly.

Commemorative Events

651. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the launch of Raidio Teilifís Éireann's commemorative programme for 1916; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40010/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The RTÉ 2016 commemorative programme was launched on 4 November 2015. The programme is rich in culture, debate, drama and entertainment, will be accessible across all media platforms, and will include television documentaries, drama series and radio programmes. The programme will be accessible online and on mobile devices, thereby ensuring availability to people both in Ireland but also worldwide. I understand that a diverse range of topics will be explored and investigated, including:

- The story of the *Children of the Revolution*, regarding the stories of the children who were killed during the events of 1916;
- A four-part Irish language programme covering a range of stories, including those of Roger Casement and the Abbey actor and idealist, Arthur Shields;

- A major drama entitled *Rebellion*, which will follow the events of 1916 through the eyes of three young women, giving different perspectives on the events of that time; and
- A four-part series entitled *Ireland Rising*, which is currently airing on Sunday evenings.

RTÉ is also working with the Ireland 2016 Project Team in my Department to produce a large-scale public event to be held on Easter Monday 2016. This will be a multi-locational public event, allowing people to watch and participate in Ireland and across the globe.

Lobbying Data

652. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of meetings requested by private external lobby groups and the number of meetings held, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43593/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Regulation of Lobbying Act was commenced in September 2015. In furtherance of the requirements of the Act and associated regulations, my Department's website (www.ahg.gov.ie) carries details of my Department's Designated Public Officials. This facilitates registered lobbyists in fulfilling their statutory obligation to report communications made with the relevant persons which fall within the scope of the Act. Lobbyists have been required to record communications with Designated Public Officials in relation to matters covered by the Act since 1 September 2015. Lobbyists are required to make a return in relation to such communications which took place between the aforementioned date and 31 December 2015 to the Standards in Public Office Commission by 16 January 2016.

The statutory mechanisms governing lobbying set out clearly the relevant people and bodies covered by the legislation as well as the nature of the communications which constitute lobbying. As these statutory mechanisms are now operational, I do not propose to pre-empt the deadlines established by the legislation. In the meantime, the Deputy may wish to note that my diary of appointments is published periodically on my Department's website.

Departmental Expenditure

653. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her Department's photography costs since she came into office, inclusive of costs incurred from use of the ministerial allowance by year in tabular form; the occasions for which photographers were booked; the photographers used; the costs associated with each occasion; the policy in place regarding the booking of photographers; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43625/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Details of photography costs incurred by my Department since my appointment in July 2014 are set out in the following table. The hiring of photographers for Ministerial or Departmental events is dependent on a number of factors, including the nature of the engagement, the expected level of media interest and the national/regional scope of the subject. At all times, value for money is a critical consideration in the context of the booking of photographers.

2014

Questions - Written Answers

Occasion	Photographer	Cost
Photocall with winner of Herald Archangel Edinburgh Festival 2014	Maxwell Photography	€486
Launch of Ireland 2016 commemorative programme at G.P.O.	Maxwell Photography	€482
Photographs of Minister and two Ministers of State for official Departmental use	Philip Fitzpatrick Photography	€200

2015

Occasion	Photographer	Cost
European Heritage Heads-Forum 10th Anniversary-Annual Meeting in Dublin Castle	Con Brogan Photography	€200
Launch of the High Island Monograph	Con Brogan Photography	€150
Visit to Cartoon Saloon in Kilkenny	Dylan Vaughan Photography	€271
Event to commemorate the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa, Glasnevin Cemetery	Lensmen	€554
Launch of Culture Ireland supported artists attending Edinburgh International Festivals	Lensmen	€258
Launch of Culture Ireland I AM IRELAND 2016 programme	Maxwell Photography	€503
John Redmond commemoration	Maxwell Photography	€138
Launch of Ireland 2016 Commemorative Programme	Maxwell Photography	€861
10th Anniversary of Culture Ireland	Maxwell Photography	€103
Dublin launch of Venice Artist Biennale 2015	Maxwell Photography	€637
Moore Street – meeting with Lord Mayor and traders	Maxwell Photography	€362
Photography for Who-DoesWhat Website	Maxwell Photography	€327
Annual Famine Commemoration and related events	Paul Faith	€781
Spanish Armada Find Sligo	Picell8 Ltd	€450

Occasion	Photographer	Cost
Teach an Phiarsaigh Cultural and Exhibition centre, Rosmuc, Connemara/ Global and Diaspora Programme (2 separate events)	Reg Gordon	€960
First Flags for School delivery/Launch of the Community Participation Strand (2 separate events)	Reg Gordon	€960
Photography for Who-DoesWhat Website	Tain Bo Media Teo	€148

Public Relations Contracts Data

654. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her Department's use of external public relations firms since she came into office by year in tabular form; the uses of these firms and the policy regarding employing them; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43641/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): No external public relations firms have been employed by my Department since my appointment in July 2014. The engagement of external groups for the provision of specialised services, including public relations firms, is dependent on a number of factors, including the expertise and resources available within my Department. In that context, value for money is at all times a critical consideration.

Public Relations Contracts Data

655. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the reports she commissioned from external consultants since March 2011, by year, title, cost, date published and company in tabular form. [43657/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The details requested by the Deputy in respect of the nine reports commissioned by my Department since its establishment in June 2011 are set out in the following table. The "*Review of PSO Air Service for the Aran Islands*" was published in May 2014. The "*Updated Business Case for Restoring the Ulster Canal from Lough Erne to Clones*" and the "*Cost Benefit Analysis of the National Gallery Redevelopment Project*" are published on the Department's website. The remaining reports have not been published.

For completeness, I wish to bring to the Deputy's attention that the University of Birmingham was commissioned in 2010 by the then Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, prior to the establishment of my Department, to undertake a review relating to peatlands. The resulting report, "*Review of Archaeological Survey and Mitigation Policy relating to Bord na Móna Peatlands*" was published in June 2013 and the associated costs of €34,337 were met by my Department.

I also wish to point out that my Department also commissions engineering or environmental experts from time to time to provide technical reports on specific issues, as required. While the providers of these services are consultant engineers, environmental consultants or may describe

themselves in other such terms, their work is not classified as consultancy services and is not funded from my Department's Administrative Budget.

Commissioned	Company	Title of Report	Cost
2011	Avia Solutions	Review of financial submissions relating to the Public Service Obligation Air Service for the Aran Islands	€6,300
2012	Bonnar Keenlyside	Review of Dublin Contemporary 2011	€10,959
2013	Dorgan Associates	Cost Benefit Analysis of National Archives Development Plan	€12,669
2013	Dorgan Associates	Cost Benefit Analysis of National Gallery Redevelopment Project	€12,731
2013/2014	Dorgan Associates	Examination of capital incentives to promote investment in film studio infrastructure	€ 6,765
2014	EY	Review of PSO Air Service for the Aran Islands	€41,795
2014	Fitzpatrick Assocs	Updated Business Case Restoring the Ulster Canal from Lough Erne to Clones	€15,191
2014	The VAT Practice	Advisory service on UK VAT	€ 919
2015	Public Affairs Ireland (PAI)	Review of Management Structure and Grading of Senior Management Posts within Údarás na Gaeltachta	€ 9,717

Ministerial Advisers Data

656. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of special advisers on her staff and their yearly salaries from 2011 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43673/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I was appointed Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht on 11 July 2014. Two special advisers

were appointed on 23 July 2014 and 18 August 2014 respectively. They were appointed on the first point of the Principal Officer scale and have advanced to the second point on 23 July 2015 and 18 August 2015 respectively.

Arts Funding

657. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her views on the low earnings of those in the arts sector and that they do not have recourse to collective bargaining; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43787/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I have no statutory function in the matter of collective bargaining, which I understand comes within the ambit of the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

Commemorative Events

658. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if a designated Famine commemoration day is merited given the scale of the tragedy itself and its effect on Ireland and the world, if and when she will make a definite decision on this; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43788/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As Chair of the National Famine Commemoration Committee, I am responsible for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place to commemorate the Great Irish Famine. In carrying out these functions, my main focus is to ensure that the victims of the Irish Famine are respectfully and appropriately remembered. In that context, I also seek to raise awareness of current food security issues worldwide. While the Commemoration ceremony retains a degree of continuity in its format, the date and the cultural elements of the commemoration may change from year to year. In some previous years it has proved possible to hold the annual commemoration ceremony on the second Sunday in May and I am aware that some people are of the view that the annual National Famine Commemoration should be held on the same designated day each year.

However, I do not consider it desirable to fix the same date each year, given the factors that may need to be considered, such as the site selection process, the availability of the lead person to officiate at the ceremony and the general arrangements at community level.

For example in 2015, due to organisational imperatives arising as a result of the staging of the event for the first time in Northern Ireland, the commemoration ceremony was held in Newry in September and proved to be a great success with significant cross-community representation. Similarly in 2016, due to the number of events relating to the centenary of the Easter Rising scheduled to take place in March, April and May of next year, it is likely that the famine commemoration ceremony will take place later in the year.

I am satisfied that the retention of such flexibility does not detract from the key aim of the annual commemoration, which is to have a fitting national ceremony to remember and show respect for all those who died or suffered loss during the Great Famine.

In fact, this flexibility facilitates the commemoration being held in the most appropriate context each year. In the circumstances, I have no plans to designate a fixed date for the national Famine Commemoration.

Commemorative Events

659. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the financial support available to local authorities to ensure the Ireland 2016 county plans are delivered, given the extraordinary response from local authorities to them; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43792/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Under the 'Community Participation' strand of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme, over 84 public consultations, facilitated by the local authorities with the support from my Department, have taken place nationwide. The response has been enthusiastic from all local authorities and each of the local authorities has now developed a rich and diverse series of events and projects that will take place around the country next year. I was very pleased to participate with An Taoiseach and other Government colleagues at the official launch on 8 October last of the 31 individual county plans arising from this process. I allocated €1 million in current funding in 2015 to support local authorities in this process, and on 25 October 2015, I joined the Taoiseach for the announcement of a further €3 million funding package in conjunction with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and IPB Insurance. This three-fold increase in funding will help to develop and realise the plans being coordinated at a county level across the country. My officials have notified the local authorities of their increased allocation for 2016, and I am confident that this funding will help to maximise participation in the Ireland 2016 programme throughout each county.

The local authorities are now in the process of organising individual launches, including a wide variety of events, lectures and opportunities for the public to get involved with the programme. Further information in relation to the various events, activities and initiatives taking place under each of the above strands, including the 31 county plans launched in October, can be found on my Department's dedicated website at www.ireland.ie.

Rural Development Programme

660. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will honour the Shannon Callows agreement signed between the heritage section of her Department and farmers in the Shannon Callows on the implementation of the habitats regulations 1997; why the provision for arbitration to resolve disputes regarding compensation for loss of earnings and value of assets has not been invoked for farmers in the Callows; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43832/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): A habitat enhancement scheme, the National Parks and Wildlife Service Farm Plan Scheme, was previously available to farmers in the Shannon Callows to undertake proactive measures for corn-crake meadows and wet grasslands. These commitments were voluntary in nature and lasted for the period of the farm plan. The Agreement referred to by the Deputy concerned the prescriptions for management in the Shannon Callows and the payments that would be made to farmers in the Scheme, and was for the period 2006 to 2010. The Farm Plan Scheme was closed to new applicants in April 2010. Funding is now provided through the Irish Rural Development Programme to assist farmers in delivering the requirements of the EU Nature Directives.

Under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, compensation may be payable where a person has been refused consent by me, as Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, for a prescribed activity within a designated site that he or she had

been lawfully undertaking in the five year period prior to the refusal. While the Regulations provide for the possibility of arbitration, this can only arise in default of an agreement with regard to compensation and only in circumstances where a refusal of consent arises under the Regulations.

Agriculture Scheme Eligibility

661. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 607 of 10 November 2015, and given that her predecessor stated in reply to a previous parliamentary question (details supplied) that a specific payment for costs and losses incurred due to restrictions imposed as a result of designation would be paid to farmers, if she will establish a farm plan scheme or another similar scheme without delay; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43834/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): A habitat enhancement scheme or farm plan was previously available from my Department to farmers in designated sites to undertake proactive measures for the conservation interests in question. These measures were not a condition of designation, nor were they compensation for designation. Any commitments made by farmers were voluntary in nature and lasted for the period of the farm plan. This scheme was closed to new applicants in April 2010. My Department will enter into new farm plan contracts only in specific cases where proactive measures are required by or overseen by my Department to protect/restore an important species or habitat and where such measures are not already provided for under schemes administered by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Compensation may be payable where a person has been refused consent by me, as Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, for a prescribed activity within a designated site that he or she had been lawfully undertaking in the five year period prior to the refusal.

An Fhoireann Rannach

662. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cén uair a cheapfar comharba ar Stiúrthóir na Gaeilge sa Roinn a bheidh ag éirí as oifig ag deireadh na bliana; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [43886/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Tá na roghanna sa chás seo á meas faoi láthair agus déanfar cinneadh go luath, i gcomhairle leis an Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe.

Maoiniú d'Eagrais Ghaeilge

663. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an eol di go bhfuil inní ar chuid de na heagraíochtaí Gaeilge faoi na leasuithe atá déanta ar an Scéim Pobal Gaeilge de chuid Fhoras na Gaeilge, ar leasuithe iad a bhaineann le cómhaoiniú, maoiniú do chostais oifige agus maoiniú chun plean gníomhaíochta a chur le chéile agus a bhaineann chomh maith le deis a bheith ag na heagraíochtaí a fhaigheann maoiniú faoin scéim cur isteach ar mhiondeontais Fhoras na Gaeilge; an bhfuil sé i gceist aici an scéal a phlé ag an gcéad chruinniú eile a bheidh ar siúl leis an Aire ó Thuaisceart Éireann; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [44098/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): Tá Scéim Phobail Gaeilge á riar ag Foras na Gaeilge ón mbliain 2005 chun cabhrú le coistí deonacha an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn i measc an phobail ar bhonn uile-oileáin. Bunaithe ar thorthaí phróisis chomhairliúcháin de chuid Fhoras na Gaeilge, cuireadh scéim leasaithe os comhair na Comhairle Aireachta Thuaidh Theas i gcomhair a faofa ar an 6 Samhain 2015. Is iad seo a leanas príomhghnéithe na Scéime Pobail Gaeilge athbhreithnithe a d'fhaomh an Chomhairle Aireachta Thuaidh Theas chun teacht i bhfeidhm ar an 1 Iúil 2016:

- aistriú ó scéim trí bliana go scéim ceithre bliana;
- comhdhlúthú ar an dul chun cinn atá déanta go dtí seo agus éascaíocht a dhéanamh do phobail nua leas a bhaint as an scéim tríd an líon deontaithe féideartha a mhéadú ón 19 ngrúpa reatha go huasmhéid 26 ghrúpa (méadú 37%);
- uasleibhéal deontais de €37,000 i mbliain 1 (ag ardú go €40,000 i mbliain 4), lena n-áirítear 80% de na costais a bhaineann le fostaíocht na n-oifigeach forbartha; agus
- fócas nua ar fhorbairt inbhuanaithe sna pobail féin a chuirfidh ar chumas grúpaí úinéiracht agus maoirseacht a choinneáil laistigh dá réimsí sprice féin agus a chinntiú go mbeidh torthaí buana mar thoradh ar an maoiniú.

Tá sé mar sprioc go mbeidh na hoifigigh forbartha a cheapfaidh na deontaithe faoin scéim úr ag cumasú grúpaí eile sna pobail le cur isteach ar scéimeanna éagsúla Fhoras na Gaeilge agus ag bunú gréasán éagsúil ar nós grúpaí siúil/rothaíochta/léitheoireachta, ciorcal comhrá, etc. Ar an mbonn sin, tacóidh an scéim nua le gréasáin sheasmhacha pobail a bhunú sa todhchaí chomh maith le freastal ar níos mó pobal ar bhonn níos leithne.

Tá sé beartaithe ag Foras na Gaeilge maoiniú de €4m a chur ar fáil don scéim nua thar thréimhse ceithre bliana. Tá mo Roinnse i mbun comhráití leis an Roinn Cultúir, Ealaíon agus Fóillíochta ó thuaidh agus le Foras na Gaeilge maidir le cur i bhfeidhm na scéime nua.

Heritage Council

664. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will allocate extra funding to the Heritage Council to compensate for the loss of funding to the Burren Life Wicklow upland project and the Blackstairs farming group, given that such groups play a significant part in rural Ireland, and without this additional funding such projects will not be able to progress. [44138/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I am aware of the important work undertaken by the Irish Uplands Forum (IUF) and its members to promote a community-based approach to sustainable development in upland areas and, in particular, their contributions received in framing the National Landscape Strategy 2015-2025, which I launched earlier this year and which will assist in the promotion of landscape objectives nationally. I understand that the IUF received funding of almost €50,000 in recent years, channelled through the Heritage Council, to support heritage education, community and outreach schemes and more recently infrastructure funding.

The Heritage Council, which my Department funds, has been allocated a sum of €5.593 million in 2015 to fund its role of supporting heritage infrastructure and promoting pride and best practice in the conservation and sustainable management of heritage assets. This figure excludes an additional and separate €0.378m allocated to the Heritage Council in 2015 as part-funding for the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

My Department is currently considering the funding available for the protection and conservation of the built heritage in 2016 in the context of its overall allocation and I will publish details of funding schemes for 2016 as soon as these are finalised. My Department's allocation to the Heritage Council in 2016 will be subject to the normal budgetary processes and final confirmation in the Revised Estimates. However, it is primarily a matter for the Heritage Council to decide how its funding should be allocated across the range of research, education and conservation programmes it supports in 2016 and future years, having regard to competing priorities for limited resources.

Film Industry Promotion

665. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will encourage Ireland as a film location, given the numerous scenic and attractive locations available in urban and rural settings; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44171/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Primary responsibility for the support and promotion of film-making in Ireland, in respect of both the indigenous sector and inward productions, is the responsibility of the Irish Film Board. This includes assistance in the identification of locations for the making of films. The Film Board has a good track record of using Irish scenery as a major asset in attracting film makers to Ireland and the recent *Star Wars* film featuring Sceilig Mhichíl is a prime example of this. Detailed information on the supports available from the Film Board, including further information on film locations, can be found on its website www.irishfilmboard.ie

Cultural Policy

666. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will utilise Ireland's culture as an international national brand with consequent economic benefits; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44172/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin): Culture Ireland, a division of my Department, was established in 2005 with a clear brand and focussed remit to promote Irish arts worldwide. Over the past 10 years, Culture Ireland has been visible globally creating and supporting opportunities for Irish artists and companies to present and promote their work at strategic international festivals and venues. Since 2005, Culture Ireland has promoted and supported over 7,500 Irish cultural projects and events worldwide, ranging across music, theatre, dance, literature, film, visual art and architecture. This support has created significant goodwill and influence for Ireland and has helped to contribute to the strength of Ireland's reputation for creative excellence. The international promotion of Irish arts through Culture Ireland continues to make significant impact internationally through its regular grant rounds and showcase programmes.

The St. Patrick's Day period is recognised as the key time to raise the profile of Ireland and connect with new and established audiences overseas through cultural events. Culture Ireland supports a significant Irish cultural programme each year globally, with highlights in areas with significant diaspora such as London, New York and Sydney. Locally, the Embassy network works with Culture Ireland to maximise the impact of the events around this period to celebrate and highlight our artistic strengths and build on Ireland's global reputation as a country of creativity.

For 2015, the international culture programme for the St. Patrick's Day period was awarded

funding in excess of €200,000 to support over 50 events to take place in 22 countries. The unique platform offered by St. Patrick's Day to highlight the strength of Ireland's creative sector also serves to foster tourism, business interests and inward investment. It presents Ireland with an unrivalled opportunity to showcase our culture and our talented artists globally.

As part of the Government's Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme next year, Culture Ireland will put in place a major programme to highlight Ireland's culture globally through presentation of Irish artists in high profile venues, particularly across the UK, USA, Canada and Australia. Under the title I am Ireland, the programme of events, offering a contemporary Irish cultural experience globally, will ensure that the Irish arts and culture brand continues to be strong. Rebuilding Ireland's reputation in key territories around the world has been one of this Government's priorities and Culture Ireland continues to play a key role in realising this objective through the strength of Ireland's global cultural offering.

Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme

667. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if mutual agreement has been reached on the impact of special areas of conservation and natural heritage areas on traditional turf cutters using the various bogs in County Kildare; if all outstanding issues have been resolved; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44173/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): 171 applications under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme for raised bog special areas of conservation have been received and acknowledged by my Department in respect of Mouds Bog and 60 applications in respect of Ballynafagh Bog in County Kildare. A total of 361 annual payments, 187 turf deliveries and 34 once-off incentive payments have been made in respect of the applications received from Mouds Bog and 107 annual payments, 20 turf deliveries and 13 once-off incentive payments have been made in respect of the applications received from Ballynafagh Bog. 78 applicants from Mouds Bog and 23 applicants from Ballynafagh Bog have expressed an interest in relocation to a non-designated bog. Discussions are on-going with qualifying applicants from Ballynafagh Bog with a view to relocation to a non-designated bog in close proximity.

The Review of Raised Bog Natural Heritage Area Network, which is available to download from my Department's website at <http://www.ahg.gov.ie/en/Publications>, provides detail on future arrangements regarding turf cutting on each of the 75 current raised bog natural heritage areas.

Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme

668. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of locations which are the subject of discussions between traditional turf cutters and her Department, as affected by special areas of conservation and natural heritage areas where outstanding issues remain; if she is confident of an amicable solution; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44174/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Up to 3,377 applications have been received under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme for raised bog special areas of conservation and natural heritage areas. Of these, 719 applicants have expressed an interest in relocation to a non-designated bog. Notwithstanding the complexity involved, progress in relocating turf cutters to non-designated bogs has been achieved

in a number of cases.

Potential relocation sites have been identified for each of the raised bog special areas of conservation where relocation may be required. When relocation sites have been assessed as suitable, my Department has been seeking expressions of interest from turf cutters with a view to them moving to these sites. In this regard, my Department has written to in the region of 400 turf cutters seeking expressions of interest in relocation to specific non-designated sites. My Department is moving forward with the steps in the relocation process where there is a sufficient level of interest in relocation to particular sites.

Given the clear scientific evidence of the negative impact of turf extraction on raised bogs, it will only be possible to utilise the provisions of article 6.3 in a small number of cases. Similarly, the flexibility provided for under article 6.4, if required, will only be applicable to a small number of sites.

The draft National Raised Bog SAC Management Plan was published in January 2014. It sets out how the raised bog special areas of conservation are to be managed into the future and how the needs of turf cutters are to be addressed. It is expected that this Plan will be finalised early next year.

Arts Plan

669. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she communicates with local community groups involved in the production of amateur dramatic and musical festivals, given the need to offer appropriate financial assistance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44175/15]

672. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she actively engages in promoting and encouraging the arts in its various forms, either directly or through bodies under her aegis; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44178/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 669 and 672 together.

The Government's policy on the arts is to promote and strengthen the arts in all its forms, to increase access to and participation in the arts and to make the arts an integral and valued part of our national life.

The Government appreciates the importance of the cultural and creative industries to Ireland. The Arts Council is the main mechanism through which the Government directs funding to the arts and to artists. The Council provides significant support to individual artists through bursaries as well as individual grants. It also funds means-tested payments to members of Aosdána. The Arts Council recently published its new Strategy Statement: *Making Great Art Work*. This sets out the Council's plans to lead the development of the arts in the decade to 2025 and prioritises two policy areas – the artist and public engagement.

This year, as part of Budget 2016, I was pleased to announce a 12% increase in allocations across a range of areas, including the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme, and a new investment programme for regional arts and cultural centres. There will be significant benefits accruing for communities, artists and creative workers from many of the Ireland 2016 programmes supported by this additional funding, including at an international level.

My Department also provides significant funding towards numerous cultural events and

bodies, which are of great economic and social benefit to the State. For example, my Department supports the annual Culture Night event, which has grown from a relatively small-scale cultural event, staged only in Dublin, in 2006 to the significant national cultural event it now is. My Department also provides support to numerous other cultural events through the funding it provides to the Arts Council, the national cultural institutions and a range of other cultural organisations.

I was also particularly pleased that the Government introduced a 25% increase in the ceiling for the Artists Exemption from 2015. This important measure recognises the invaluable contribution which artists make to Irish society.

My Department continues to work with other Departments to promote the cultural and creative industries within the framework of the Government's overall objectives under the Action Plan for Jobs.

Finally, the place of artists in society has been a significant theme arising from the public consultation process, which I put in place for the development of Ireland's first national cultural policy, *Culture 2025*. This will be reflected in the policy document which I will publish early in the New Year.

These measures will, I believe, provide increased support to Irish artists, as well as community groups, both emerging and established, and underpin Government investment in arts and culture into the future.

Artworks Sales

670. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will engage with the private sector to ensure that objets d'art are not sold off to public or private collectors globally, engage with potential sellers with a view to retaining such objets d'art in this jurisdiction; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44176/15]

671. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will encourage items in the Beit collection to be retained in this jurisdiction; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44177/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 670 and 671 together.

As I outlined in my response to question 242 on 24 September 2015, the sale, export and import of artefacts is a normal part of trade. Ireland has benefitted over the years from artistic works which have been imported into the State.

In terms of keeping objects of importance in the State, generous tax relief is provided under section 1003 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 for donations to approved bodies of heritage items that are considered outstanding examples of their type, whose export from the State would constitute a diminution of the accumulated cultural heritage of Ireland. A Selection Committee chaired by my Department considers proposals for such relief.

As regards the Beit Collection, the Selection Committee has approved the proposed donation of "A Village Kermesse near Antwerp" by David Teniers II, which is valued at €2 million, to the National Gallery under section 1003. Two other proposed donations are being assessed. In June, I asked the Alfred Beit Foundation to postpone the proposed sale of the paintings, so all options could be explored, including identifying Irish donors. I am pleased that this approach is

now yielding positive results. *Question No. 672 answered with Question No. 669.*

Arts Plan

673. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will encourage employment growth throughout the arts sector; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44179/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Government's policy on the arts is to promote and strengthen the arts in all its forms, to increase access to and participation in the arts and to make the arts an integral and valued part of our national life. In this context, the Government very much appreciates the importance of the cultural and creative industries to Ireland and provides significant support for the sector through my Department, by way of funding for the Arts Council and the Film Board, together with various capital supports for the development of arts and cultural infrastructure. The Arts Council is the main mechanism through which Government funding is directed to the arts and to artists. The Council provides significant support to individual artists through bursaries as well as individual grants. It also funds means-tested payments to members of Aosdána. The Arts Council recently published its new Strategy Statement: *Making Great Art Work*. This sets out the Council's plans to lead the development of the arts in the decade to 2025 and prioritises two policy areas – the artist and public engagement.

This year, as part of Budget 2016, I was pleased to announce a 12% increase in allocations across a range of areas. This includes additional funding to the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme, and a new investment programme for regional arts and cultural centres. There will be significant benefits accruing for communities, artists and creative workers from many of the Ireland 2016 programmes supported by this additional funding, including at an international level.

I was also particularly pleased that the Government introduced a 25% increase in the ceiling for the Artists Exemption from 2015. This important measure recognises the invaluable contribution which artists make to Irish society.

My Department continues to work with other Departments to promote the cultural and creative industries within the framework of the Government's overall objectives under the Action Plan for Jobs.

Finally, the place of artists in society has been a significant theme arising from the public consultation process, which I put in place for the development of Ireland's first national cultural policy, *Culture 2025*. This will be reflected in the policy document which I will publish early in the New Year.

These measures will, I believe, provide increased support to Irish artists, as well as community groups, both emerging and established, and will underpin Government investment in arts and culture into the future.

Easter Rising Commemorations

674. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she is continuing to develop plans for the 1916 commemoration; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44180/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Ire-

land 2016 Centenary Programme, which was launched on 31 March last, includes a rich diversity of programmes and events, complementary and additional to the formal State occasions, which will run throughout 2016 to commemorate the centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising. The Programme is an invitation to everyone on the island of Ireland and to the global Irish community to shape and engage in a diverse range of historical, cultural and artistic activities – all designed to facilitate reflection, commemoration, celebration, debate and analysis and an active imagining of our future. Officials of my Department have facilitated an intensive consultation period over the last few months, including active engagement with schools, universities, colleges, business and voluntary organisations, arts and culture institutions, historical societies, local authorities and representative groups – at home and in our Diaspora around the world – to inform, to stimulate debate and discussion about 2016, and to foster programme initiatives. Work has been ongoing to implement a comprehensive programme and planning is well underway for the range of initiatives within the seven programme strands.

Among the key milestones achieved to date are the following:

- I was delighted to host the first of the State ceremonial events of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme on 1 August last to commemorate the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa in Glasnevin Cemetery, in the presence of President Michael D Higgins and An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, T.D.

- Over 84 public consultation meetings were held with local communities all around the country. 31 individual county plans were launched on 8 October last containing over 1,800 events across the country. €1m was allocated to facilitate these plans this year, with a further €3m to be made available next year.

- An allocation of €22 million in capital funding is being provided through my Department's Vote in 2015 for the 'Permanent Reminder' projects, with a further €31m being provided next year. These capital projects are progressing well.

- The Global and Diaspora Programme was launched on 29 June and was very positively received at home and abroad.

- On 6 August, the Arts Council announced 9 major arts projects to commemorate 1916.

- The National Flag Initiative was launched on 14 September, marking the commencement of the delivery by the Defence Forces of our National Flag and the Proclamation to over 3,300 national schools across the country. Well over 2,000 flags have now been delivered and the project has been very well received.

- The Irish Language strand - *An Teanga Bheo* - was launched at the end of October by An Taoiseach.

- The Education Programme strand was launched on 22 September for the primary, post-primary and third-level education sectors.

- Consultation is ongoing with relevant stakeholders in Northern Ireland, including official, political, media, artistic and NGO stakeholders.

- The National Cultural Institutions are planning a range of innovative exhibitions and projects and all are progressing well. The National Library launched its 2016 plans just yesterday.

- The official Culture Ireland programme "*I am Ireland*" was launched by Minister of State Ó Ríordáin on 3 October. This will showcase the best of Irish arts and culture on the international stage.

- On 10 November, I announced that work was to start on the development of the new Commemorative Centre at the National Monument in Moore Street, which was acquired by the State earlier in the year.

Further information in relation to the various events, activities and initiatives taking place under each of 7 strands of the Programme, including the 31 county plans launched in October, can be found on my Department's dedicated website at www.ireland.ie.

Philanthropy Initiatives

675. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if the arts continue to benefit from support from philanthropists at home and abroad, if she will augment and encourage such support; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44181/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Private support of the arts is very important and the Government continues to support this through tax incentives and other initiatives. In this regard, my Department introduced small philanthropy schemes in 2012 and 2013, both of which have helped to encourage arts organisations to build partnerships with potential sponsors. My Department also operates small capital grants schemes, which require to be co-funded from private or philanthropic sources. The Arts Council operates the RAISE programme, which seeks to enhance fund-raising skills in arts organisations with a view to reducing the sector's dependency on funding from the taxpayer and moving it more towards the business sector. These initiatives assist the sector in securing philanthropic contributions to the arts in Ireland.

Heritage Sites

676. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she continues to protect valuable archeological sites; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44182/15]

677. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she has identified historical buildings, sites or structures deemed to be at risk, the action she is putting in place or that is pending to address the issues arising; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44183/15]

678. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if particular historical sites or buildings in County Kildare are at risk and the action she has taken or that is pending to address these risks; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44184/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 676 to 678, inclusive, together.

Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, provides for the protection of the architectural heritage. The Act gives primary responsibility to planning authorities to identify and protect the architectural heritage by including relevant structures on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) – in this case, Kildare County Council. Inclusion on the RPS places a duty of care on the owners and occupiers of protected structures and also gives planning authorities powers to deal with development proposals affecting them and to seek to safeguard their future.

Grant funding of €624,000 was allocated for the Structures at Risk Fund 2015, to enable conservation works to heritage structures, in both private and public ownership, deemed to be at significant risk of deterioration and which are protected under the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. This fund, which is administered through the local authorities, encourages the regeneration and reuse of heritage properties and helps to secure the preservation of protected structures which might otherwise be lost. Since 2011, over 130 structures have been safeguarded for the future as a result of the Structures at Risk Fund.

My Department has a number of measures at its disposal to facilitate the restoration of major historical or cultural sites. I am the owner or guardian under the National Monuments Acts of approximately 1,000 national monuments located at approximately 750 sites and in such cases there is a statutory duty to maintain the national monument. Such maintenance is undertaken by the Office of Public Works. Local authorities are responsible under the National Monuments Acts for maintaining the national monuments of which they are owners or guardians. A wide range of other monuments (in the order of 130,000) are currently subject to protection under other provisions of the National Monuments Acts but my Department and the Office of Public Works do not have a direct role in their maintenance, except where, as already noted, a monument is a national monument of which I am owner or guardian.

My Department is also providing €350,000 of funding to the Office of Public Works (OPW) in 2015 to assist in the conservation and presentation of historic buildings and national monuments in State ownership.

Finally, in October this year I announced a new €2 million investment scheme for the repair and conservation of protected structures in 2016. This allocation from Capital Stimulus funding will assist with works to safeguard structures, in private and civic ownership, protected under the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. This fund will operate on the same model as the very successful Built Heritage Jobs Leverage Scheme (BHJLS), which ran in 2014 and invested €5 million nationally in our built heritage leveraging an additional €10 million, and is expected to support a significant number of projects across the country and create employment in the conservation and construction industries. It will help to regenerate urban and rural areas and will come as a welcome boost to the custodians of heritage properties.

Well maintained historic buildings contribute positively to the vitality of our cities, towns, villages and countryside. Local communities have a great sense of pride in their built heritage, which in turns can help to provide an important source of local employment by boosting tourism.

Heritage Sites

679. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will develop a preservation plan for St. Fechin's church and holy well in Omey Island in Conamara, County Galway, and, in particular, take steps to prevent erosion from causing any further damage to the site; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44223/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): These monuments are not in my ownership or guardianship under the National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2004. I understand that they are located in an area of commonage with several private owners.

The monuments are, however, included in the Record of Monuments and Places under section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994. Any person proposing to carry out

works at, or in relation to, such a monument is required to give my Department two months' notice in writing and must not, except in a case of urgent necessity and with my consent, carry out the works before that two months period has elapsed.

My Department will be glad to provide any interested parties with any guidance or advice that might be of assistance in relation to the statutory provisions applicable in this case.

Departmental Legal Costs

680. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the total cost to her Department, and those under her aegis, for the procurement of legal services in the State from 2011 to 2015 in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44567/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I am advised that the cost of legal services paid from my Department's Administrative Budget since its establishment in June 2011 amounts to €6,195 in respect of legal advice provided on a single occasion in 2012. For completeness, I would bring to the Deputy's attention that my Department makes payments from time to time to the Chief State Solicitor's Office in respect of legal services that it provides to my Department. The Deputy may also wish to refer to my reply to Question Number 642 of 1 December which details costs of €225,100 incurred in respect of legal cases brought against my Department.

Bodies operating under the aegis of my Department are separate legal entities in their own right. The issues raised by the Deputy are part of the day-to-day operational responsibilities of the bodies in question and are matters for the bodies concerned.