

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 10, inclusive, answered orally.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

11. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government given that capital-funded social housing provision targets, including new-builds and units provided under the rental accommodation scheme and long-term leasing are well-below the level targeted for 2015, if he will revise his targets for capital funded social housing provision for the 2015 to 2017 period downwards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44120/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): I do not propose to revise the targets for social housing delivery announced last April and issued at that time to all local authorities to cover the period out to end-2017. Those targets are in line with the Social Housing Strategy and have been carefully calibrated to make a substantial impact on the housing waiting lists of all local authority areas across the country. The delivery of social housing through different approaches requires different lead-in times. In particular, construction projects need time for planning, approval by elected members, tendering and construction. This is why I have targeted a range of approaches to delivery which include local authorities and approved housing bodies acquiring properties where good value for money is achievable, the remediation of vacant social houses, securing long term leased units using the Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP), additional provision under the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), as well as the roll-out of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP).

A strong pipeline of new social housing construction projects is now in place following from the announcement in May of the first major direct build social housing programme under the Social Housing Strategy, involving some 100 separate housing projects, and a further substantial announcement in July of approvals for local authorities and approved housing bodies. The outcome has been half a billion euro allocated for 2,900 social housing new builds and acquisitions up to the end 2017. Further announcements in this regard are planned for the New Year.

While the availability of suitable properties in the private market is currently challenging, the RAS and SHCEP combined have met the social housing needs of an additional 2,547 households to date in 2015. Over the lifetime of the Strategy, the two schemes are expected to provide accommodation for 29,400 households, and I remain confident that this can be achieved. In addition the roll out of the HAP scheme will continue, with a further 10,000 households to be accommodated under the scheme in 2016 alone.

I am committed to facilitating local authorities to return the maximum possible number of vacant social housing units to productive use in 2015. In addition to the original funding provided for this purpose in 2015, and conscious of the impact of the pressures in the private rental market on delivery under the RAS and SHCEP schemes, I have increased the budget allocation in order to deliver an estimated 2,500 vacant units back into productive use this year.

Overall, I am satisfied that between new builds, acquisitions and the return of vacant units, we are on track to deliver the capital target of almost 7,500 units by 2017.

Rural Development Policy

12. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the detail of the proposed charter for rural Ireland, when it will be published, how it is being devised, the consultation process that was carried out, how it is expected that County Donegal will benefit from it; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44050/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): I am fully committed to supporting the development and revitalisation of rural Ireland, through advancing the implementation of the recommendations in the report of the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas, also known as the CEDRA report. As the Deputy will be aware, the first recommendation of the CEDRA report relates to the preparation of a clear and committed Rural Economic Development Policy Statement, which outlines how Government intends to support integrated rural economic development to 2025. The publication of the proposed *Charter for Rural Ireland*, to which the Deputy refers, is the first step in that process. Through the proposed *Charter for Rural Ireland*, it is intended to make a specific and public commitment to support rural Ireland's regeneration and to underpin the future sustainable development of Ireland's rural communities. I expect that this Charter will be brought to Government for approval shortly.

In relation to the Deputy's query regarding the consultation process that was carried out when preparing the Charter, I can advise the Deputy that the work of CEDRA, including its final report, which included submissions from various interested parties, was used as a starting point for the development of the Charter. My Department also consulted with the CEDRA Expert Advisory Group and the CEDRA Inter-departmental Group, which comprises senior officials from various Departments whose work and remit impact on rural Ireland.

The focus of the Charter is on establishing frameworks and practices to support the rejuvenation of the rural economy and rural society. The objective of the Charter is to ensure that systems are in place to support enterprise creation and development, maintain and restore the rural cultural heritage, support and protect existing towns and other settlements, facilitate safe and secure rural communities and foster an increased quality of life for all rural dwellers. I am confident that the Charter for Rural Ireland, when delivered, will have a very positive impact on all rural areas, including in County Donegal.

Local Authority Housing Data

13. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of residential units made available to local authorities in 2015, the number of these made available to citizens and families in emergency accommodation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44045/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): The Social Housing Strategy 2020 sets out clear, measurable actions and targets to increase the supply of social housing, reform delivery arrangements and meet the housing needs of all households on the social housing list. The Strategy targets the delivery of 35,000 new units, to be delivered by local authorities and approved housing bodies, and 75,000 units in the private rental market to be delivered mainly under the Housing Assistance Payment scheme. The Strategy has been supported by two successive budgets with €1.7 billion allocated to housing to support the provision of over 33,000 units across both Capital and Current programmes. Given the pressing need to recommence a house building programme around €3 billion in capital funding will be provided in support of the Social Housing Strategy through the Government's Capital Plan - Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021.

The commitment of on-going financial support has allowed me to allocate half a billion euro to local authorities and approved housing bodies for 2,900 new social housing units to be delivered between now and 2017.

In terms of output in 2015 the target set is 15,900 across the current and capital programmes. All efforts are being made, working with delivery partners in local authorities, approved housing bodies and NAMA, to deliver maximum output under each delivery mechanism and this will continue right up to the year-end. The latest data, some of which relate to the position at end Quarter 3, indicate that over 10,000 units have been delivered across all the programmes so far in 2015. With the most significant share of delivery traditionally coming through in the last quarter of the year, I expect further significant progress to be reflected in the end-year position.

Under the Ministerial Direction issued by Minister Kelly, which applies until 31 January 2016, key local authorities are required to prioritise homeless and other vulnerable households in the allocation of tenancies under their control. The four Dublin local authorities have been directed to allocate 50% of all available dwellings to such households, while the local authorities in counties Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford have been directed to allocate 30%.

In terms of households exiting homelessness, the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive figures show that 739 households exited homelessness and entered into tenancy arrangements in the first 9 months of 2015 in the Dublin region.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

14. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question Number 731 of 6 October 2015, the status of the 1,400 homes to be transferred from the National Asset Management Agency to local authorities; if the full 2,501 homes have been purchased and at what prices, or leased; what is the monthly payment for these leasing arrangements for each home; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44131/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): The figures referred to by the Deputy relate to the position at the end of June. The latest figures represent progress to the end of September 2015, at which point a total of 1,600 NAMA related residential properties have been delivered for social housing use. This comprises of 1,241 completed properties and 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 proper-

ties are to be further appraised. Overall, I expect that in excess of 2,000 units for social housing purposes will be secured from this engagement with NAMA.

NAMA sourced units are brought into social housing use through existing delivery mechanisms including the Social Housing Investment Programme, the Capital Acquisition Scheme and the Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP). At the end of September 2015, 858 or 48% of the social housing units delivered by NAMA were by way of long-term leasing funded by the SHCEP. I expect by year end, this will be well in excess of 50%. The current average monthly cost of operational NAMA units leased by Approved Housing Bodies or local authorities, and funded by SHCEP, is €770 per unit per month. Monthly leasing arrangements under the SHCEP achieve significant discounts on market rents and are subject to regular rent reviews. In the case of NAMA related properties, average discounts achieved are in the region of 17% for houses and 12% for apartments. In addition, under these arrangements, rents are fixed for the first six years.

In the case of properties purchased, my Department does not distinguish the financing of NAMA sourced units from other sources of social housing supply. In every case, prices paid are determined by the independently determined market value.

NAMA Social Housing Provision

15. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the discussions and negotiations he has had with the National Asset Management Agency on increasing its provision of social housing units, if the agency is doing all within its authority and mandate to increase the supply of social housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44119/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): The National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) continues to play an important role in the delivery of social housing. To the end of September 2015, a total of 1,600 NAMA residential properties had been delivered for social housing use, comprising 1,241 completed properties and 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. Overall, I expect that in excess of 2,000 units will be secured for social housing purposes from this engagement with NAMA. In addition, NAMA is funding the construction of new residential properties to help meet demand in the major urban centres. The overall programme will be funded from NAMA's own resources and will lead to the development of an estimated 20,000 units by 2020, mainly in the Greater Dublin area where the current residential supply shortage is most acute. Residential developments funded by NAMA are subject to the same planning and regulatory requirements as all other developments and this includes policy relating to Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000. As such, I expect 10% of the output of this investment by NAMA, or roughly 2,000 units, to become available for social housing.

NAMA's Special Purpose Vehicle - the 'National Asset Residential Property Services' (NARPS) – was established in 2013 to facilitate the sale or lease of NAMA debtor or receiver residential properties for social housing purposes. In line with a commitment in the Social Housing Strategy, its remit has been expanded to allow it to fund the purchase of Part V units which become available through NAMA's residential delivery programme. In this way, NAMA will continue to facilitate the provision of high quality units for social housing purposes in mixed tenure, sustainable communities and thus complement the extensive social housing con-

struction programmes of local authorities also currently underway.

Wind Energy Guidelines

16. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the wind farm development guidelines on setback distances will be published, the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44049/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): In December 2013, my Department published proposed “draft” revisions to the noise, setback distance and shadow flicker aspects of the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines. These draft revisions proposed:

- the setting of a more stringent day and night noise limit of 40 decibels for future wind energy developments,
- a mandatory minimum setback distance of 500 metres between a wind turbine and the nearest dwelling for amenity considerations, and
- the complete elimination of shadow flicker between wind turbines and neighbouring dwellings.

A public consultation process was initiated on these proposed draft revisions to the Guidelines, which ran until 21 February 2014. My Department received submissions from 7,500 organisations and members of the public during this public consultation process. It is intended that the revisions to the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines will be finalised as soon as possible. In this regard, account has to be taken of the extensive response to the public consultation in framing the final guidelines. Further work is also advancing to develop technical appendices to assist planning authorities with the practical application of the noise measurement aspects of the Wind Guidelines. My Department is advancing work on the Guidelines in conjunction with the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

The revisions to the Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006, when finalised, will be issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Planning authorities, and, where applicable, An Bord Pleanála are required to have regard to guidelines issued under Section 28 in the performance of their functions under the Planning Acts.

Departmental Contracts

17. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 170 and 171 of 2 December 2015, if procedures exist for accidental or unscheduled meetings that may take place between Ministers or senior officials and bidders for State contracts under the Minister’s remit, and if such policies contain an obligation to take note of the topics discussed at such meetings. [44111/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): 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.

A meeting between Minister Kelly and Deputy Brendan Ryan was scheduled for 10 December 2014, to discuss the Senior Alerts Scheme. While it was not indicated that any other people would be attending the meeting, Deputy Ryan was, in fact, accompanied by two people who were part of a company that had bid in the tender process to establish a panel of preferred suppliers for the equipment needed for the supply and installation of personal monitored alarms, at what I am advised was ultimately a meeting of brief duration in respect of which minutes were not considered necessary. It is important to note that the assessment of the tenders including the award of contracts under the procurement process concerned was managed separately by Pobal, an independent company.

In relation to the Deputy's query regarding procedures that exist for meetings that may take place, inadvertently, between Ministers or senior officials and bidders for contracts, a note of the meeting is generally taken where issues of a substantive nature are discussed and it would be usual to ensure, subsequently, that any such meeting did not affect the particular procurement process concerned. In the instance referred to by the Deputy, I understand the meeting was of a brief duration and minutes were not considered necessary. The procurement process was not affected, particularly as the procurement concerned was being managed separately by Pobal.

I should add that following the enactment of the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015, internal procedures have been established, including a template for officials designated under the Act to use in recording notes of meetings.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

18. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if the State's capacity to engage in mitigating measures against harmful greenhouse gas emitters is severely restricted owing to the weak legislative climate regime; that it is simply unrealistic to expect the State to be able to achieve even the specified targets Ireland is committing to, given the planned-for growth in agriculture emissions; the increase in transport emissions; the fall-back in measures to tackle emissions in these key sectors and in the residential sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44134/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): In relation to our 2020 greenhouse gas emissions reduction target, the latest EPA projections indicate that, while we may come close to meeting our cumulative emissions targets for the period 2013 to 2020, due in part to over-achievement in the early years of the period, our actual emissions in 2020 will most likely fall short of the headline target figure of a reduction of 20%. The challenges that we face in terms of meeting our 2020 targets and those which will be agreed for 2030 are well understood by Government, in the context of our National Policy on Climate Change and also in terms of our legislative response.

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill 2015, which will be enacted in the

coming days, will provide the statutory basis for the State to transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by the year 2050.

Specifically in respect of mitigation matters, the Bill provides for the submission to Government of a National Mitigation Plan at least once every five years. Each such Plan will specify the policy measures that would be required in order to manage greenhouse gas emissions and removals, taking into account the existing obligations on the State under EU and international law.

The Plan will incorporate the sectorial mitigation measures to be adopted by relevant Ministers, such as those responsible for agriculture, transport, energy and the built environment, for the purposes of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enabling the achievement of the national transition objective. In this way, a whole-of-Government approach will be adopted to ensure that sectors of the economy with the largest emissions play their part in contributing to emissions reductions now and into the future.

Leader Programmes Expenditure

19. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the spend incurred under the Leader programme 2007 to 2013; the original allocation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44164/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): The original allocation of LEADER funding for the 2007-2013 programming period was just short of €400 million. The allocation was reduced in 2012 when the EU co-financing rate changed due to the financial crisis. To date, €276 million has been spent on projects, €12 million on animation expenses and €71 million on administration giving a total of €359 million.

The final date for expenditure under the LEADER element of the Rural Development Programme 2007 – 2013 is 31 December 2015. The final outturn for the LEADER element of the Rural Development Programme 2007 – 2013 is expected to be in the order of €370 million. This level of investment has made a very significant impact across a range of areas, including enterprise development, job creation and rural tourism, in line with priorities identified by the Local Action Groups involved. Further significant investment will be made through the next LEADER programme, which I expect to become operational on a rolling basis from the beginning of next year.

Local Authority Housing

20. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government why he places a limit of €30,000 when considering applications for the funding of vacant housing units owned by local authorities and long-term voids, given that there is such a large number of vacant social housing units in each local authority area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44123/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): The funding support that my Department provides for local authorities to return vacant social housing units to use is directed at units where remediation costs greatly exceed the normal end-of-lease maintenance costs. While the costs that local authorities might need to incur are not capped, support from my Department is subject to a limit of

€30,000 per unit. This funding is not a substitute for the normal responsibilities of local authorities for maintaining their social housing properties and the standard end-of-lease maintenance they undertake is often sufficient to prepare a unit for early re-letting. Support is provided in respect of the additional costs that arise where remediation costs are higher than normal. The average Exchequer contribution to local authorities under this programme is €14,800 per unit. 2,333 units were returned under the programme in 2014, on top of units repaired using local authorities' own resources. In 2015, funding has been made available to support the return of up to 2,500 further units, which covers all of the suitable units that the local authorities have identified.

I recognise that there are other social housing units where there is a greater level of dereliction than can be addressed with the support currently available under the standard programme to remediate vacant units. Accordingly, my Department has also commenced a new programme to support local authorities to tackle those more extensively damaged units. The number of such units is relatively small but, nonetheless, this new funding programme will allow even more units that have been out of commission for many years to be brought back into use. The new programme will be rolled out in early 2016.

Tenant Purchase Scheme Administration

21. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans for replenishing actual housing stock, given the announcement of the new tenant purchase scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44130/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): 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. Under Section 13 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, as amended, local authorities may, with my Department's approval, use sales receipts and moneys received from tenant purchasers under the new scheme to invest in a range of social housing supports, including the provision of additional housing units and the refurbishment and maintenance of existing housing stock.

Specifically in terms of social housing supply, the Social Housing Strategy 2020 sets out clear, measurable actions and targets to increase the supply of social housing, reform delivery arrangements and meet the housing needs of all households on the housing list with flexibility to meet future demand. In total 110,000 new social housing units are targeted for delivery, with 35,000 new units to be delivered and 75,000 households to be supported mainly through the Housing Assistance Payment Programme.

The Strategy has been supported by two successive budgets with €1.7 billion allocated to housing with associated delivery targets of over 33,000 units. Given the pressing need to recommence a house building programme almost €3 billion in capital funding will be provided in support of the Social Housing Strategy under the Government's Capital Plan - Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021.

This commitment of on-going financial support has allowed me to allocate half a billion euro to local authorities and approved housing bodies for 2,900 new build and acquisition social housing units to be delivered by end 2017.

Preparatory work will continue in 2016 on further new innovative projects, such as advanc-

ing the provision of 500 new social housing units through a PPP programme and an affordable housing pilot scheme.

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

22. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government in the aftermath of his welcome investment in the public housing programme, if that programme can be accelerated to provide substantially more housing accommodation in the short to medium term, if he will put a sequence of steps in place, in conjunction with the local authorities, to access off-balance sheet recorded funding in each local authority area where major housing waiting lists currently exist, if he will put a strategic plan in place to drive the programme to a much greater extent than has been possible heretofore, by raising the house completion targets substantially on a monthly basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44099/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): In November 2014 the Government approved the Social Housing Strategy 2020 which sets out a strategic framework for meeting the State's social housing needs to the end of the decade. The Strategy also sets out clear, measurable actions and targets to increase the supply of social housing, reform delivery arrangements and meet the housing needs of all households on the social housing list. The Strategy targets the delivery of 35,000 new units, to be delivered by local authorities and approved housing bodies, and 75,000 units in the private rental market to be delivered mainly under the Housing Assistance Payment Programme. The Strategy has been supported by two successive budgets with €1.7 billion allocated to housing to support the provision of over 33,000 units across both Capital and Current programmes. Given the pressing need to recommence a house building programme around €3 billion in capital funding will be provided in support of the Social Housing Strategy under the Government's Capital Plan - Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021.

The commitment of on-going financial support has allowed the allocation of half a billion euro to local authorities and approved housing bodies for 2,900 new social housing units to be delivered by 2017.

The Strategy also includes a commitment to commence work on a financial vehicle, to be known as the Strategic Housing Fund, to raise funding for the social housing sector. The financial vehicle will be established to facilitate the aggregation of private investment into a fund for subsequent lending as project finance. It is intended that this funding would be lent on to qualifying Approved Housing Bodies, giving them access to long term finance. In this regard, the Social Housing Strategy 2020 refers to the possibility of an Approved Housing Body being established by a local authority or among local authorities.

Work on the development of this new funding model is being progressed under the oversight of a group which has been put in place to develop the financial aspects of the Social Housing Strategy. This group - the Finance Work Stream - comprises a range of key stakeholders including my Department, the Housing Finance Agency, the National Development Finance Agency and the Departments of Finance and of Public Expenditure and Reform. The timing of the introduction of the new funding model will be dependent on the outcome of the group's work.

Commercial Rates Valuation Process

23. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if the Government will bridge the financial gap caused by the net reduction in global valuation of commercial rates on utility companies. [44053/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): The Commissioner for Valuation has sole responsibility for all valuation matters, including the global valuation of property of public utility undertakings under Part 11 of the Valuation Act 2001, as amended. The Valuation Act 2001 comes under the remit of my colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. The Valuation Act 2001, as amended, provides for global valuations of utility undertakings, to be carried out by the Valuation Office every five years and entered on the central valuation list. The most recent global valuations carried out by the Valuation Office are in respect of Gas Networks Ireland, Iarnród Éireann and telecommunications companies BT Ireland, Eircom, Vodafone, Three Ireland and Meteor. On 4 November 2015 the Valuation Office issued a copy of the Valuation Certificate and a schedule setting out the apportioned value for each rating authority to my Department. The previous valuation for these utilities had taken place in 2010. The Global Valuation Certificates show a reduction in the combined valuations for these utilities of €112m. Moreover, the reduction in the global valuation of the ESB, following an appeal to the Valuation Tribunal, will reduce the rates payable by the ESB from 2016.

The levying and collection of rates are matters for each individual local authority. The annual rate on valuation (ARV), which is applied to the valuation for each property, determined by the Valuation Office, to obtain the amount payable in rates, is decided by the elected members of each local authority in the annual budget and its determination is a reserved function. This process has recently been concluded in each local authority as part of the budgeting process for 2016. The implications of the Commissioner of Valuation's global revaluation of utility infrastructure for individual local authorities will ultimately be dependent on each authority's ARV, and its overall income and expenditure decided on in its budget.

My Department engaged with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and there will be a once off adjustment of €16.65 million in support from the Local Government Fund in 2016 to local authorities affected by the global valuations.

Illegal Dumping

24. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if the necessary funding for the continued remediation of the Kerdiffstown landfill site will be ring-fenced in future budgets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44114/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): Remediation of the former illegal landfill at Kerdiffstown is the Government's priority landfill remediation project for the coming years. In September 2015, Minister Kelly briefed the Government on the matter, outlining the scale of this complex remediation project, including details of the timeframes and the estimated associated funding requirements. Some €11.78m has been invested in the project to date, initially through the Environmental Protection Agency and, more recently, through Kildare County Council, following the transfer of responsibility for the site to the Council earlier this year. Significant further funding will be required over the coming years. While the detailed costs of remediation will not be fully known until licensing and tendering processes have been completed, I anticipate that a significant proportion of the funding available for landfill remediation in my Department's Vote for 2016 will go towards the remediation process at Kerdiffstown. The specific allocations for

future years will be determined in the context of the annual Estimates processes.

Public consultation will continue to be an important feature of the project and community updates will be issued on www.kerdiffstowncleanup.ie as remedial works on the site are commissioned.

Leader Programmes Administration

25. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the status of the new Leader programme, when it will be delivered in communities, the status of its delivery in County Galway, if its commencement in County Galway will be delayed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44110/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): 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 now complete and those successful at stage one have moved to stage two of the process, which is the preparation of local development strategies for their areas. The preparation and submission of local development strategies is underway in each of the 28 designated sub-regional areas. 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 and these are being considered at present.

At stage one of the process, two entities in Galway submitted qualifying expressions of interest to become the Local Action Group for the Galway sub-regional area, namely Forum Connemara covering the Connemara municipal area and Galway Local and Community Development Committee covering the whole county. My Department has facilitated a number of meetings with both entities with a view to bringing all interested parties together to develop one coherent local development strategy for Galway. To date, no agreement has been reached between the parties and both entities are preparing separate strategies for their selected areas.

In areas where a single strategy is submitted, an Independent Evaluation Committee will review and evaluate these strategies with a view to ensuring that the strategies meet the required standard. In areas where entities do not come to an agreement and multiple strategies are submitted, it will be a matter for the Independent Evaluation Committee to make a decision on the basis of the quality of the local development strategies submitted. In this situation, the Independent Evaluation Committee will not make a decision on the successful strategy until all strategies for that sub-regional area have been submitted for assessment.

I understand that the local development strategies for Galway are expected to be submitted for evaluation in January 2016.

Waste Management

26. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has engaged with Bord na Móna on the decrease in tonnage allowable from 1 December 2015 at the Drehid landfill site from 360,000 tonnes to 120,000 tonnes; if Bord na Móna has discussed with his Department when this excess tonnage will now be deposited; his views on increasing the levy for community gain to be applied by planning authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44113/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): It is a matter for individual waste operators to determine their own preferred waste treatment options having regard to market conditions as well as available infrastructure in Ireland and elsewhere in the EU primarily. In terms of the specific matter referred to, under section 60(3) of the Waste Management Act 1996, the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government is precluded from exercising any power or control in relation to the performance by the Environmental Protection Agency of a statutory function vested in it, including matters concerning the licensing conditions of authorised landfill facilities. The attachment of conditions relating to individual community gain funds to planning permissions is a matter for the statutory planning authorities. The Minister has no role in the process.

Wind Energy Guidelines

27. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to place a moratorium on wind farms until effective regulations are put in place. [44055/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): Proposals for wind energy developments are subject to the statutory requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, in the same manner as other proposed developments. Planning applications are made to the relevant local planning authority with a right of appeal to An Bord Pleanála. In the case of wind development proposals which meet the statutory threshold criteria for classification as Strategic Infrastructure Developments under the Planning and Development Acts, such applications must be submitted directly to An Bord Pleanála. Planning authorities, including An Bord Pleanála, are required to have regard to guidelines issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, in the performance of their functions under the Act, including my Department's Wind Energy Development Guidelines, which were published in June 2006. Ultimately, planning authorities will make their own decisions based on the specific merits or otherwise of individual planning applications.

As the Deputy will be aware, my Department is currently conducting a targeted review of the 2006 Guidelines focusing on noise, setback and shadow flicker. Following an extensive public consultation, it is intended that revisions to the Wind Energy Development Guidelines will be finalised and issued as soon as possible.

In the interim, the 2006 Guidelines will continue to apply to existing planning applications which are with either the local planning authorities or with An Bord Pleanála for determination.

It is not intended to place a moratorium on applications for planning permission for wind farm developments as proposed. Under section 30 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, the Minister is specifically precluded from exercising any power or control in relation to any particular planning case with which a planning authority, or An Bord Pleanála, is or may be concerned.

Commercial Rates

28. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the status of revenues from commercial rates to local authorities as a result of the global revaluations undertaken by the Valuation Office; and how this will affect local authority

budgets in 2016 and 2017. [44121/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): The Commissioner for Valuation has sole responsibility for all valuation matters, including the global valuation of property of public utility undertakings under Part 11 of the Valuation Act 2001, as amended. The Valuation Act 2001 comes under the remit of my colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. The Valuation Act 2001, as amended, provides for global valuations of utility undertakings, to be carried out by the Valuation Office every five years and entered on the central valuation list. The most recent global valuations carried out by the Valuation Office are in respect of Gas Networks Ireland, Iarnród Eireann and telecommunications companies BT Ireland, Eircom, Vodafone, Three Ireland and Meteor. On 4 November 2015 the Valuation Office issued a copy of the Valuation Certificate and a schedule setting out the apportioned value for each rating authority to my Department. The previous valuation for these utilities had taken place in 2010. The Global Valuation Certificates show a reduction in the combined valuations for these utilities of €112m. Moreover, the reduction in the global valuation of the ESB, following an appeal to the Valuation Tribunal, will reduce the rates payable by the ESB from 2016.

The levying and collection of rates are matters for each individual local authority. The annual rate on valuation (ARV), which is applied to the valuation for each property, determined by the Valuation Office, to obtain the amount payable in rates, is decided by the elected members of each local authority in the annual budget and its determination is a reserved function. This process has recently been concluded in each local authority as part of the budgeting process for 2016. The implications of the Commissioner of Valuation's global revaluation of utility infrastructure for individual local authorities will ultimately be dependent on each authority's ARV, and its overall income and expenditure decided on in its budget.

My Department engaged with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and there will be a once off adjustment of €16.65 million in support from the Local Government Fund in 2016 to local authorities affected by the global valuations.

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

29. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government considering the housing and homelessness crisis, if he will consider, as an alternative to temporary modular homes, purchasing an equivalent number of permanent homes, hundreds of which are currently advertised for sale at equivalent prices to the cost of modular homes, and which would move quickly and more permanently provide homes for those with housing need; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44129/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): In delivering on the targets of the Social Housing Strategy 2020, local authorities and approved housing bodies are utilising a range of delivery approaches to meet the needs of those on the housing waiting lists. The acquisition of properties is an important component of this delivery, as is the remediation of vacant units. This is particularly so given the time-lag in delivery for construction projects. Local authorities already have devolved responsibility to undertake suitable acquisitions of properties for social housing purposes, while being sensitive to local market conditions and achieving good value for money. The acquisition of units, therefore, is already underway and will continue to be used by local authorities where appropriate, alongside other social housing delivery mechanisms such as construction - including modular housing - and the delivery of NAMA residential properties, making units available through the local authority leasing scheme, the rental accommodation scheme and the Housing

Assistance Payment scheme.

In line with the Social Housing Strategy, all of these approaches are required for the delivery of social housing in the short, medium and long-terms and I am satisfied that they are being advanced strongly by local authorities and approved housing bodies.

The programme for the delivery of 500 units of modular housing for homeless families across Dublin is being implemented to mitigate the issues associated with an increasing volume of homeless families accommodated in inappropriate commercial hotel arrangements. Accordingly, in combination with other approaches, it is an appropriate and valuable element of the delivery of social housing for those who require this support.

Pyrite Remediation Programme

30. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the discussions he has had regarding the manner in which the pyrite remediation scheme has been constructed and the condition that acceptance into the scheme is based on the presence of damage rather than the presence of pyrite; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44047/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): The pyrite remediation scheme, which was first published by the Pyrite Resolution Board in February 2014, was developed having regard to the recommendations set out in the Report of the Pyrite Panel (July 2013) and the provisions of the Pyrite Resolution Act 2013. To be eligible to apply under the scheme, dwellings must have Building Condition Assessment with a Damage Condition Rating of 2.

The Pyrite Panel recommended a categorisation system as a means of prioritising pyrite remediation works in recognition of the expensive and intrusive nature of pyrite remediation and the unpredictability of pyritic heave. The Panel was clear in its view that only dwellings with significant damage due to pyritic heave should be remediated and that it would be unreasonable to expect dwellings not exhibiting such damage to be remediated. I am satisfied that the conditions for entry onto the scheme are appropriate and, accordingly, there are no proposals to amend the legislation in this regard.

Planning Issues

31. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is concerned regarding our planning laws as they relate to the timescales to decide on planning applications for major companies backed by the Industrial Development Agency Ireland and Enterprise Ireland; if we compare favourably with our European competitors in adjudicating on planning applications, if he has been approached by the agency or Enterprise Ireland in regard to speeding up decision times, lest we lose possible investment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44124/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): A decision to grant or refuse a valid planning application is generally made by a planning authority within 8 weeks from the date of receipt of the application. However, the decision period can vary, particularly if the planning authority seeks further information from the applicant in relation to the proposed development which it should do within the first 8 weeks after receipt of the planning application. In such instances, the planning

authority then has 4 weeks from the date the further information is received to make a decision on the application or 8 weeks in cases where an environmental impact statement or a Natura impact statement is required. A period of 4 weeks is allowed for the making of an appeal to An Bord Pleanála after the date of the decision by the planning authority and the Board has a statutory objective of deciding on appeals within 18 weeks. My Department does not collect information in relation to individual planning applications lodged with a planning authority in respect of development supported by the IDA or Enterprise Ireland. Under section 30 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, I am specifically precluded from exercising any power or control in relation to any particular planning case with which a planning authority, or An Bórd Pleanála, is or may be concerned.

Further streamlining enhancements to the planning system are proposed in the Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2015 which is presently being progressed through the Houses of the Oireachtas with a view to enactment before the end of the year. Additional streamlining of the planning system will be brought forward in a further Bill – the Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill – which it is intended to publish before the end of the year. As outlined in the Government's Construction 2020 Strategy, which was published in May 2014, every effort is being made to ensure our planning system is appropriately positioned to facilitate sustainable development, economic growth and underpin our economic recovery.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

32. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government how the target of 1,400 new-builds or acquisitions by local authorities and approved housing bodies will be met by the end of 2015, given that only 403 new units were provided in the first six months of 2015, the details of the new units and where they will be provided. [44128/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): The Social Housing Strategy 2020 provides a comprehensive response to the need for social housing and targets the provision of over 110,000 social housing units to 2020, through the delivery of 35,000 new social housing units and meeting the housing needs of some 75,000 households through the Housing Assistance Payment and Rental Accommodation Scheme. The output target for 2015 is set at 15,900 across the current and capital-funded programmes. Within that, a target of 2,400 units is to be delivered through the capital-funded programmes of building/acquiring new social housing units by local authorities, new sheltered housing by approved housing bodies, and the returning of vacant properties to productive use. Current data show that over 2,500 units have already been delivered through the capital programmes as follows:

	No.
Local Authority Housing – construction and acquisition	569
Capital Assistance Scheme	199
Regeneration	109
Vacant Units returned	1,630

Local authorities have advised me that they are advancing the purchase of some 750 new units this year, many of which will be finalised between now and the end of the year, which is traditionally the time of greatest funding drawdown by local authorities. Combined with the further numbers of vacant housing units that I expect will be returned by the end of this year, this should mean that the capital target for 2015 will be further exceeded. All 31 local authori-

ties are actively engaged in the delivery of these units in 2015, so the impact will be felt across all areas in terms of new social housing provision.

We now have a strong pipeline of new social housing construction projects in place following from the announcement in May of the first major social housing build programme under the Social Housing Strategy, with a further substantial announcement in July of approvals for local authorities and approved housing bodies. The outcome has been half a billion euro allocated for 2,900 social housing new builds and acquisitions to end 2017. I also propose to make further announcements in this regard early in the New Year. Coupled with new housing acquisitions and tackling vacant units, this means that progress towards achievement of the overall capital targets for the period out to 2017 is well advanced.

Pyrite Remediation Programme

33. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the contact he has had with HomeBond in the past two months regarding the structural issues which emerged in the course of pyrite remediation, if he is satisfied that home owner's rights are adequately vindicated under the current arrangement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44048/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): HomeBond is a private limited company providing structural guarantees for new houses and, since November 2008, the HomeBond Insurance scheme is underwritten by Allianz Insurance. As is the case for any private company, its operations are a matter for its management and Board of Directors. I also understand that HomeBond Insurance Services Ltd is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland. As a private company, I have no role or function in its operations and cannot direct HomeBond to take a particular course of action.

In the context of the pyrite remediation scheme, an agreement was reached between the Pyrite Resolution Board and HomeBond in June 2014 under which HomeBond agreed to contribute technical and project management services to the Board to the value of €2 million. Such services include assisting in organising and managing the testing of dwellings and project management of remediation contracts. HomeBond has also agreed to make available to the Pyrite Resolution Board/Housing Agency the results of testing undertaken by it prior to the operation of the scheme.

My Department is aware that building defects, which are outside the scope of the pyrite remediation scheme, have been identified in a number of dwellings during pyrite remediation works undertaken under the scheme. Against this background, I understand that a supplementary agreement has recently been made between the Pyrite Resolution Board and HomeBond with regard to how non-pyrite-related structural defects, which are uncovered during pyrite remediation works under the pyrite remediation scheme, will be addressed in future.

Housing Issues

34. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his role in providing a national framework of policy, legislation and funding to underpin the role of housing authorities in addressing homelessness at local level, if he will provide a directive for modular homes to be built at sites not already earmarked for building of bricks and mortar homes, if he has issued any directive for public private partnerships to pro-

duce urgently needed social housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44046/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): My Department's role in relation to homelessness involves the provision of a national framework of policy, legislation and funding to underpin the role of housing authorities in addressing homelessness at local level. Statutory responsibility in relation to the provision of accommodation for homeless persons rests with the individual housing authorities and the purposes for which housing authorities may incur expenditure in addressing homelessness are prescribed in Section 10 of the Housing Act 1988. My Department has no function with regard to operational matters, such as site selection for modular housing or for any particular development, which are matters for the relevant housing authorities. I am not, therefore, considering issuing a Direction in this matter. The Government has approved the delivery of 500 units of modular housing for homeless families across Dublin. It is intended to have the first 150 units delivered as quickly as possible in the Dublin City Council administrative area, with the City Council acting as the contracting authority. The Council is aiming to secure the delivery of an initial 22 of these units before Christmas, with commencement of delivery of the remaining units to follow by late Q1 2016. A further 350 units will then be provided across the four local authorities in the Dublin region through a national procurement framework overseen by the Office of Government Procurement.

The Government's Social Housing Strategy 2020 provides for an investment of €300 million in social housing through the public private partnership model. In total, the programme is expected to deliver 1,500 social housing units. To enable delivery to commence as quickly as possible, the PPP programme is being rolled-out in up to three bundles.

I announced the sites for the first bundle of Social Housing PPP projects on Budget day, 13 October 2015. The bundle comprises 6 sites with a capital value of approximately €100m, which are expected to deliver over 500 units. Two of the sites are located in Dublin City with one each in South Dublin, Kildare, Wicklow and Louth. Sites for the next bundles are currently being assessed. This process is expected to conclude in early 2016. I am satisfied that the PPP programme is proceeding well and I have no plans to issue any Direction in that regard.

Building Regulations

35. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the investigation panel to examine the mica issue will be set up and functioning, its terms of reference, when it will report its findings, the process for those home owners affected by mica to notify the investigation panel with details of their homes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44135/15]

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 home owners, 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.

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

36. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if the plan for the provision of social housing is the most effective option available in tackling the worsening housing crisis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44126/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): A shortage of supply is at the heart of the current challenges in the housing sector and the Government is addressing this on a number of fronts. The Government's Construction 2020 Strategy, published last year, is aimed at addressing issues in the property and construction sectors and ensuring that any bottlenecks that might impede the sector in meeting residential and non-residential demand are addressed. A number of important measures have been taken already aimed at improving housing viability and increasing supply. The measures include the introduction of a vacant site levy, reductions in development contributions, revised Part V provisions and initiatives to improve financing.

Given that these measures will take time to fully impact on supply, some shorter term measures have recently been agreed by Government, including:

- a targeted development contribution rebate scheme in Dublin and Cork, focused on large-scale developments at affordable prices;
- fast-tracking of implementation of new apartment guidelines which while supporting good quality build, will improve the viability of this type of development; and
- legislative amendments to introduce greater flexibility and streamlining to the Strategic Development Zone provisions of the Planning and Development Acts.

In addition, NAMA is aiming to deliver a target of 20,000 residential units before the end of 2020, with 90% of these units to be in the greater Dublin area.

In terms of social housing, the Social Housing Strategy 2020 sets out clear, measurable

actions and targets to increase the supply of social housing, reform delivery arrangements and meet the housing needs of all households on the housing list with flexibility to meet future demand. In total, 110,000 new social housing units are targeted for delivery with 35,000 new units to be delivered and 75,000 households to be supported mainly through the Housing Assistance Payment Scheme.

The Strategy has been supported by two successive budgets with €1.7 billion allocated to housing. Given the pressing need to recommence a house building programme almost €3 billion in capital funding will be provided in support of the Social Housing Strategy through the Government's Capital Plan - Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021.

This commitment of on-going financial support has allowed Minister Kelly and me to allocate half a billion euro to local authorities and approved housing bodies for 2,900 social housing new builds and acquisitions to be delivered by end 2017.

These projects will contribute to delivery in 2016 and, when taken together with the broader range of housing programmes, I expect that over 17,000 housing units will be provided next year. In addition, preparatory work will continue in 2016 on further new innovative projects, such as advancing the provision of 500 new social housing units through a PPP programme and an affordable rental scheme.

Overall, I am satisfied that the approach taken by Government is comprehensive and Minister Kelly and I are committed to seeing it implemented in full.

Waste Management

37. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is aware that the significant numbers of tyres collected by the local authorities in Dublin in the weeks before Hallowe'en 2015 have not been properly disposed of; and if current plans for the tyre industry will address this issue. [44116/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): My Department is aware of the illegal stockpiling of tyres. Indeed, the recent issues experienced by a number of local authorities in the period before Hallowe'en are simply part of much wider problems with waste tyres in Ireland. I am confident that Minister Kelly's plans for the introduction of producer responsibility arrangements for waste tyres will deal with the problem identified by the Deputy by providing a proper waste management system for tyres, closing the significant gaps that have been identified under current arrangements.

Wind Energy Guidelines

38. **Deputy Helen McEntee** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the status of his engagements with the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources on his stated objective to update wind energy guidelines; if industrial wind farms are appropriate for residential areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44051/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): In December 2013, my Department published proposed

“draft” revisions to the noise, setback distance and shadow flicker aspects of the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines. These draft revisions proposed:

- the setting of a more stringent day and night noise limit of 40 decibels for future wind energy developments,
- a mandatory minimum setback distance of 500 metres between a wind turbine and the nearest dwelling for amenity considerations, and
- the complete elimination of shadow flicker between wind turbines and neighbouring dwellings.

A public consultation process was initiated on these proposed draft revisions to the Guidelines, which ran until 21 February 2014. My Department received submissions from 7,500 organisations and members of the public during this public consultation process. It is intended that the revisions to the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines will be finalised as soon as possible. In this regard, account has to be taken of the extensive response to the public consultation in framing the final guidelines. Further work is also advancing to develop technical appendices to assist planning authorities with the practical application of the noise measurement aspects of the Wind Guidelines. My Department is advancing work on the Guidelines in conjunction with the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

The revisions to the Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006, when finalised, will be issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Planning authorities, and, where applicable, An Bord Pleanála are required to have regard to guidelines issued under Section 28 in the performance of their functions under the Planning Acts.

Proposals for the location of individual wind farms are a matter for the relevant developer taking account of several criteria including connectivity to the national grid.

When considering individual planning applications for such developments and the appropriateness of their location, planning authorities, including An Bord Pleanála where relevant, are required to have regard to local area and county development plans, local authority renewable energy strategies, the Wind Energy Development Guidelines issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and other relevant matters including existing residential development, existing wind energy developments, the local landscape and the natural and built heritage.

The 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines provide a guide to the analysis of suitable areas for wind energy by planning authorities, when preparing their development plans and renewable energy strategies.

Security of the Elderly

39. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the funding he has made available for the provision of alarms, pendants and other security devices for the elderly in each year since 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44163/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): My Department manages 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. Funding is available under the scheme towards the purchase of equipment by a registered organisation i.e. personal alarm and/or pendant and the associated monitoring and service charges are paid by the participant. The scheme is administered by local community and voluntary groups with the support of my Department. My Department undertook to consider new approaches to the Seniors Alert Scheme in 2014 and arising from this, it was decided that the scheme should be managed by Pobal, given that organisation's significant experience delivering programmes on behalf of Government. The management and administration of the scheme transferred from the Department to Pobal on 7 September 2015.

This new approach will reduce the administrative burden for the many hundreds of community and voluntary groups registered under the scheme, who provide an excellent service for the elderly. It will enable these groups to concentrate on the main purpose of the scheme, namely to support and interact with the elderly in the local community.

The 2015 allocation for the operation of the Seniors Alert Scheme is €2.35m.

The annual spend on the Seniors Alert Scheme from 2011 to 2014 is shown in the following table:

Year	Expenditure
2011	€2.47m
2012	€2.52m
2013	€2.32m
2014	€1.70m

Ministerial Meetings

40. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has received any written or oral representations on behalf of Task Alarms from any elected representative, and the topics discussed at his meeting with a bidder for contracts under the senior alerts scheme on 10 December 2015. [44112/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): A total of 3 representations were received by my Department from elected representatives on behalf of Task Alarms.

In relation to the Deputy's query regarding the meeting between Minister Kelly and Deputy Brendan Ryan on 10 December 2014 in relation to the Seniors Alert Scheme, the meeting request from Deputy Ryan did not state that any other people would be attending the meeting. Deputy Ryan was, however, accompanied at the meeting by two people from one of the groups who were bidding in the procurement process being managed by Pobal.

The meeting was of short duration and included discussion in relation to technical details such as the division of the market into lots, the standards applied in relation to the supply of equipment and consultation with suppliers.

It should be noted that the assessment of the tenders including the award of contracts under the procurement process for the Seniors Alert Scheme was managed by Pobal, an independent company, following a public advertisement on eTenders on 20 October 2014.

Rental Accommodation Scheme Expenditure

41. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 732 of 6 October 2015, if the information has been compiled and if the data represent value for money; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44133/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): The information is being compiled and will be provided to the Deputy shortly.

The Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP) and Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) are key delivery programmes under the Social Housing Strategy.

In the case of RAS, the Scheme was established with the dual purpose of eliminating long-term dependence on the Supplementary Welfare Allowance rent supplementation scheme and enhancing the capacity of local authorities to respond to long-term housing need. Under the Scheme, value for money can be viewed in a number of ways and can reflect both direct and indirect financial costs and benefits. The cost of the Scheme is determined by the on-going cost of meeting contractual commitments with property owners. Local authorities, in negotiating contracts with property owners, seek to maximise a discount on market rent. The funding to support the cost of RAS is made available through the redirection of resources from the Department of Social Protection. Monies are provided on an Exchequer neutral basis to meet the cost of persons transferring from rent supplement to RAS.

In relation to the Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP), units provided in long-term leased arrangements are subject to formal, professional valuation procedures to agree rents payable, and for the most part require Departmental approval. In respect of proposals examined by the Department, an average discount of 20% below market rent is being achieved. In addition, regular rent reviews are specified in each agreement.

The Housing Assistance Payment Scheme (HAP) scheme, which is currently being rolled out on a pilot basis, has been designed with the intention of providing efficiencies to both tenants and landlords, and value for money for the Exchequer. As well as removing a barrier to employment, by allowing recipients to remain in the scheme if they gain full-time employment, the HAP scheme improves regulation of the rented accommodation being supported and it provides certainty for landlords as regards their rental income. Under the HAP scheme, eligible households source their own accommodation in the private rented sector, payments are made electronically directly to the landlord on behalf of the tenant, and the tenancy agreement is between the HAP recipient and the private landlord. In order to test HAP processes and provide efficiencies, Limerick City and County Council are currently providing a transactional shared service on behalf of all HAP local authorities on an interim basis. This shared service structure ensures greater consistency of processes, and resource efficiencies, by managing all HAP tenants and landlords through one Financial Management System. The operation of the pilot has facilitated a better understanding of the business and operational requirements, including identifying areas where efficiencies can be gained.

While my Department keeps its housing delivery mechanisms under regular review, I am satisfied that the RAS, SHCEP and HAP schemes represent good value for money for the Exchequer.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

42. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will introduce sectoral targets to reduce carbon emissions, given the discussions in Paris, France and the need for this State to meet its international obligations. [44054/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): The extent of the challenge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, in line with our EU and international commitments, is well understood by Government, as reflected in the National Policy Position on Climate Action and Low-Carbon Development, published in April 2014, and in the Climate Action and Low-Carbon Development Bill 2015, expected to be enacted very shortly. The National Policy Position provides a high-level policy direction for the adoption and implementation by Government of plans to enable the State to move to a low-carbon economy by 2050. Proposed statutory authority for the plans is set out in the Climate Action and Low-Carbon Development Bill 2015.

In anticipation of enactment of the planned legislation, work is already underway on developing a low carbon plan, the National Mitigation Plan, the primary objective of which will be to track implementation of measures already underway and identify additional measures in the longer term to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and progress the overall national low carbon transition agenda to 2050. The first iteration of the National Mitigation Plan will place particular focus on putting the necessary measures in place to address the challenge to 2020 but also in terms of planning ahead to ensure that appropriate policies and measures will be in place beyond that. In this context, key sectors in the low carbon transition process (electricity, transport, built environment and agriculture) are currently developing sectoral mitigation measures in tandem with Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) processes during which measures will be further developed and prioritised.

Development of the National Mitigation Plan is being guided by a long-term vision of low carbon transition, as set out in the National Policy Position based on:

- an aggregate reduction in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions of at least 80% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2050 across the electricity generation, built environment and transport sectors; and
- in parallel, an approach to carbon neutrality in the agriculture and land-use sector, including forestry, which does not compromise capacity for sustainable food production.

The ultimate objective of successive National Mitigation Plans is to incrementally achieve this vision by 2050. In that context, the National Mitigation Plan now being developed will have regard to Ireland's obligations under the current 2009 Effort Sharing Decision and any likely future EU and international obligations that may arise, including new targets to be agreed under the 2030 climate and energy package.

I have no plans at this time to introduce sectoral targets. As noted above, the National Policy Position sets out the ambition level for the electricity generation, built environment and transport sectors in aggregate rather than as individual sectoral objectives. This is to ensure that it can be achieved at minimum cost. The proposed iterative process to pursue and achieve this aggregate ambition level will allow Departments and Government collectively to establish the most cost-efficient options at a point in time. Inevitably, the cost of some technologies will reduce over time and the least-cost transition advice and trajectory will evolve accordingly.

Carer's Allowance Applications

43. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection when she

will make a decision on an application by persons (details supplied) in Dublin 5 under the carer's allowance scheme. [44436/15]

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 10 November 2015. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Rent Supplement Scheme Payments

44. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 117 of 10 November 2015, the steps a tenant who was under housing assistance payment should take to avail of rent supplement where a landlord declines to renew a new housing assistance payment agreement; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44454/15]

45. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the number of persons currently in receipt of rent supplement in County Louth for in excess of 18 months; the number of these who have been transferred to the housing assistance payment scheme; and of those transferred, the number who have successfully secured accommodation within the current rent limits of this scheme by community welfare officer region in County Louth. [44455/15]

46. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the measures that allow flexibility within the rent supplement scheme in cases where applicants cannot source property within the limits she has set in County Louth; and if the housing assistance payment scheme allows for an uplift in the same manner. [44456/15]

48. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the amount spent on rent supplement from 2011 to 2015 in counties Louth and Meath; the number of persons in these counties in receipt of the supplement from 2011 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44458/15]

49. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the measures she has taken to communicate with recipients of rent supplement who are concerned at losing their homes in counties Louth and Meath; the supports available to them; and if she will roll out initiatives such as those implemented in County Dublin. [44459/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Kevin Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 44 to 46, inclusive, 48 and 49 together.

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 breakdown of rent supplement recipients in Louth and Meath is provided in the following tabular statement. Rent supplement expenditure from 2011 to 2015 is also provided. A breakdown of expenditure by county is not available.

The Department's strategic direction is to transfer responsibility of persons with long term housing needs to the local authorities under HAP. There are currently over 1,500 recipients of rent supplement in Louth of which 1,240 are in receipt of the scheme for periods over 18 months. To date, approximately 240 long term rent supplement recipients in Louth have trans-

ferred to HAP. The complete transfer of all long term recipients to HAP will take place over a period of time.

In local authority areas where HAP is in place, including Louth and Meath, new applicants assessed as requiring social housing support will be considered for HAP rather than rent supplement. Rent supplement will continue to be paid to households who are already in the private rented sector but who, generally because of a loss of income through unemployment, require a short term income support to pay their rent. HAP recipients whose landlords refuse to renew their tenancy should engage with their local authority. Policy responsibility and reporting on HAP is a matter for the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

In view of the current difficulties in the private rented market, rent supplement policy continues to allow for flexibility where landlords seek rents in excess of the limits for both existing customers and new applicants to the scheme. Under this approach each tenant's circumstances are considered on a case-by-case basis, and rents are being increased above prescribed limits as appropriate. Community Welfare Service staff have a statutory discretionary power to award or increase a supplement for rental purposes, for example, when dealing with applicants who are at risk of losing their tenancy or in danger of homelessness. In addition the Department, in conjunction with Threshold, operates a special Protocol in the Dublin and Cork areas where the supply issues are particularly acute, with plans underway to extend this protocol to Galway City. I am keeping this matter under review including any further extension of the Protocol in place with Threshold.

Where Departmental staff are notified of a threat of tenancy loss, the preventative measures are implemented as appropriate. This flexible approach has supported over 5,400 rent supplement households throughout the country to retain their rented accommodation through increased rent payments, of which 71 cases refer to householders in Louth. A county breakdown of this information is provided in the following tabular statement.

The Department has undertaken a communications campaign to encourage people at risk to avail of these measures and the Tenancy Protection Service (if in Dublin or Cork city) including the issue of text messages to circa 50,000 rent supplement recipients; updating messages on the Department's website and monthly tweeting of information; and updating the Citizens Information homepage and their micro site "keepingyourhome.ie". A national poster campaign was also launched with posters distributed locally to Department offices, Post Offices, libraries, credit unions, etc.

I believe that these measures - and the reforms to the private rental sector announced last month - will continue to provide adequate support to rent supplement customers and will provide increased certainty for both tenants and landlords in the current market.

Table 1: Number of Rent Supplement Recipients by County, 2011 to date

County	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015 End Nov
Louth	2,734	2,549	2,422	2,211	1,508
Meath	2,723	2,143	1,941	1,726	1,538

Table 2: Rent Supplement Expenditure: 2011 to date

Year	Cost €000
2011	502,747
2012	422,536

Year	Cost €000
2013	372,909
2014	338,347
2015	298,415 1

1 Revised 2015 Expenditure

Table 2: Total Increased Rental Payments by County under Rent Supplement at 07/12//2015

County	Awards under National Tenancy Sustainability Framework	Awards under protocol with Threshold	Total no. of increased payments by County
Carlow	21		21
Cavan	13		13
Clare	60		60
Cork	204	68	272
Donegal	-		-
Dublin	2,058	1,588	3,646
Galway	101		101
Kerry	18		18
Kildare	189		189
Kilkenny	110		110
Laois	97		97
Leitrim	44		44
Limerick	7		7
Longford	90		90
Louth	71		71
Mayo	3		3
Meath	235		235
Monaghan	1		1
Offaly	49		49
Roscommon	12		12
Sligo	-		-
Tipperary	165		165
Waterford	26		26
Westmeath	89		89
Wexford	7		7
Wicklow	82		82
Total	3,752	1,656	5,408

Supplementary Welfare Allowance Payments

47. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if community welfare offices in County Louth have the capacity to assist persons with meeting the cost of deposits for accommodation within the remit of the exceptional needs payment scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44457/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Kevin Humphreys):

Under the supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) scheme, the Department may make a single exceptional needs payment (ENP) to help meet essential, once-off and unforeseen expenditure which a person could not reasonably be expected to meet out of their weekly income. The Government has provided €27.9m for exceptional and urgent needs payments in 2015.

An ENP is a means tested payment payable at the discretion of the officers administering the scheme taking into account the requirements of the legislation and all the relevant circumstances of the case in order to ensure that the payments target those most in need of assistance. Assistance through ENPs may be provided towards rent deposits. The Department has agreed to provide assistance for rent deposits in respect of Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) tenancies pending the introduction of a deposit protection scheme. This form of assistance is very important to those on low incomes who are at risk of, or who are homeless, or who rely on the private rented market to meet their housing needs.

The Department made over 2,300 payments of rent deposits/rent in advance to the end of November 2015, costing approximately €1.3 million. This includes the payment of 40 rent deposits in County Louth.

Any persons who consider that they have an entitlement to an ENP under the SWA scheme should contact the Department. *Questions Nos. 48 and 49 answered with Question No. 44.*

Question No. 50 withdrawn.

Back to Education Allowance Appeals

51. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection when she will make a decision on a review for a person (details supplied) in County Louth under the back to education allowance scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44486/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Following a review of the individual's application for Back to Education Allowance, a decision to award this payment has now been made.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

52. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will review further medical evidence in support 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. [44497/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer on 26 November 2015. The Appeals Officer will consider all of the documentary evidence presented and may determine the appeal on a summary basis, or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

53. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if there is a mechanism available whereby a person who was on community employment and then signed on for credits for six months before receiving a jobseeker's allowance can receive the Christmas bonus; if there is an appeals mechanism or other options available to persons in such situations; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44511/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): On Budget Day, I was pleased to announce a 75% Christmas Bonus paid to over 1.2 million long-term social welfare recipients, such as pensioners, people with disabilities, carers, and long-term jobseekers.

The bonus is payable to jobseekers who have been in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) for a duration of 15 months (390 days) in recognition of their being wholly or mostly financially dependent on their social welfare payment for income. Time in receipt of Jobseeker's Benefit (JB) is included in the calculations of duration.

Normally a participant on a CE scheme has previously been in receipt of JA. When the CE scheme ceases the person may be eligible to claim either JB or JA. If JA is claimed, eligibility for the Christmas Bonus is determined by the total duration of their JA claim immediately before the CE scheme and their current claim. However, this does not apply in the case where someone has been signing for credits only for a period after the cessation of the CE scheme.

If the Deputy wishes to supply further details of an individual case, this will be examined by my officials.

Social Welfare Payments Administration

54. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of the Christmas bonus (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44516/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): On Budget Day, I was pleased to announce that a 75% Christmas Bonus would be paid to over 1.2 million long-term social welfare recipients, such as pensioners, people with disabilities, carers and long-term jobseekers. The bonus has never been paid to short-term jobseekers, and this arrangement continues to apply this year.

The Live Register is made up of recipients of Jobseeker's Allowance, Jobseeker's Benefit, and people signing for credits. The bonus is paid to long-term jobseekers who have been in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance for a minimum of 15 months (390 days), in recognition of their being wholly or mostly financially dependent on their social welfare payment for income. It should be noted that time in receipt of Jobseeker's Benefit is taken into account when calculating this duration.

Questions Nos. 55 and 56 withdrawn.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

57. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the number of applications for reinstatement, following retirement on grounds of ill-health, with prior notice granted since 2004; the legislation, rules and procedures under which they were granted; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44563/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): No applications for reinstatement, following retirement on grounds of ill-health, have been granted in my Department in the period since 2004.

Any applications received for reinstatement following retirement on grounds of ill-health are dealt with in accordance with section 11.4 of the Superannuation Handbook for the Civil Service, which contains two conditions which need to be fulfilled with regard to a recall for duty in cases of ill-health retirement – that a person would have to be fit for work; and would also have to be required to return.

Rent Supplement Scheme Applications

58. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection when an increase in rent support in line with increased rent will be made available to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44588/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I refer the Deputy to Parliamentary Questions No. 194 of 29 September 2015 and No. 62 of 12 November 2015. The client concerned has not, to date, provided the required documentation outlined in response to the previous Parliamentary Questions.

Rent Supplement Scheme Applications

59. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection notwithstanding the reply to previous parliamentary questions and the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare, if other options are available to meet the person's rent increase; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44596/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department is unable to determine eligibility to Rent Supplement prior to receipt of a complete application to the Mid-Leinster Rent Unit, PO Box 11758, Dublin 24.

Jobseeker's Benefit Payments

60. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if a payment under the jobseeker's scheme will be restored to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44601/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): In early November the person concerned advised his local office that he had commenced casual work. He was requested to provide documentation so that his means can be re-assessed having regard to his new circumstances which, to date, he has not provided. A further request for this documentation issued to the person concerned on 8 December and his claim will remain suspended pending receipt of this information.

Rent Supplement Scheme Eligibility

61. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the

entitlement to partial rent support of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; if efforts will be made to ensure that the person's position is not detrimentally affected in the approach to the festive season; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44602/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): As detailed to the Deputy in reply to Parliamentary Question No. 46 of 19 November 2015, Rent Supplement is not payable where a person or their spouse/partner is in full-time employment. The client concerned was requested to submit to the Department an up to date Rent Supplement application form, lease agreement confirming any increase in their monthly rent and current payslips in order for their rate of Rent Supplement entitlement to be re-assessed. This documentation has not, to date, been received by the Department. The client has been advised that this claim will be closed if the outstanding information has not been received by the 21 December 2015.

Rent Supplement Scheme Applications

62. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if and when rent support will be approved for a person (details supplied) in County Meath; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44607/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Rent Supplement claim for the client concerned was awarded on 26 November 2015.

Carer's Allowance Applications

63. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the steps she will take to have an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath immediately dealt with; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44628/15]

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 22 September 2015. The application is currently being processed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Back to Work Family Dividend Scheme Data

64. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the number of persons who have availed of the back to work dividend scheme since it was introduced; how this compares to the numbers expected; her plans to review the scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44649/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The back to work family dividend (BTWFD) was introduced in Budget 2015 when it was estimated that the average weekly number of recipients in that year would be 9,700. By the end of November 2015 there have been just over 10,500 applicants for BTWFD with over 10,000 of those currently in receipt of a payment. Through these payments the dividend is providing support in respect of over 17,000 children.

The back to work family dividend aims to help families to move from a weekly social welfare payment into employment. It gives financial support to people with children who were in

receipt of a jobseeker or one-parent family payment and who take up employment, increase their hours of employment or become self-employed.

If a person qualifies for the dividend for their first year in employment they will get a weekly payment equivalent to the increases for qualified children they were being paid on their jobseeker or one-parent family payment. This is up to a maximum of 4 children. Half that weekly amount will be paid for the second year in employment. This means that over the two years, a family with one child will receive additional support of €2,324 to supplement wages. A family with two children will receive €4,649; those with three children will get €6,973, while those with four or more will get €9,298.

My officials are constantly monitoring take up of the scheme and seeking ways to improve awareness of the dividend among jobseekers. My Department has given an undertaking to formally review the operation and effectiveness of the dividend by the end of 2017.

Question No. 65 withdrawn.

NAMA Social Housing Provision

66. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Finance given the current housing crisis, why social housing comprises only 10% of the housing stock to be delivered by the National Asset Management Agency; if this conflicts with recent commitments to increase the supply of social housing and given the agency's capacity to supply housing stock, if he will task it to increase this percentage as a matter of urgency. [44443/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I must first point out to the Deputy that NAMA does not directly deliver housing. In cases where residential development is commercially viable, NAMA funds such development in order that its debtors and receivers can maximise their repayment of debt and deliver a surplus to taxpayers. I am advised that, as part of any NAMA-funded residential development, NAMA debtors and receivers will abide by their Part V obligation to deliver 10% of the stock as social housing.

It is neither equitable nor feasible to impose different social housing obligations on developers, based purely on their sources of development finance. To impose on a NAMA debtor a higher obligation to deliver social housing than is imposed, for instance, on a developer who is funded by a bank or who has access to other sources of finance, would be arbitrary and discriminatory. From the perspective of a NAMA debtor, their capacity to redeem their debt is a primary consideration and imposing additional obligations over and above the obligations that are imposed on a debtor outside NAMA would reduce their capacity to repay their debt.

As I recently pointed out in Parliamentary Question 171 of 8 December 2015, 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.

Furthermore, NAMA has 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.

The core housing issue we face is that of insufficient supply of housing generally, which impacts the supply of social housing, starter homes and all other categories of housing, particularly in the greater Dublin area. Any contribution to the overall supply of housing will therefore have a positive impact for housing across all categories. Therefore, NAMA's contribution to the housing market and by association social housing is timely and welcome.

NAMA's commercial funding programme, being an independent and commercial initiative, does not contradict or lessen the Government's commitment to deliver on our Social Housing 2020 strategy. 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 and I can assure the Deputy that NAMA's residential funding programme are complementary to, rather than in lieu of, the Government's commitments.

Tax Credits

67. Deputy Lucinda Creighton asked the Minister for Finance the estimated annual cost to the Exchequer of extending the existing PAYE tax credit of €1,650 to all individuals who currently pay income tax as self-employed persons. [44462/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy's question refers to the payment of tax as a self-employed person, it is assumed that the Deputy is interested in the additional cost of increasing the Earned Income Credit (EIC) introduced in Budget 2016, from the €550 to €1,650, the level of the existing PAYE tax credit. The Earned Income Credit is available to taxpayers with active self-employed trading or professional income, and to business owner/managers who do not have access to the PAYE credit on salary income from their business. On this basis I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the estimated total first and full year costs of such proposals would be in the order of €37 million and €123 million respectively.

These figures are estimates using data for 2013, the latest year for which data are available.

It should also be noted that this estimate does not take into account the fact that very low taxable incomes may not be able to fully utilise the tax credit. It also assumes that the maximum Earned Income and PAYE credit value claimable by a taxpayer with both employment and self-employment income would be €1,650.

Tax Data

68. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Finance the number of instances and transactions in which capital acquisitions tax and in which inheritance tax was payable and the value to the Exchequer of each of these taxes in 2014; and the yearly cost to the Exchequer of increasing the threshold above which inheritance tax applies from €280,000 to €500,000. [44463/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the number of instances in which Capital Acquisitions Tax was payable in 2014 was 12,752. Of these, 11,370 were for Inheritance Tax, while the numbers paying other Capital Acquisitions Tax (primarily gift tax and discretionary trust tax) was 1,382. These figures are provisional.

General information pertaining to Capital Acquisitions tax net receipts is available on the Revenue statistical web page at <http://www.revenue.ie/en/about/statistics/index.html>. In particular, in relation to the Deputy's Question, a breakdown showing annual net receipts for Capital Acquisitions Tax including 2014 is available at <http://www.revenue.ie/en/about/statistics/cat-receipts.pdf>. Future updates will be provided in due course.

The cost in a full year of increasing the category A threshold from €280,000 to €500,000, without changes to the other thresholds, would be approximately €74 million.

Tax Relief Data

69. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Finance the tax reliefs relating to property, the number of persons availing of each relief and the total cost to the Exchequer of each relief in the most recent tax year. [44467/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that within the tax code there are a significant range of tax reliefs associated with property. All reliefs, including property related reliefs, are a cost to the Exchequer. I propose to provide an analysis of the property reliefs under each Tax and Duty heading. Unless otherwise stated the figures relate to the year 2013.

Income Tax/Corporation Tax Reliefs

The following table is a list of the property based incentive schemes qualifying for capital allowances. It should be noted some of these figures are provisional. While the majority of these schemes have been terminated (capital allowances have been retained for expenditure on hotels, holiday camps, holiday hostels, guest house and registered caravan and camping sites at a rate of 4% per annum over 25 years), tax relief may continue to be claimed on expenditure incurred prior to the termination date in question.

Scheme	Number of Claimants	Tax Cost - €m
Urban Renewal	2,664	46.0

Scheme	Number of Claimants	Tax Cost - €m
Town Renewal	749	10.9
Seaside Resort	286	2.3
Rural Renewal	2,198	18.5
Multi-storey car parks	57	3.0
Living Over the Shop	41	0.6
Student Accommodation	537	11.9
Enterprise Areas	105	1.9
Park and Ride	17	0.7
Hotels	1,017	35.5
Holiday Cottages	574	11.0
Holiday Hostels	*	*
Guest Houses	*	*
Nursing Homes	418	10.9
Housing for the Elderly/ Infirm	100	1.4
Convalescent Homes	12	0.5
Qualifying Hospitals	357	9.2
Qualifying Mental Health Centres	*	*
Qualifying Sports Injury Clinics	82	1.4
Buildings used for certain Childcare Purposes	304	4.4
Buildings or structures in registered Caravan camp; Camping sites	*	*
Mid-Shannon Corridor Tour- ism Infrastructure Invest- ment Scheme	*	*

* indicates that the number of claimants is low (usually less than 10) and cannot be provided to protect taxpayer confidentiality.

As statistics were not captured separately for Third Level Educational Buildings and the Countrywide Refurbishment Scheme (both now terminated) these have not been included. Also not included are the ordinary industrial buildings (e.g., mill/factory and airport runways/buildings) as statistics are not captured separately for these either.

The Living City Initiative and incentives for certain Aviation Services Facilities were commenced in 2015. The earliest point at which statistics for the number of persons availing of these reliefs and the total cost to the Exchequer may become available is when tax returns for 2015 have been filed.

Home Renovation Incentive (HRI)

This scheme provides a tax relief by way of an income tax credit on repair, renovation or improvement works on principal private residences or rental property carried out by tax compliant contractors. In addition to providing an income tax relief, the HRI also aims to support tax compliance in the building industry by moving activity out of the shadow economy into the legitimate economy.

The year 2014 was the first full year in which the incentive operated. The incentive came into operation on 25 October 2013 and will run until 31 December 2016. Rental properties were brought within the scheme from 15 October 2014.

Since the introduction of the incentive, works on 31,719 properties have been notified to Revenue's HRI online system (as of 30 November 2015). This represents more than €695 million worth of works involving some 6,705 contractors. The potential total cost to the Exchequer in respect of these properties is approximately €47m. As a claim for the HRI credit can only be made in the year after works have been paid for, there was no cost to the Exchequer in 2014 (works paid for in the period from 25 October 2013 to 31 December 2013 were deemed to have been paid for in 2014).

Additional Income Tax Reliefs

Other property based reliefs include interest relief on loans to acquire a principal private residence (PPR) (terminated for any new cases after 31 December 2012 interest relief for PPRs purchased between 2004 and 2012 will continue until end 2017), relief for rental payments on private tenancies (terminated for any new cases after 7 December 2010 - Individuals who were in receipt of the relief at 7 December 2010 may continue to claim it until 2017) the rent-a-room relief and relief for expenditure on significant buildings or gardens. The cost of the reliefs and the number claiming the relief are set out on the following table:

Year	No.	Amount
Year 2014	Number of claimants	Cost - €m
Mortgage interest relief for PPRs	495,000	266.0
Year 2013	Number of claimants	Cost - €m
Rent-a-room relief	4,370	5.9
Expenditure on significant buildings or gardens	120	2.1

Capital Gains Tax Reliefs

For the purpose of capital gains tax there are three significant property based reliefs, the property purchase incentive, the Principal Private Residence relief and the farm restructuring relief.

The property purchase incentive relief was introduced in the Finance Act 2012. The relief applies to properties purchased between 7 December 2011 and 31 December 2014. For the relief to apply, the property must be owned for a period of at least 7 years. The rationale for the relief was to encourage investment in Irish property at a time when the property market was at a low ebb.

The Principal Private Residence Relief is available for individuals disposing of a house which was occupied by them as their only or main residence. The rationale for the relief is to ensure that the sale of a house, which will generally be replaced with another house, can be done on a tax-neutral basis.

Farm restructuring relief was introduced in the Finance Act 2013. The rationale for the relief is to facilitate the consolidation of land holdings, thereby increasing the productivity of those land holdings.

There is no statistical information available to the numbers availing of the Principal Private

Residence relief and the farm restructuring relief or their cost to the Exchequer. The property purchase incentive had no cost to the Exchequer in the past full year since the entitlement to avail of the relief will not arise until a future point in time.

Capital Acquisitions Tax

The property based reliefs available for the purposes of capital acquisitions tax are set out on the following table. Costs and numbers availing relate to 2014.

Relief	Rationale for relief
Reduction of 90% in market value of agricultural property	To encourage entrepreneurial activity and the inter-generational transfer of business.
Reduction of 90% in market value of business property	To encourage entrepreneurial activity and the inter-generational transfer of business.
Exemption from CAT on the inheritance or gift of a residential property where the beneficiary has lived in the property as a sole or main residence for a specified period both before and after the inheritance/gift.	To prevent hardship for home-sharers.
Spouses and civil partners	Gifts and inheritances of property between spouses and civil partners are exempt from CAT.
Public or charitable purposes	To exempt from CAT gifts/inheritances of property where the property is applied for purposes that are public or charitable.
Heritage properties	To exempt from CAT gifts/inheritances of houses/gardens that are of national, historic or artistic interest and where there are reasonable viewing facilities offered to the public.

N/A indicates that the figures are not available.

Valued Added Tax

The VAT Consolidation Act 2010 provides for the making of Orders whereby VAT that has been paid may be refunded in certain circumstances. Three Refund Orders provide for the possibility of recovering VAT associated with property.

- VAT Refund Order (No. 15) of 1981 allows for certain construction costs incurred in the adaptation of a house for certain qualifying disabled persons. The Order does not allow for the initial construction cost of a house.

- Refund Order (No. 29) of 1996 allows for VAT refunds/remission for qualifying accredited diplomatic personnel who purchase property for use as embassies/consulates and also for use as their principal private residences.

- SI 201 of 2012 provides for refunds of VAT for farmers on the construction, extension, alteration or reconstruction of farm buildings which are used solely or mainly in the farming business.

Each of the Refund Orders provides for relief for a number of areas of expenditure, including the property costs, so it is not possible to provide the cost to the Exchequer that relates solely to the property costs.

Local Property Tax

In relation to LPT the following table sets out the exemptions and reliefs available.

LPT exemptions	Rationale for exemption
Properties fully subject to commercial rates	To provide relief for owners of properties that may be fully liable for both LPT and commercial rates charged by a local authority.
Long term mental or physical infirmity	To provide relief for owners of properties who are unable to continue living in their property because of a long-term mental or physical infirmity and where those properties are vacant. An exemption is also available for nursing homes that are used exclusively for the care of such persons.
Owned and sold by builders and developers	To provide relief for builders and developers who have built properties with the intention of selling them but that were not yet sold or rented out or occupied as a residence at the time of the first liability date of 1 May 2013. In the event of a sale before the next liability date of 1 November 2016, the exemption continues to be available for the purchasers of such properties.
Special needs accommodation	To provide relief for charitable and social housing bodies who own properties that are made available to persons who require special accommodation and support to enable them to live in the community because of old age, physical or mental infirmity or other reason.
Recreational activities	To provide relief for charitable bodies who own properties that are used solely as residential accommodation to facilitate recreational activities in the course of carrying out the body's main purpose.
Purchases in 2013	To provide relief, following the termination of mortgage interest relief, for persons who purchased properties during 2013 and who occupy the properties as their sole or main residence.
Unfinished housing estates	To provide relief, as had been done in relation to the Household Charge, to owners of properties that were located in housing estates that were certified as 'unfinished' by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government.

LPT exemptions	Rationale for exemption
Pyrite damage	To provide relief to owners of properties that have been appropriately certified as having been damaged to a significant extent by pyrite.
Incapacitated persons	To provide relief for owners of properties that have been acquired or adapted because of their suitability, or to make them suitable, for occupation by persons who are totally and permanently incapacitated from maintaining themselves by earning a living from working and whose condition dictates the type of property they can live in.
Reduced chargeable value of property	Rationale for reduction in chargeable value
Property adapted for occupation by certain disabled persons	To provide relief for owners of properties who have had to incur expenditure on construction or adaptation work to make the properties suitable for occupation by certain disabled persons where the work has the effect of increasing the value of the properties so that they move into a higher LPT valuation band with a higher tax liability.
Deferral of payment of LPT	Rationale for deferral
Income threshold	To provide relief for persons whose annual income does not exceed a specified threshold by allowing them to defer payment of either the full or partial LPT liability until their circumstances improve or their property ceases to be owned by them.
Estate of deceased person	To provide relief for executors and administrators of a deceased person's estate to give them an opportunity to transfer ownership of any residential property to a beneficiary or to sell the property and distribute the proceeds of sale.
Insolvency	To provide relief for persons who have entered into certain formalised insolvency arrangements for the management of their debts until such time as the arrangements cease to have effect.
Hardship	To provide relief for persons who suffer a significant financial loss or incur a significant expense that is unexpected and unavoidable and as a result of which are unable to pay their LPT liability.

In relation to the LPT exemptions, I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the cost to the Exchequer for 2014, the most recent year available, is estimated to be €12 million in total. Exemptions have been claimed for around 41,000 properties. LPT deferrals have resulted in delayed LPT receipts estimated at €7 million in 2014. Claims for deferral have been made in respect of around 27,000 properties for 2014. I am further advised that costs for individual

exemptions or deferrals are not available at this time.

Stamp Duty

Finally, the following table sets out the relief or exemption from stamp duty for transactions associated with property. Costs and numbers refer to 2014 data.

Stamp Duties Consolidation Act 1999 Exemptions and reliefs from stamp duty:

Section	Relief	Rationale for relief
Section 79	Associated companies	Exemption from stamp duty is available where property is transferred between companies with a significant degree of common ownership
Section 81AA	Young trained farmers	Exemption from stamp duty is available to encourage the early transfer of farmland to young farmers with approved educational qualifications.
Section 82	Charitable bodies	Exemption from stamp duty is available where property is transferred or leased to a charitable body.
Section 82B	Approved sports bodies	Exemption from stamp duty is available where land is transferred to an approved sports body where the land is used for the sole purpose of promoting athletic or amateur games or sports.
Section 82C	Pension schemes and charitable bodies	Exemption from stamp duty is available where property is transferred by pension schemes and charitable bodies
Section 93	Industrial and provident societies	Exemption from stamp duty is available where a house is transferred or leased by a registered industrial and provident society to a member of the society for the purpose of providing housing for members of the society.
Section 93A	Approved voluntary body	Exemption from stamp duty is available where land is transferred or leased to a voluntary body for the purpose of providing social housing.
Section 94	Land Commission	Exemption from stamp duty is available where land is purchased from the Land Commission
Section 95	Commercial woodlands	Partial relief from stamp duty is available to encourage the sale or lease of land on which trees have been planted as a commercial undertaking.
Section 96	Spouses and civil partners	Exemption from stamp duty is available where property is transferred between spouses and civil partners.

Section	Relief	Rationale for relief
Section 97	Dissolution of a marriage	Exemption from stamp duty is available where property is transferred on foot of a court order between divorced spouses and between civil partners where the civil partnership has been dissolved or annulled
Section 97A	Cohabitants	Exemption from stamp duty is available where property is transferred on foot of a court order from one cohabitant to his or her cohabitant.
Section 98	Foreign property	Exemption from stamp duty is available in respect of transfers of property that is situated outside the State.
Section 99	Dublin Docklands Development Authority	To encourage development in the docklands area of Dublin, exemption from stamp duty is available where land is acquired by the Dublin Docklands Development Authority
Section 99A	Courts service	Exemption from stamp duty is available where land is acquired by the Courts Service.
Section 100	Temple Bar Properties Limited	To encourage development in the Temple Bar area of Dublin, exemption from stamp duty is available where land is acquired or leased by Temple Bar Properties
Section 103	Shared ownership leases	Exemption from stamp duty is available to assist those on low incomes to purchase their own homes under a shared ownership lease.
Section 106A	National Building Agency Limited	Exemption from stamp duty is available where land is transferred or leased to the National Building Agency Limited for social housing purposes
Section 106B	Housing authorities and Affordable Homes Partnership	The stamp duty charge is capped at €100 where property is transferred or leased to certain social housing bodies.
Section 106C	Grangegorman Development Agency	To encourage development at Grangegorman, exemption from stamp duty is available where land is acquired or leased by the Grangegorman Development Agency
Section 108AA	Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland	Exemption from stamp duty is available where property is transferred or leased to the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland which was established by the Minister for Finance to improve the supply of funds to SME's.
Section 108B	National Asset Management Agency	Exemption from stamp duty is available where property is transferred or leased to the National Asset Management Agency

Section	Relief	Rationale for relief
Section 108C	Ireland Strategic Investment Fund	Exemption from stamp duty is available where property is transferred or leased to a Fund Investment Vehicle under the control of the NTMA
Schedule 1	Consanguinity relief	A 50% reduction in the rate of stamp duty encourages early transfers of farmland to certain relatives who will actively carry on farming activities.

N/A indicates that the figures are not available.

* indicates that the number of claimants is low (usually less than 10) and cannot be provided to protect taxpayer confidentiality.

Tax Rebates

70. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Finance if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare is due a refund on tax paid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44508/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by Revenue that based on the information available, the person concerned is not due a refund of tax. However Revenue will make arrangements to contact the individual to confirm this information is fully reflective of their circumstances.

Property Tax Data

71. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of property tax paid in County Louth for each of the years 2014 to date; the proportion that was spent in County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44526/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that statistics relating to Local Property Tax (LPT) can be found on the statistics web page of the Revenue website at <http://www.revenue.ie/en/about/statistics/index.html>.

Specifically, the available LPT information, including amount collected by Local Authority, is available at <http://www.revenue.ie/en/about/statistics/lpt-compliance.html>. Updates will be published in due course.

NAMA Social Housing Provision

72. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Finance the arrangements under which the National Asset Residential Property Services Limited, the National Asset Management Agency social housing special purpose vehicle, will directly lease properties to local authorities in order to fulfil its Part V obligation, associated with its construction of the private housing units announcement; if, in the leasing of these units, the National Asset Residential Property Services Limited will have a commercial mandate to lease the units at market rates or if the units will be leased at below market rates; whether the National Asset Management Agency has any statutory duty to fulfil a Part V obligation, when constructing housing developments; and whether the National Management Asset Management Agency's construction of social housing units is

based on agreement with the Departments involved. [44546/15]

73. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Finance the arrangements under which National Asset Residential Property Services Limited, the National Asset Management Agency's social housing special purpose vehicle, will retain ownership of the housing units to be leased to local authorities for social housing provision; whether the National Asset Residential Property Services Ltd vehicle will have to remain in operation and existence indefinitely, as the lease-holder on these social housing units, or whether it is due to cease existence at the same time as the National Asset Management Agency; if it is to be wound up with the National Asset Management Agency, the arrangements in place for disposing of its social housing units; if it is to dispose of the units, if it will have to sell them at market rates; and if these units will have to be sold to local authorities or if they can be put on the open market. [44548/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 72 and 73 together.

The Deputy rightly identifies increased social housing provision as a priority for the 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.

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. Section 10 of the NAMA Act requires NAMA to in all instances 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. NAMA must act akin to a private sector commercial entity in this respect.

NAMA is not a property developer. NAMA's role in relation to new housing output is, like a bank, that of a secured lender which makes a commercial decision to advance funding to maximise its return. As a secured lender, NAMA provides funding to its debtors and receivers where it is shown that this will increase the overall recovery for NAMA from the security being funded. Residential projects funded by NAMA are delivered by NAMA's debtors and receivers who are subject to the same planning requirements as all other applicants in the planning process, including Part V legislation which requires the provision of 10% of their housing units for social housing.

Government recently amended Part V to remove the ability of developers to account for their social housing commitments through cash payments to local authorities and furthermore to ensure that the social housing will be located predominantly on the site of the original developments, not off-site as had been a feature of Part V since its introduction. NAMA debtors and receivers will fulfil their Part V obligation to deliver 10% of residential units in the form of on-site social housing units.

NAMA has stated publicly its intention to facilitate, where feasible, the provision by its debtors and receivers of future Part V housing on NAMA-funded developments through its social housing SPV, NARPS. This is a very important initiative, which means that NAMA, as opposed to the relevant local authority, will, in many cases, bear the up-front capital cost of delivering Part V housing on estates it funds and that such housing will, in line with Government policy be aimed at ensuring greater integration in housing, be delivered on-site.

Any delivery via NARPS, through Part V or otherwise, must be on a commercial basis in line with Section 10 of the NAMA Act. In this regard, NARPS leases properties to either local authorities or approved housing bodies on the basis of commercial long-term lease arrangements which include an option for the local authority or approved housing body to buy the leased unit.

Part V agreements are facilitated through the Planning Process and the design and planning specification of new houses and apartments are determined in the planning consent by reference to national and local policy and standards. NAMA does not own properties, is not a developer and NAMA is not a planning applicant in any instance so NAMA is not a direct party in the planning process, so while it may facilitate development, NAMA does not negotiate housing specification with local authorities as this is a reserved function of the planning process.

NAMA has already played a very important role in facilitating on a commercial basis the supply of houses and apartments from within its existing portfolio for social housing. 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 under this initiative and NARPS, alongside the direct leasing or sale by NAMA debtors and receivers, is an important mechanism in ensuring this supply. Properties are leased by NARPS to approved housing bodies on the basis of long-term leasing arrangements. The NARPS lease provides, typically, for up to an average 20% discount to market rents, with the rent fixed for the first six years, and reviewed every three years thereafter, and includes an option for the approved housing body to purchase the property outright after a number of years at market value. The discount reflects the fact that the local authority and/or approved housing body take full responsibility for property maintenance and repairs over the lifetime of the lease. NAMA expects to have delivered close to 800 units out of end-2015 figure of 2,000 through the NARPS mechanism.

The 2,000 units that will be delivered by NAMA from within its existing portfolio by the end of this year for social housing equates to more than one-third of total social housing provision under Part V in the years between 2002 and 2011. This underlines the important contribution that NAMA has already made in this area. It should also be noted that NAMA originally made over 6,500 houses and apartments from within its existing portfolio available for social housing under this commercial initiative but local authorities confirmed demand for just over 2,500 of these.

Decisions relating to the disposal of the social housing portfolio leased by NARPS or to the possible dissolution of NARPS will be a matter for the NAMA Board to make at the appropriate time in the future. However, possible options could include selling the SPV at market value as part of NAMA's ongoing de-leveraging, in which case a market participant would keep the long term lease arrangements with local authorities in place, or allowing local authorities to buy the properties from NAMA.

While there may be commercially attractive opportunities in the social housing sector, any such opportunities are based upon the current social housing delivery model of direct Exchequer subvention. As previously stated, NAMA cannot provide that subvention.

It is clear however that the social housing supply problem is a subset of the wider supply problem in the property market and NAMA's funding commitment in terms of commercially viable residential output will be part of the overall housing solution, although it can only be part of the solution.

Looking at the private market, NAMA debtors and receivers control only about 30% of zoned residential sites in the Dublin area and accordingly, market participants who control the other 70% of the sites also have a major role to play if the supply/demand imbalance is to be

addressed in the years ahead.

The 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.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

74. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of applications for re-instatement, following retirement on grounds of ill health, with prior notice granted since 2004; the legislation and rules or procedures under which they were granted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44558/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy is aware there is no provision in the legislation to allow for the reinstatement to the Civil Service of a former civil servant other than by way of competition.

I wish to advise the Deputy, therefore, that no applications for re-instatement, following retirement on grounds of ill-health, with prior notice, have been granted by my Department since 2004.

Where an officer retires on grounds of ill-health the procedures are set out in Circular 22/07, titled, Ill-Health Retirement from the Civil Service. There is no provision under Circular 22/07 whereby a person who has retired with prior notification on ill health grounds may initiate an application for reinstatement

Persons wishing to re-join the Civil Service must compete in the normal recruitment process i.e. through an open recruitment competition run by the Public Appointments Service or the Top Level Appointments Committee, or via such other competitions that may be run, under licence, by individual Civil Service Departments or Offices.

Property Tax Administration

75. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the basis on which it is concluded that a person (details supplied) in County Longford is a property owner, given that the person is not; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44599/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by Revenue that the person to whom the Deputy refers is not listed as the 'liable person' for the property in question or for any other property in respect of Local Property Tax (LPT).

Revenue has also confirmed to me that the person was never issued with any correspondence or compliance/payment notifications in regard to LPT.

It may be that the person misunderstood a general reference to LPT that was included in a recent customer service letter that issued to him in regard to 'MyAccount', which is Revenue's new secure online service.

National Treasury Management Agency Remuneration

76. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the salary band of each of the four members of the staff of the National Treasury Management Agency who received retention payments in 2014 and in 2015 as follows: €50,000 to €100,000, €100,001 to €150,000, €150,001 to €200,000, €200,001 to €250,000, €250,001 to €300,000, €300,000 plus; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44646/15]

77. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of agreements the National Treasury Management Agency has entered into with staff to make retention payments, in addition to the four payments already disclosed by him; the cost to the agency in entering into those agreements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44647/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 76 and 77 together.

The National Treasury Management Agency has now advised me that they made an additional retention payment of €10,000 which they had erroneously classified as a contract completion payment and was omitted from their response to PQ No. 94 of 3 December 2015. This means that performance-related payments and retention payments made in 2014 and in 2015 amounted to €136,500 and €199,200 respectively. I have arranged for the Dáil record to be amended accordingly.

The relevant salary band in respect of the retention payments is €50,000 to €100,000 (one employee) and €150,000 to €200,000 (three employees, one of whom received a retention payment in 2014 and 2015).

In respect of the retention payments disclosed, a total of €210,000 potentially remains to be paid if the employees in question remain in employment until specific dates in 2016 and 2017.

As previously set out in a response to Parliamentary Question 212 of 23 April 2013, in a limited number of cases where the NTMA employs staff with very marketable skills (particularly in the area of IT) on fixed-term contracts as opposed to permanent contracts, contract completion payments were made upon the expiry of the fixed-term contract in question. In 2014, a total of €53,208 was paid to 10 employees upon expiry of their fixed-term contracts while in 2015 a total of €81,956 was paid to 15 employees upon expiry of their fixed-term contracts. There are three such contract completion arrangements outstanding and a total of €196,250 potentially remains to be paid to the employees in question upon completion of their fixed-term contracts. No contract completion payments will be made to any of the three employees in question if they become a permanent employee.

The practice of entering into employment contracts providing for retention payments or contract completion payments has been discontinued. No retention arrangement has been entered into since mid 2014. None of the arrangements described above extend beyond 2017.

Banking Sector Remuneration

78. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of staff in the financial institutions covered by the bank guarantee that have received so-called retention payments in 2014 and 2015 and the amount paid in retention payments at each bank in 2014 and 2015, in tabular form; if prior approval was required or sought from him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44648/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Government's policy with respect to banking remuneration has been in place since mid-2011. In summary, remuneration in State

supported banks is capped at €500,000 (excluding normal pension entitlements) per individual and no form of bonus remuneration, whether performance based or retention, is allowed.

Officials in my Department have asked each of the banks to comment on the question asked by the Deputy and have received the following responses:

1) Allied Irish Banks: "AIB operates within the provisions of the State Agreements and retention payments are not a feature of our Remuneration Policy."

2) Bank of Ireland: "Publicly available information in relation to staffing remuneration is available in Bank of Ireland's Annual Reports and Pillar 3 Disclosures, all available on the Bank's website.

"3) Permanent TSB: "Permanent TSB does not pay retention payments to staff."

Banking Sector Remuneration

79. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the payment of bonuses or other retention payments at Permanent TSB; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44650/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): This Government's policy with respect to banking remuneration has been in place since mid-2011. In summary, remuneration in State supported banks is capped at €500,000 (excluding normal pension entitlements) and no form of remuneration with any variable pay component(s), whether performance based or otherwise or bonus payments are awarded or paid.

Since July 2011 Permanent TSB has had to comply with these restrictions on remuneration. I have been informed by Permanent TSB that it continues to abide by the terms of that agreement and does not pay bonuses or retention payments to staff.

The bank also confirms that a freeze on general pay increases has been in place since 2010. However, in a limited number of cases, it has agreed to match current market pay rates for individual staff members where it is clear that they are being paid below current market rates or they had taken on changed/new responsibilities and the bank will have to match current market rates to attract a replacement employee if the current employee decides to leave the bank.

Irish banks in which the State has a majority ownership position publish remuneration information on their websites. The figures provided for PTSB relate to the status at year end 2014 and are available at the following link: <http://www.permanenttsbgroup.ie/investors/reports-and-presentations/other-documents/2015.aspx>

State Banking Sector

80. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the valuation placed on the State's banking assets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44651/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As requested by the Deputy, the current valuation of the State's remaining investments in the banks is set out in the following table:

Bank/investment	€bn	Source of valuation
AIB - Equity/preference shares	€13.4bn	Equity valuation of €11.7bn as agreed between the Minister and AIB as part of the bank's capital reorganisation. In addition, the valuation includes €1.7bn representing the redemption of the remaining preference shares due to complete in the coming weeks.
AIB - CoCo	€1.6bn	At par
BOI - Equity	€1.5bn	Based on the Irish Stock Exchange closing price on 4 December 2015
PTSB	€1.5bn	Based on the Irish Stock Exchange closing price on 4 December 2015
Total current valuations	€18.0bn	

Departmental Staff Redeployment

81. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of employees who are on Civil Service redeployment panels by grade; if his Department is required to accept staff from redeployment panels before promoting staff internally, assigning existing staff to higher duties on an allowance basis, or recruiting new entrants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44514/15]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Public Service Agreements (the Croke Park and Haddington Road Agreements) provide for agreed redeployment arrangements to apply in the Civil Service and in other parts of the Public Service where there are surplus staff. A Department of Public Expenditure and Reform circular (Circular 8 of 2010) setting out the arrangements across the Civil Service and between the Civil Service and Non-Commercial State Sponsored Bodies issued in July 2010 and can be found at <http://hr.per.gov.ie/redeployment/>

I have been informed by the Public Appointments Service (PAS) that as of the end of October 2015 there are 26 Officers on the Redeployment Resource Panel, 11 civil servants and 15 from the NCSSB sector. The total number redeployed from the panel to date is 995.

Redeployment will generally take precedence over recruitment (including fixed term employees), transfers and promotions except in circumstances where special skills are required or where the post cannot otherwise be filled through redeployment arising from geographical or other constraints, or to meet essential manpower planning and business needs.

The Deputy will recall that at Budget time in October 2014 I also announced an end to the Moratorium on Recruitment and Promotion in the Public Service, to be replaced with new delegated management arrangements to be phased in during 2015 and 2016. These arrangements, which now apply to most Government Departments, give managers the means to respond to service needs as they arise, including considerable flexibility to make staffing and service level delivery decisions at the front line.

These new arrangements represent a significant shift away from the central control of the Moratorium and allow Departments greater management of their staffing resources.

The following table sets out the grades currently on the Resource Panel:

Civil Service Grades

Grades
Principal Officer - 1
Assistant Principal - 1
Engineer Grade II - 1 Principal Officer - 1
Higher Executive Officer -1 Assistant Principal - 1
Executive Officer - 2 Engineer Grade II - 1
Clerical Officer - 4 Higher Executive Officer -1
Cleaner - 1 Executive Officer -2
Clerical Officer - 4
NCSSB Grades Cleaner - 1
NCSSB
Snr Principal Scientific Officer - (Engineer) - 1 NCSSB Grades
Principal Officer - 1 Principal Officer - 1
Grade VIII - Manager - 1 Snr Principal Scientific Officer - (Engineer) - 1 Assistant Principal - 1
Assistant Principal Officer - 2 Principal Officer - 1 Engineer Grade II - 1 Principal Officer - 1
Senior Scientific Officer (Engineer) - 1 Grade VIII - Manager - 1 Higher Executive Officer -1 Assistant Principal - 1
Health & Safety Inspector (Eng Grade II) -1 Assistant Principal Officer - 2 Executive Officer -2 Engineer Grade II - 1
Shannon Development Executive 3 (E3) - 1 Senior Scientific Officer (Engineer) - 1 Clerical Officer - 4 Higher Executive Officer -1
Grade VII - Systems Analyst - 1 Health & Safety Inspector (Eng Grade II) -1 Cleaner - 1 Executive Officer -2
Level 3 A (HEO) - 1 Shannon Development Executive 3 (E3) - 1 Clerical Officer - 4
Level 3B (HEO equiv) - 1 Grade VII - Systems Analyst - 1 NCSSB Grades Cleaner - 1
Higher Executive Officer - 1 Level 3 A (HEO) - 1
Executive Officer - 1 Level 3B (HEO equiv) - 1 Snr Principal Scientific Officer - (Engineer) - 1 NCSSB Grades
Retail Manager - 1 Higher Executive Officer - 1 Principal Officer - 1
Clerical Officer - 1 Executive Officer - 1 Grade VIII - Manager - 1 Snr Principal Scientific Officer - (Engineer) - 1
Retail Manager - 1 Assistant Principal Officer - 2 Principal Officer - 1
Clerical Officer - 1 Senior Scientific Officer (Engineer) - 1 Grade VIII - Manager - 1
Health & Safety Inspector (Eng Grade II) -1 Assistant Principal Officer - 2
Shannon Development Executive 3 (E3) - 1 Senior Scientific Officer (Engineer) - 1
Grade VII - Systems Analyst - 1 Health & Safety Inspector (Eng Grade II) -1
Level 3 A (HEO) - 1 Shannon Development Executive 3 (E3) - 1
Level 3B (HEO equiv) - 1 Grade VII - Systems Analyst - 1
Higher Executive Officer - 1 Level 3 A (HEO) - 1

Grades
Executive Officer - 1 Level 3B (HEO equiv) - 1
Retail Manager - 1 Higher Executive Officer - 1
Clerical Officer - 1 Executive Officer - 1
Retail Manager - 1
Clerical Officer - 1

Public Sector Staff Recruitment

82. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of persons who have been placed on Civil Service panels arising from open competitions held in 2014 and 2015 to date by grade; the number appointed from open competitions by grade in each of the past six months; the estimated number of staff to be appointed by grade in the next six months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44515/15]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Public Appointments Service (PAS) is an independent, statutory body which provides professional recruitment and selection services to the civil service. It operates under the Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA) Codes of Practice in conducting its business.

Assignments to fill vacancies are made based on requests received from Departments. The service is demand led and therefore it is not possible to predict the number to be assigned over the next six months.

The following table sets out information in relation to Civil Service General Service recruitment conducted by the Public Appointments Service as requested.

Grade	Competition closed for applications	No. placed on panel	No. assigned/ recommended (to date)
Principal	March 2015	164	11
Assistant Principal	June 2015	90	Interviews recently concluded and reference checks, etc. currently being carried out. Assignments to commence shortly.
Graduate Recruitment (Administrative Officer & Graduate Economist)	October 2014	112	112 offered assignment. 93 accepted.
Graduate Recruitment 2015(AO; Graduate Economist; Trainee Auditor & Third Secretary)	October 2015		A new recruitment programme recently commenced and the selection process in currently in progress.
Executive Officer	January 2015	338	Assignments commenced September. 78 assigned to date. Assignments ongoing as requested.

Grade	Competition closed for applications	No. placed on panel	No. assigned/ recommended (to date)
Clerical Officer	July 2014	11,500 qualified at initial selection stage. From this group, those placed highest are invited through to subsequent selection stages on an ongoing basis, if required.	Total of 1,420 assigned to date. 817 of those within the last 6 months.
Temporary Clerical Officer 2014	March 2014	13,191 applications received.	Total Assigned 2,090
Temporary Clerical Officer 2015	March 2015	14,143 applications received	Assigned 1,740 (total to date)1,152 assigned within last 6 months.

Flood Relief Schemes

83. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will request the Office of Public Works to carry out remedial works to address flooding to the lands of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry, as the existing public water course river through the person's land is inadequate and this has already been examined as part of the Kenmare flood relief scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44522/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): The location in question does not form part of any Arterial Drainage Scheme falling under the remit of the Office of Public Works (OPW) and the OPW therefore has no responsibilities in this area.

Local flooding issues are a matter, in the first instance, for each local authority to investigate and address. Kerry County Council may carry out flood mitigation works using its own resources. The Council may also apply to the OPW for funding of flood mitigation works under the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme. This purpose of this scheme is to provide funding to local authorities to undertake minor works to address localised flooding and coastal protection problems within their administrative areas.

Kenmare town is an Area for Further Assessment (AFA) being assessed under the South Western Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Study, however, the location in question is not within the Kenmare AFA. Further information on the Study is available on www.southwestcfamstudy.ie

Flood Relief Schemes Status

84. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of planned flood relief schemes (details supplied) in County Cork including the commencement and completion dates for each scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44534/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Si-

mon Harris): In relation to the Clonakilty Flood Relief Scheme, a preferred scheme design option was presented at a statutory Public Exhibition which took place from 15 December 2014 to 20 January 2015. All the observations received from concerned parties have been answered. Detailed design of the scheme will commence shortly, which will be followed by a procurement process for a civil works contractor and the formal Confirmation of the Scheme by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform under the Arterial Drainage Acts. Subject to successful completion of the tender and Confirmation processes, it is hoped that construction will start in late 2016 or early 2017.

The position with regard to the Bandon Flood Relief Scheme is that the second stage of a tender competition for a civil works contractor is underway. Tender documentation has been issued to the short-listed candidates and tenders are due back in early January. The Scheme will shortly be submitted to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (PER) for formal Confirmation of the Scheme as required by the Arterial Drainage Acts. The Minister will be required to undertake an independent review of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to ensure that all legislative requirements have been complied with before the Scheme can be approved. It is planned that works will commence in the summer of 2016.

The Skibbereen Flood Relief Scheme has been submitted to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform for Confirmation and is also subject to an independent review of the EIS. Cork County Council is the Contracting Authority for the Skibbereen Scheme and the Council is progressing the process to procure a civil works contractor. Approval for the contractor appointment by the OPW as the sponsoring and funding agent must await the formal Confirmation of the Scheme by the Minister. It is hoped that this process will be completed in early 2016, which will allow construction of the Scheme to be commenced in mid-2016.

It is expected that the Clonakilty, Bandon and Skibbereen Schemes will take approximately 24-30 months to complete.

The Government remains fully committed to the provision of flood relief schemes for the people of Bandon, Skibbereen and Clonakilty and the OPW has made provision for the cost of implementing these schemes in its financial profiles over the years 2016-2018.

Flood Relief Schemes

85. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans for flood relief in Athleague village in County Roscommon; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44537/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): Athleague is an Area for Further Assessment (AFA) under the Shannon Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme and detailed flood risk assessment is being carried out by engineering consultants on behalf of the Office of Public Works in partnership with Roscommon County Council. Draft predictive flood maps, produced under the Study, were the subject of a Public Consultation event in Athleague on 17 September 2014. The draft maps are scheduled to be finalised following the national statutory consultation process, currently ongoing until 23 December, 2015. Details are available on the consultation website http://maps.opw.ie/flood_draftmap_consult/.

As part of the process, a further Public Consultation event on preliminary options to manage flood risk was due to be held in Athleague on 8 December 2015. However, due to flooding in the town, it will be rescheduled for a date in early 2016. Flood Risk Management Plans for

the Shannon CFRAM Study area are scheduled to be prepared during 2016. Data on the recent flooding in Athleague will be gathered by the Shannon CFRAM Study consultants and fully taken into account as part of work on the Study.

In 2010 funds were approved in the sum of €270,000 for works under the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme for a project in Athleague County Roscommon.

No further applications have been submitted by Roscommon County Council for works at Athleague. It remains open to the Council to apply for funding under the above scheme. Any application received will be assessed under the eligibility criteria, which include a requirement that any measures are cost beneficial, and having regard to the overall availability of funding.

Flood Relief Schemes

86. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans for flood relief in Roscommon town; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44538/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): Roscommon Town is an Area for Further Assessment (AFA) under the national Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme. A detailed flood risk assessment of Roscommon Town is being carried out by engineering consultants on behalf of the Office of Public Works (OPW) under the Shannon CFRAM Study, in partnership with Roscommon County Council.

Draft predictive flood maps have been produced and a Public Consultation event was held on them in Roscommon Town on 24 April, 2014. The draft maps are scheduled to be finalised following the national statutory consultation, currently on-going until 23 December, 2015. Books of draft maps are available to view at the Council's Offices and on http://maps.opw.ie/flood_draftmap_consult/. Furthermore, as part of the development of preliminary options to manage flood risk, a Public Consultation event was held in Roscommon Town on 8 December, 2015. In response to the recent flooding in the town, data will be gathered by the Shannon CFRAM consultants and taken account of as part of the option development stage of the Study. Flood Risk Management Plans for each CFRAM Study area are scheduled to be prepared during 2016.

Local flooding issues are a matter, in the first instance, for each local authority to investigate and address.

The Council may also apply to the OPW for funding of flood mitigation works under the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme. This purpose of this scheme is to provide funding to local authorities to undertake minor works to address localised flooding and coastal protection problems within their administrative areas. The scheme generally applies to relatively straightforward cases where a solution can be readily identified and achieved in a short time frame. Under the scheme, applications are considered for projects that are estimated to cost no more than €500,000 in each instance. Funding of up to 90% of the cost is available for approved projects, with the balance being funded by the local authority concerned. Any application received will be considered in accordance with the scheme eligibility criteria, including a requirement that any measures are cost beneficial, and having regard to the overall availability of resources for flood risk management. Since 2010 funding of €457,200 has been approved under the OPW's Minor Works and Coastal Protection Scheme for flood mitigation works on the River Jiggy in Roscommon Town.

Flood Relief Schemes

87. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans for flood relief in Ballinasloe town in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44539/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): Ballinasloe is an Area for Further Assessment (AFA) under the national Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme. A detailed flood risk assessment of Ballinasloe is being carried out by engineering consultants on behalf of the Office of Public Works (OPW) under the Shannon CFRAM Study, in partnership with Roscommon County Council.

Draft predictive flood maps have been produced and a Public Consultation event was held on the draft maps in Ballinasloe on 26 February, 2014. The draft maps are scheduled to be finalised following the national statutory consultation, currently on-going until 23 December, 2015. Books of draft maps are available to view at the Council's Offices and on http://maps.opw.ie/flood_draftmap_consult/. In response to the recent flooding in Ballinasloe, data will be gathered by the Shannon CFRAM consultants and taken account of as part of the option development stage of the Study. As part of the preliminary options development process, a Public Consultation event will be held in Ballinasloe early in 2016. Flood Risk Management Plans, which are scheduled for completion by the end of 2016, will include a prioritised list of measures, both structural and non-structural, to address flood risk in an environmentally sustainable and cost effective manner.

Very significant funding, totalling €1.9 million, has been approved from 2010 to date by the OPW to Galway County Council under the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme, in respect of flood mitigation works in Ballinasloe area.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

88. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of applications for reinstatement, following retirement on grounds of ill health, with prior notice granted since 2004; the legislation, rules and procedures under which they were granted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44561/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I can advise the Deputy that there have been no staff employed by my Department within the specified period who have been identified as having being previously retired on grounds of ill health.

Organic Farming Scheme Applications

89. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when the organic scheme will be open for new entrants in 2016. [44460/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The first tranche of the new Organic Farming Scheme attracted an unprecedented level of applications, with the result that we have already met virtually all our targets in this area for the entire Rural Development Programme. This is a remarkable outcome and testifies to the strength of the consultation process which has lead to the design of a scheme which seems to answer a great many of the needs of the sector. The second tranche of the Organic Farming Scheme is now open for

farmers who wish to convert to organic farming in 2016 and to organic farmers whose current contract ends on 31 December 2015. The closing date for the Scheme is 31 December 2015.

The requirement for a further tranche will be reviewed in 2016 mindful of expressions of interest and availability of funding.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

90. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue under the 2015 basic payment scheme to a person (details supplied) in County Sligo, the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44470/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Private Contract Clause application to my Department. He was notified in writing on 22 October 2015 that this application was unsuccessful and was given the right to appeal this decision. No such appeal was received by my Department. The person named has received his Basic Payment Scheme advance payment on 19 October 2015 and his balancing payment on 1 December 2015 on foot of his pre-existing entitlements.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

91. **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 persons (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44473/15]

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 28 May 2015. The Areas of Natural Constraint Schemes application has been fully processed and payment will issue shortly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

My Department also received a 2015 Transfer of Entitlements Allocation Right and Reference Value application from the persons named. This application has been processed and payment under the Basic Payment Scheme will issue shortly.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

92. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when farm payments will be made to a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44480/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Schemes was received from the person named on 24 May 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.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

93. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will arrange to carry out the digitisation process to the lands of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44482/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Basic Payment/Area of Natural Constraint (ANC) Schemes was received in my Department from the person named on 27 May, 2015. Processing of the ANC Scheme application has been finalised and payment has issued to the nominated bank account of the person named.

A late Basic Payment Scheme amendment form was received in the Department on 6 August 2015. This amendment form included a land parcel of 2.63 hectares digitised area with a claimed area of zero hectares. Processing of this Basic Payment Scheme application has been finalised. Advance and balancing payments have issued to the nominated bank account of the person named. There is no outstanding digitising in relation to this application.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

94. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive farm payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44483/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Basic Payment/Area of Natural Constraint Scheme was received in my Department from the person named on 15 May, 2015. All payments due under both schemes have issued to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

95. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of applications under the basic payment scheme, the national reserve scheme and the young farmers scheme by persons (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44489/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I can confirm that an application was received from Herd Number M2081792 on 29 February 2015 and is currently being processed for payment. An official from my department will contact the named persons directly and inform them of the situation.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

96. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive farm payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44490/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Schemes was received from the person named on 17 April, 2015. Processing of the application under both schemes has been

recently finalised and payments will issue shortly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Departmental Properties

97. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a lease of a building (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44491/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The organisation referred to by the Deputy was given special considerations in 2010 with regard to their tenancy in the building in Howth because of the voluntary and social nature of their activity.

The Department has received no recent correspondence directly from the organisation with regard to the issues raised by the Deputy. I can confirm that, as always, my officials would be willing to liaise with the organisation in this matter.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

98. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a farm payment for a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44493/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Schemes was received from the person named on 11 May 2015. Processing of this application under both schemes has recently been finalised and payments will issue shortly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

99. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an application under the basic payment scheme by a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44504/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): There is no record of an application from the person named having been received under the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme in my Department. An Official from my Department will be in contact directly with the person named to discuss the issue.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

100. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for the delay in headage payments for 2015 being issued to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44507/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme/Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) Scheme was received in my Department from the person named on 26 May 2015.

Under the 2015 ANC Scheme, eligible applicants are required to have met a minimum stocking density of 0.15 livestock units for a retention period of seven consecutive months and to maintain an annual average of 0.15 livestock units calculated over the twelve months of the scheme year. Payment under the ANC scheme has not issued in this case as, at this stage, the holding concerned has not satisfied the scheme's minimum stocking density requirements. An official from my Department has been in direct contact with the person named to advise him of the outstanding issues. I understand that further documentation in relation to this issue is now to be forwarded to the Department. On receipt of this documentation, the application will be further reviewed.

Under the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme, a commonage parcel claimed by the person named has been over claimed. The commonage evidence supplied by all applicants of this commonage parcel is currently being examined. On completion of this exercise, appropriate payments will issue to the nominated bank accounts of all the herd owners concerned.

Agriculture Scheme Eligibility

101. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the action a person who applied for 40% grant aid for a new shed because the closing date was approaching may take, given that this person may actually qualify for 60% as a young farmer under the exceptional circumstances in the young farmer capital investment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44509/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The first tranche of the Young Farmer Capital Investment closed on the 25 September 2015. The next tranche is now open for receipt of applications. The eligibility conditions for the Young Farmer are set out in the Terms and Conditions of the Scheme. If the person in question considers that they may be eligible under the Scheme they should apply on line immediately.

Agriculture Schemes

102. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if simplification in the rules applying to young farmer schemes across the European Union, as announced in recent weeks (details supplied), will allow the Irish authorities to decide the criteria for young farmers, for example for the young farmer capital investment scheme, if so, when such changes will be effected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44512/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The statement made by EU Agriculture and Rural Development Commissioner Phil Hogan on the 16 November will not have an impact on the eligibility criteria already set out in the Terms and Conditions of the Young Farmer Capital Investment Scheme. That statement dealt with providing access to schemes for legal entities controlled by young farmers, and these are already facilitated under the Irish Scheme.

Agriculture Schemes

103. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of the national reserve for new entrants scheme and the case of a person (detail supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44524/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The process of deciding objective criteria for the National Reserve is carried out in consultation with the Direct Payments Advisory Committee which includes members of the main farming bodies and advisory services. After consultation with this Committee it was decided that an off farm income limit of €40,000 would be applied to all applicants under the 2015 National Reserve. The corresponding off farm income limit under the previous National Reserve was €30,000. Applicants under the 2015 National Reserve also have the flexibility of choosing either the 2013 or 2014 tax year, whichever is more advantageous.

Applicants must comply with all eligibility criteria including off farm income criteria in order to be deemed eligible to qualify for an allocation of entitlements under the National Reserve. By increasing the off-farm income limit and granting a choice of reference years, I have granted the maximum possible flexibility regarding income limits for the National Reserve. Officials from my Department have been in contact with the person named regarding his off-farm income as submitted in support of his National Reserve application.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

104. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers awaiting the first instalment of payments and the value of outstanding payments under the basic payment scheme and the areas of natural constraint scheme by county, if a partial payment will be made to all farmers while outstanding issues are being resolved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44536/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Payments under the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme commenced, on schedule, on 23 September, 2015. To date, payments worth €180m have issued over 84,000 applicants. The total number of eligible applicants is 102,555. Many applicants cannot be paid until early next year when they have complied with stocking density and retention terms of the scheme. In relation to the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) and Greening Payment, I am pleased to confirm that advance payments began issuing in Ireland on 16 October 2015. This is the earliest that payments can commence under the governing EU Regulations. In addition, I can confirm that the level of the advance payment was set at 70% for 2015 rather than the normal 50%. The increase in the advance payment for 2015 is, in particular, due to the difficulties encountered in the dairying and pigmeat sectors.

Ireland is among the earliest to pay the BPS in the European Union and to date, of the approximately 122,265 eligible applicants, 11 7,380 farmers have received payments totalling €1.0 25 billion.

It is not permissible under the governing EU legislation to make partial payments in respect of unclear cases. Work is continuing in my Department to prioritise the processing of outstanding cases for payment under both schemes. Regular pay runs are in place to pay applicants as cases are cleared for payment. The further detail requested on a county basis by the Deputy is currently being collated and will be forwarded directly once available.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

105. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of applications for reinstatement, following retirement on grounds of illhealth, with prior notice granted since 2004; the legislation, rules and procedures under which they were

granted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44551/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department had two applications for reinstatement, following retirement on grounds of ill-health, with prior notification, granted since 2004.

The retirements were under Circular 7/57, titled “Retirement from the Civil Service on the ground of ill-health” and on the grounds of the Department having sought the advice of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO).

The applications for r-instatement were referred to the CMO and a copy of the CMO report was sent to the Department of Finance with a request for sanction to reinstate the officers. The lump sum received at retirement was subject to repayment and arrangements were made to cease payment of pension from the day before the date of reinstatement.

Circular 22/07 which is the current circular covering ill-health retirement does not provide civil servants with an automatic right to return to work. Any request for a return to work is a matter for the Department’s discretion taking into account the advice of the CMO and taking into account the current staff recruitment policy and budgetary restrictions.

Forestry Grants

106. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a forestry grant payment will be paid to a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny, as all the paperwork was destroyed. [44615/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The application for payment under the Afforestation Scheme in respect of the person named is currently under review in my Department. One of the conditions for receipt of payment is that the applicant must be the owner of the land that has been planted under the Scheme. My Department has requested clarification regarding the ownership of the land from the registered forestry company representing the person named and, while I sympathise with his sad loss, it is important that this clarification be supplied in order for payment to be made. My officials have again been in touch with his registered foresters to see if the necessary information can be supplied in order to facilitate payment.

Agriculture Scheme Data

107. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the percentage of applicants in County Cavan paid to date under the 2015 areas of natural constraint scheme and the single payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44629/15]

108. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the percentage of applicants in County Monaghan paid to date under the 2015 natural constraint scheme and the single payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44630/15]

109. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will ensure that outstanding payments due to farmers in counties Cavan and Monaghan under the natural constraint scheme and the single payment scheme will be made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44631/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 107, 108 and 109 together.

In relation to the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) and Greening Payment, I am pleased to confirm that advance payments began issuing in Ireland on 16 October, 2015. This is the earliest that payments can commence under the governing EU Regulations. In addition, I can confirm that the level of the advance payment was set at 70% for 2015 rather than the normal 50%. The increase in the advance payment for 2015 is, in particular, due to the difficulties encountered in the dairying and pigmeat sectors. The balancing payments commenced on 1 December. A total of 97% of eligible applicants in Cavan and 98% of eligible applicants in Monaghan have been paid under the BPS.

I can also confirm that payments under the Areas of Natural Constraints (ANC) Scheme commenced, on schedule, on 23 September 2015. A total of 85% of eligible applicants in Cavan and 83% of eligible applicants in Monaghan have been paid under the ANC Scheme. It should be noted that many farmers cannot be paid until early 2016 when they comply with the stocking requirements of the scheme.

As outstanding cases under the BPS, Greening and ANC are processed and are cleared of any outstanding error, they will be sent for payment. My Department is prioritising the processing of all such outstanding cases with regular payment runs continuing over the coming weeks.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

110. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for non-payment of area aid under the young farmers scheme to a person (details supplied) in County Sligo, if he will re-examine this case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44635/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted applications for the 2015 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. There is no issue with regard to the date of issuing the herd number in this case.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

111. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Defence the number of applications for reinstatement, following retirement on grounds of ill health, with prior notice granted since 2004; the legislation, rules and procedures under which they were granted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44555/15]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department received two applications for re-instatement, following retirement on grounds of ill-health, with prior notice, since 2004.

The applicants were placed on a Central Resource Panel for redeployment to another Department/Office as my Department had no suitable vacancies at the grades concerned.

The applications for re-instatement were granted in line with Para. 11.4 of Superannuation Handbook and Guidance Notes – Established Civil Service Scheme.

One of the applicants has been redeployed to fill a vacant position at the relevant grade in another Department. The second applicant remains on the Central Resource Panel as no suitable vacancy at the applicant's grade has arisen to date.

Pension Provisions

112. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if she will offer Garda Síochána pensioners the option of weekly, fortnightly or monthly salary payments; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44479/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Payments to retired members of An Garda Síochána are made from the Garda Síochána Vote (Vote 20). As the Garda Commissioner is the Accounting Officer for An Garda Síochána, I have asked for her views on this issue and I will write directly to the Deputy on receipt of same.

Garda Equipment

113. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if she will introduce the use of body cameras and car dash cameras within An Garda Síochána, given recent high profile incidents of their use in crime detection in the United States of America and in the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44466/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Garda Commissioner is the Accounting Officer for the Garda Vote and has responsibility for the deployment of resources as determined by operational needs.

In that context I am advised by the Garda authorities that a total of 15 body-worn cameras were purchased by An Garda Síochána in 2012 for the purposes of evaluating body-worn camera technology as an alternative to the use of handheld camcorders. In 2014, senior Garda management decided that five of these units, which were used predominantly in training and evaluation exercises since their purchase, were to be deployed for the purpose of ensuring public order and the protection of Gardaí on duty.

Video captured by these devices is encrypted to prevent unauthorised access if the unit is lost or stolen and recordings can only be accessed by downloading to a specific secure location on the Garda IT network. The use of these devices by An Garda Síochána is governed by Section 38 of the Garda Síochána Act, 2005 and the Garda Code of Practice established under Section 13 of the Data Protection Acts 1998 and 2003.

In respect of the Deputy's query concerning the use of dash cams, 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.

Road Traffic Offences

114. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prosecutions and of convictions for motor tax offences and the cost to her Department, to An Garda Síochána and to the Courts Service of these prosecutions in 2015 to date. [44468/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Deputy will appre-

ciate that I have no role in relation to the prosecution of offences. I have sought information from the Courts Service in relation to number of cases referred to and will contact the Deputy when this data is to hand. Certain data in relation to recorded offences and court outcomes is available from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and I have requested the CSO to provide available data as it relates to motor tax offences to the Deputy directly. Information concerning the composite costs of the prosecutions referred to is not readily available.

Commencement of Legislation

115. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when section 52 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 will commence, and if its non-commencement is preventing students from accessing grants. [44495/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am planning to sign the commencement order in relation to significant portions of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015, including section 52, before the end of the year. Section 52 stipulates when a person's guardianship of a child ends, being on the death of the guardian, the child's attaining the age of 18, or the child's marriage, whichever first occurs. However, while section 52 is not commenced, I should stress that it represents a codification of the current legal position and is not an actual change to the rules on how guardianship terminates.

I understand that my officials are liaising with their counterparts in the Department of Education and Skills in relation to guardianship, its duration and termination. As the Deputy is aware, the assessment of students for the student grant scheme is a matter for the Department of Education and Skills.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

116. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of applications for reinstatement, following retirement on grounds of ill health, with prior notice granted since 2004; the legislation, rules and procedures under which they were granted; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44562/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I can inform the Deputy that, since 2004, there have been no reinstatements following retirement on the grounds of ill-health in my Department.

Naturalisation Applications

117. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of an application for naturalisation by a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44579/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the processing of the application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy is ongoing. Certain information was requested from the applicant on 3 November 2015 and a response has been received. The case will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a

privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

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

Naturalisation Applications

118. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if previous disqualification for eligibility for naturalisation arising from a number of offences will permanently disqualify a person (details supplied) in County Dublin from eligibility; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44580/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Section 15 of the Act provides that the Minister may, in her absolute discretion, grant an application for a certificate of naturalisation if satisfied certain statutory conditions are fulfilled. In particular, these conditions require that an applicant is of good character. The granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and I know the Deputy will appreciate that it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process. The Minister, having considered the application from the person concerned decided not to grant a certificate of naturalisation.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application for a certificate of naturalisation if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956 as amended. The fact that a person may have had an application refused does not preclude or disqualify them from submitting a fresh application in the future. Indeed, the letter advising the person concerned of the Minister's decision also informed her that she may reapply for the grant of a certificate of naturalisation at any time. The letter advised that, when considering making such a re-application, she should give due regard to the reasons for the refusal which were contained in the submission attached to the refusal letter and that any further application will be considered taking into account all statutory and administrative conditions applicable at the time of application.

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

Family Reunification Applications

119. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a previously refused application for family reunification by a person (details supplied) in Dublin 22 will be reconsidered and if further medical evidence will be accepted in the context of a review.

[44581/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I have been informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service of my Department that the provisions governing family reunification for recognised refugees contained in the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) do not provide for a review of applications. However, it is open to the person referred to by the Deputy to submit a new application to the Family Reunification Section in respect of the family member referred to above. Any new application should be accompanied by all appropriate documentation in support of the application including in particular up to date original medical reports (clearly detailing diagnosis and prognosis) and original identity documentation in respect of the subject of the application.

Residency Permits

120. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if health needs will be borne in mind in determining eligibility for residency status by a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44582/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): If the persons whose details were supplied has made an application for asylum or subsidiary protection in the State, the Deputy will be aware that it is not the practice to comment on such applications until they have fully completed the protection process. This is in accordance with Section 19(1) of the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended) which provides for the protection of the identity of protection applicants.

The Deputy is advised that the health needs of any particular applicant are not a determining factor in the process of deciding eligibility for protection in the State.

The question of residency status does not arise at present in the case of the person whose details were supplied.

Asylum Applications

121. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current and expected residency status of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44583/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): If the person whose details were supplied has made an application for asylum or subsidiary protection in the State, the Deputy will be aware that it is not the practice to comment on such applications until they have fully completed the protection process. This is in accordance with Section 19(1) of the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended) which provides for the protection of the identity of protection applicants.

With regard to residency status, the Deputy is reminded that protection applicants are issued with a temporary residence permission pending a final decision on their application. In the event that an applicant is finally determined not to be in need of protection, consideration is then given to whether the person should be granted leave to remain in the State on humanitarian grounds.

Travel Documents

122. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a temporary travel pass and visa will be issued to a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44584/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department advises me that in exceptional cases an application for Irish temporary travel document may be considered in respect of qualifying non Irish nationals who are resident in Ireland. In all such cases, INIS must be satisfied that there is no alternative open to the applicant before an Irish temporary travel document will issue. The person concerned has to show that they have made reasonable and formal efforts to obtain a national passport, that it has been formally and unreasonably refused and that their own consular authorities are unable to offer consular assistance to them whilst resident in the State.

I am informed by INIS that the Travel Document Unit have no record of having received an application for a temporary travel document in respect of the person concerned.

It is open to the person in question to submit an application for a temporary travel document accompanied by the relevant supporting documentation to the Travel Document Unit of INIS which is located at 13-14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2. Full information in this regard and the applicable application form is available at “www.inis.gov.ie”.

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

Residency Permits

123. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the procedure to be followed by a person (details supplied) in County Clare in regularising residency status; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44585/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that as the person referred to by the Deputy is stated to be here for several years, it would appear that this person has remained in the State without the appropriate permission. This is in breach of Section 5 (1) of the Immigration Act 2004 which provides that no non-national may be in the State other than in accordance with the terms of any permission given to him by or on behalf of the Minister. Furthermore, Section 5(2) of the Act provides that a non-national who is in the State in contravention of subsection (1) is for all purposes unlawfully present in the State.

The person concerned should immediately contact their local Garda Immigration Officer.

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

view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Residency Permits

124. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the procedure to be followed by a person (details supplied) in County Clare in regularising residency status; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44586/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the persons referred to by the Deputy never had an immigration permission to remain in the State. This is in breach of Section 5 (1) of the Immigration Act 2004 which provides that no non-national may be in the State other than in accordance with the terms of any permission given to him by or on behalf of the Minister. Furthermore, Section 5(2) of the Act provides that a non-national who is in the State in contravention of subsection (1) is for all purposes unlawfully present in the State.

The person concerned should immediately contact their local Garda Immigration Officer.

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

Residency Permits

125. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current and expected residency status of a person (details supplied) in County Meath; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44589/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): If the person whose details were supplied has made an application for asylum or subsidiary protection in the State, the Deputy will be aware that it is not the practice to comment on such applications until they have fully completed the protection process. This is in accordance with Section 19(1) of the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended) which provides for the protection of the identity of protection applicants.

With regard to residency status, the Deputy is reminded that protection applicants are issued with a temporary residence permission pending a final decision on their application. In the event that an applicant is finally determined not to be in need of protection, consideration is then given to whether the person should be granted leave to remain in the State on humanitarian grounds.

Residency Permits

126. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the potential residency status of a person (details supplied) in County Meath; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44591/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): If the person whose details were supplied has made an application for asylum or subsidiary protection in the State, the Deputy will be aware that it is not the practice to comment on such applications until they have fully completed the protection process. This is in accordance with Section 19(1) of the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended) which provides for the protection of the identity of protection applicants.

With regard to residency status, the Deputy is reminded that protection applicants are issued with a temporary residence permission pending a final decision on their application. In the event that an applicant is finally determined not to be in need of protection, consideration is then given to whether the person should be granted leave to remain in the State on humanitarian grounds.

Naturalisation Applications

127. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current and expected residency status of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 16; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44592/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the processing of the application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy, who currently has permission to reside in the State until 20 July 2016, is ongoing and the case will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

It is recognised that all applicants for citizenship would wish to have a decision on their application without delay. While most cases are now generally processed within six months, the nature of the naturalisation process is such that, for a broad range of reasons, some cases will take longer than others to process. In some instances, completing the necessary checks can take a considerable period of time.

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

Naturalisation Applications

128. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality notwithstanding her reply to previous parliamentary questions, when a person (details supplied) in County Kildare will qualify for naturalisation: and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44595/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Irish Nationality

and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, sets out the conditions for naturalisation. It is open to any individual to lodge an application for citizenship if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements. Detailed information on Irish citizenship and naturalisation is available on the INIS website at www.inis.gov.ie. The website also contains an on-line naturalisation residency calculator which individuals may find of assistance in establishing if they meet the residency requirements.

A previous application for naturalisation from the person concerned was unsuccessful as it was determined that she did not satisfy the statutory residency requirements at the time and she was informed of this in a letter issued on 12 November, 2014.

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

Immigration Status

129. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if she will regularise residency and eligibility for stamp 4 for a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44597/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised by the Irish naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person in question does not have a basis under which they may apply for a Stamp 4. I am informed that this person has not had the requisite four-year legal residence as an Employment Permit holder in order to qualify for a Stamp 4 and as such they will need to continue to hold Employment Permits in order to take up any offers of employment in the State.

Queries on 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.

Immigration Status

130. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 233 of 22 October 2015, when the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service will be in contact with a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44600/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the circumstances of the person in question are under consideration at present and it expects to issue a letter to him in the next seven days outlining the current position in respect of the application.

Queries on 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.

Deportation Orders

131. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current and-or expected residency status of a person (details supplied) in County Laois; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44603/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order made on 15 July 2011.

Representations were received from the person's legal representative, to request the Minister to use her discretion, pursuant to Section 3 (11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), to revoke the Deportation Order. The Deputy might wish to note that any such decision will be to 'affirm' or to 'revoke' the existing Deportation Order. In the mean-time, the Deportation Order remains valid and in place.

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

Naturalisation Applications

132. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of an application for naturalisation by a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44605/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the processing of the application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy is ongoing with a view to establishing whether the conditions for naturalisation, such as good character and lawful residence are satisfied.

A letter issued to the solicitor of the person concerned requesting certain information. Upon receipt of the requested information, or in the event that the person concerned does not respond, the case will be further processed and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

It is recognised that all applicants for citizenship would wish to have a decision on their ap-

plication without delay. While most cases are now generally processed within six months, the nature of the naturalisation process is such that, for a broad range of reasons, some cases will take longer than others to process. In some instances, completing the necessary checks can take a considerable period of time.

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

Garda Investigations

133. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a person who reports an issue and provides a lengthy written statement to An Garda Síochána is entitled to an update on the stage that the investigation is at, whether the Director of Public Prosecutions has made any comment on the matter, and if a definite line of inquiry is being followed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44612/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Deputy will appreciate that the conduct of particular Garda investigations is a matter for the Garda authorities and I, as Minister, do not have a role in this regard. The Deputy will also be aware that the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) is independent in the performance of her functions and it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the actions of the DPP in a particular case.

However, I can advise the Deputy in general terms that An Garda Síochána have always endeavoured to keep victims updated on the progress of investigations. Moreover, since the coming into force of the EU victims directive on 16 November 2015, on reporting a crime victims are entitled to be given contact details within An Garda Síochána for communications about their case. From the same date, victims are entitled to tell An Garda Síochána that they wish to receive updates on the stage the investigation is at. If they express such a wish, they must be provided with information on the state of criminal proceedings, unless in exceptional circumstances where the proper handling of the case may be adversely affected by such notification.

Garda Vetting Applications

134. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of an application for Garda Síochána vetting by a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44634/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am informed by the Garda authorities that a vetting application in respect of the person referred to was received by the Garda Central Vetting Unit on 24 September 2015. However, the application was incomplete and returned to the registered organisation concerned for completion.

I am further informed that on 17 November 2015 the application was once again received by the Garda Central Vetting Unit. The application was processed and returned to the registered organisation on 3 December 2015.

It would be advisable for the applicant to contact the registered organisation to ascertain the

current position.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

135. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of applications for reinstatement, following retirement on grounds of ill health, with prior notice granted since 2004; the legislation, rules and procedures under which they were granted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44553/15]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): Since its establishment in June 2011, my Department has not received any applications for re-instatement following retirement on grounds of ill-health.

General Medical Services Scheme Administration

136. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Minister for Health if and when he will reinstate the rural practice allowance, the distance code and the prescribing physicians allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44437/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Payments to GPs under the General Medical Services (GMS) Scheme in respect of the Rural Practice Allowance and Dispensing arrangements to eligible patients under the specified criteria continue to exist. The rates of payment are set out in the Health Professionals (Reduction of Payments to General Practitioners) Regulations 2013.

Where a GP currently holds the Rural Practice Allowance but the circumstances underpinning this have changed, the GP retains the allowance while they continue to practise in this location. However, an application for the allowance is considered afresh by the HSE when a new GP commences in the area.

The HSE has recently produced revised Rural Practice Allowance guidelines for remote rural areas. The purpose of the new guidance is to ensure consistency, transparency and fairness in decision-making regarding relevant discretionary provisions of the GMS contract as they apply to rural GP practices.

The guidance also provides for greater flexibility in considering applications from GPs than was provided for in the original governing circular, as well as providing additional options to support GPs. The new guidance does not affect existing holders of the allowance.

With regard to GP dispensing arrangements under the GMS Scheme, such arrangements may cease in certain circumstances, e.g. where a pharmacy opens within three miles of the relevant GP's main centre of practice.

The HSE, Department of Health and Irish Medical Organisation are currently engaged in a comprehensive review of the GMS and other publicly funded health sector contracts involving GPs. It is envisaged that the issue of supports for General Practice in remote rural areas and dispensing arrangements will be considered under this review process.

Under the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2009 (FEMPI), the "distance from the GP's surgery" was removed as a factor in calculating certain fees payable to GPs under the GMS Scheme. Any reversal of this measure would have to be considered in the context of the review of fee adjustments introduced under FEMPI for contracted professionals

in the health sector, which will be undertaken shortly.

Health Services Staff Recruitment

137. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Health the status of the appointment of a replacement nurse on Cape Clear Island in County Cork, including the steps the Health Service Executive has taken to fill this vacancy (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44442/15]

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 he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with the Executive.

National Children's Hospital Expenditure

138. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if he will confirm that the most recent projection by the project team of cost is €740 million, not including fit-out of the hospital, as against original budget of €485 million; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44445/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I take it that the Deputy is referring to the capital project to develop the new children's hospital. Minister Howlin has committed to making €200m available from the sale of the National Lottery for the new children's hospital, adding to the existing €450m Exchequer funding and underlining the Government's commitment to the project. Current estimates are that the core hospital, including both satellite centres, will be delivered within this envelope. This includes provision for inflation, VAT and contingencies; it does not include equipment or ICT which can be purchased, licensed or leased separately. Philanthropic and commercial funding streams will be targeted as appropriate for supporting elements of the project to include car parking, academic and research facilities, and estimates will continue to be reviewed and refined at each stage of the project. I do not intend to provide further detail on the cost breakdown at this stage, on the basis of commercial sensitivity. In regard to the figure of €485m to which the Deputy refers, this figure has never been a confirmed estimate for the project.

Hospitals Expenditure

139. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health the expected cost in 2015 of purchasing medical procedures, consultations, operations and aftercare from private hospital facilities and of addressing the various lengthening waiting lists in adult and children's hospitals, the type and number of these, and the equivalent spend in 2014. [44446/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly. If he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Medicinal Products Prices

140. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if he has investigated why the price of units of cancer drugs is up to more than €200 higher in this State than elsewhere, given recent research (details supplied) highlighting this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44447/15]

141. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health why Bevacizumab which is used to treat breast, lung, renal and ovarian cancer costs €1,319 in Ireland as against €1,085 in the United Kingdom, if he has queried this price difference with the manufacturer and supplier of this drug; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44448/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 140 and 141 together.

The prices of drugs vary between countries for a number of reasons, including different prices set by manufacturers, different wholesale and pharmacy mark-ups, different dispensing fees and different rates of VAT. The size of the market can also be a factor in the prices set by manufacturers.

The *Lancet Oncology* study referred to by the Deputy relates to list prices of products. The authors make clear that the study does not consider the actual commercially confidential discounted prices in place, and therefore has limitations.

For example, gemcitabine and zoledronic acid are off-patent hospital drugs, for which Irish hospitals would have contracts in place with additional discounts below the list prices. The final prices paid for those drugs would be significantly lower than those reported in the *Lancet* article, which clearly states that the prices surveyed are list prices only.

Similarly, the price of the hospital-administered drug bevacizumab reported in the article is a list price, and does not reflect any commercially confidential discounts that may be in place.

With regard to drug prices in Ireland more generally, engagement between the State and the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association regarding a possible successor pricing and supply agreement to the existing (2012) Agreement is expected to commence early in 2016.

Health Services Data

142. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting, the average waiting time and the number of persons who have waited in excess of the Health Service Executive's 13-week target for endoscopy and colonoscopy diagnostic testing and services at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda in County Louth; the staffing levels for the provision of these services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44449/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly. If he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and my officials will follow up the matter.

Health Services Data

143. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the average waiting times and the number of persons who have waited in excess of the Health Service Executive's 13-week target for diagnostic testing, such as endoscopies and colonoscopies; and the staffing level for providing these services by region and hospital group in tabular form. [44450/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly. If he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and my officials will follow up the matter.

National Treatment Purchase Fund Waiting Times

144. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the details of the gastrointestinal endoscopy initiative, which includes colonoscopies undertaken by the National Treatment Purchase Fund, including when this commenced, the consultation that took place and with whom, the number of persons who were identified as waiting over 12 months, the number who have now been treated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44451/15]

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 more than 12 months.

The NTPF initiative commenced on 30 September 2015 after consultation with the HSE and Department of Health to facilitate the treatment of patients waiting more than 12 months for a Gastroscopy, Colonoscopy or Proctoscopy procedure. A total of 2,652 patients were identified in this category. At 3 December 2015 a total of 558 patients remain to be treated.

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

Health Services Access

145. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health further to recent media reports (details supplied) the measures he will take to ensure parity of access for persons without private health insurance awaiting tests to detect bowel cancer to ensure the strict Health Service Executive target of no person waiting more than 13 weeks for what is a vital diagnostic test is met; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44452/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): It is important to be note that 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.

The National Treatment Purchase Fund Board has recently commenced a GI Endoscopy Initiative, approved by the Department, which aims to complete before the end of the year. The initiative is targeting those waiting over 12 months now or before the end of December 2015 for a routine endoscope. While these waiters are largely confined to a smaller number of hospitals, the initiative aims to offer an external appointment to all patients waiting more than 12 months for a routine Gastroscopy, Colonoscopy or Proctoscopy procedure.

My Department will continue to monitor HSE performance against the national targets for urgent and routine scopes.

Health Services Staff Data

146. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the staffing levels of radiographers and gastroenterologists and the vacancies in endoscopy services by region and hospital group. [44453/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter. If he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Primary Care Centres Expenditure

147. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Health the estimated capital expenditure on primary care centres and convalescent facilities for 2016. [44464/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Following the announcement in late September of the health capital envelope of €3,061 million for the multi-annual period 2016-2021, the HSE has recently submitted its draft Capital Plan. This Plan requires my approval together with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. However, in advance of the approval process it is not possible to indicate the estimated capital expenditure on primary care and convalescent facilities for 2016.

Respite Care Services Availability

148. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Health why a decision has been taken to refuse access to respite care for users of a service from other regions who have in the past used the service; his views on the case of a person (details supplied) from County Cork who previously accessed the Cheshire home service in Newbridge in County Kildare but who has

now been refused access. [44474/15]

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 he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with the HSE.

Hospitals Capital Programme

149. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health if he will prioritise funding for phase 2 of the current developments at St. Luke's Hospital in Kilkenny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44494/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): St Luke's Hospital (SLH) Kilkenny has had a major €21m capital investment recently resulting in the development of the Susie Long Day Services Unit, Emergency Department /Acute Medical Assessment Unit, Hepatology Dept, Oncology Unit, Concourse and Education and Library Centre. The new development provides SLH with much needed additional capacity and will support the hospital in meeting the needs of Carlow, Kilkenny and surrounding counties.

Any future capital development in SLH must be considered within the overall acute hospital sector infrastructure programme, and also within the overall capital envelope available to the health service. The HSE is concentrating on applying the funding available for infrastructure development in the most effective way possible to meet current and future needs. Proposed developments must also be considered in the context of the establishment of hospital groups. Each hospital group will be required to develop a strategic plan to describe how it will provide more efficient and effective patient services and reorganise its services to provide optimal care to the populations it serves.

In relation to the specific query on phase two of the current development at SLH, I have asked HSE to respond to the Deputy directly. If he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and my officials will follow up the matter.

Hospitals Funding

150. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health how the funding of €16.9 million, €8.9 million revenue and €8 million capital provided in July 2015 to support acute hospitals over the winter period was allocated by hospital group and by individual hospital. [44498/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Additional funding of €16.9m (€8.9m revenue and €8m capital) was provided in July to support acute hospitals over the winter period. This 'winter capacity' funding is being applied to a range of initiatives including additional bed capacity. In preparation for the 2015/16 winter period, hospital groups have provided comprehensive winter resilience plans to the HSE, outlining how they will implement an integrated approach across primary, community, social and acute services to manage winter pressures. This approach is intended both to avoid unnecessary admissions to acute hospitals and to expedite discharges from hospital efficiently.

As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly with details of the allocation of the €16.9m. If he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15

working days he should contact my Private Office and my officials will follow up the matter.

Hospitals Funding

151. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health how the so-called winter capacity funding to support acute hospitals has been used to date; the initiatives that were funded by hospital group and by individual hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44499/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Last December I convened the ED Taskforce to assist in dealing with the challenges presented by ED overcrowding. Significant progress has been made to date on the ED Taskforce Plan implementation.

Additional funding of €16.9m (€8.9m revenue and €8m capital) was provided in July to support acute hospitals over the winter period. This ‘winter capacity’ funding is being applied to a range of initiatives including additional bed capacity. In preparation for the 2015/16 winter period, hospital groups have provided comprehensive winter resilience plans to the HSE, outlining how they will implement an integrated approach across primary, community, social and acute services to manage winter pressures. This approach is intended both to avoid unnecessary admissions to acute hospitals and to expedite discharges from hospital efficiently.

As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly. If he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and my officials will follow up the matter.

Hospital Services

152. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 179 of 26 November 2015, the locations of the 135 hospital beds which were closed for refurbishment or for infection control purposes during 2015 to date; where the 91 re-opened beds are located; if hospitals will be allocated additional staffing resources to manage patient care in these beds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44500/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As of October 2015, a total of 154 hospital beds were closed for refurbishment or for infection control purposes. 91 of these beds had re-opened by 30 November and the HSE has confirmed that a total of 111 beds had been reopened by 4 Dec 2015. Further detail on the location of these beds is provided in the following table:

-	Beds Closed	Beds Open on	Beds Open on
Hospital	Oct-15	30/11/2015	04/12/2015
Galway	17	0	0
Beaumont	33	6	21
UL	29	23	23
Naas	15	15	15
St James's	5	0	5
Tullamore	15	15	15
St. John's	20	12	12
Cork UH	20	20	20
Total	154	91	111

Hospital Services

153. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 179 of 26 November 2015, the locations of the 301 beds which are due to be added to support the acute hospital system over the winter period; the progress that has been made across the locations noted as being identified, including Limerick, Drogheda, Galway and north Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44501/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Additional funding of €16.9m (€8.9m revenue and €8m capital) was provided in July to support acute hospitals over the winter period. This ‘winter capacity’ funding is being applied to a range of initiatives including additional bed capacity. In preparation for the 2015/16 winter period, hospital groups have provided comprehensive winter resilience plans to the HSE, outlining how they will implement an integrated approach across primary, community, social and acute services to manage winter pressures. This approach is intended both to avoid unnecessary admissions to acute hospitals and to expedite discharges from hospital efficiently.

The HSE has provided details of the location of the 301 winter capacity beds and number of beds open to date, as set out in the following table:

Hospital	Total Proposed July 2015	Total No. Beds open on 30/11/15	Total No. Beds open on 4/12/15
RCSI	44	8	44
OLOL Drogheda	8	8	8
Louth	12	0	12
Connolly	24	0	24
IRELAND EAST	79	25	59
SVUH	22	0	22
Loughlinstown	10	0	0
Navan	15	15	15
Kilkenny	12	0	12
Wexford	10	10	10
Cappagh	10	0	0
DUBLIN MID-LANDS	16	12	12
Tallaght	16	12	12
UL	27	22	22
Limerick	27	22	22
SOUTH SOUTH WEST	48	20	20
CUH	30	20	20
St. Mary's Orthopaedic, Mercy University Hospital	18	0	0
SAOLTA	59	19	19
Merlin Park	14	14	14
Galway	30	0	0
Letterkenny	10	0	0
Portiuncula	5	5	5

Hospital	Total Proposed July 2015	Total No. Beds open on 30/11/15	Total No. Beds open on 4/12/15
CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL GROUP	28	0	0
CUH Temple Street	14	0	0
Tallaght (Childrens)	14	0	0
GRAND TOTAL	301	106	176

Seirbhísí Sláinte

154. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Sláinte cén polasaí atá aige i leith seirbhísí sláinte ar na hoileáin amach ón gcósta; cad atá déanta aige maidir leis an bpolasaí sin a chur i bhfeidhm; cad iad na socruithe atá déanta aige lena chinntiú go mbeidh altra lánaimseartha cónaithe ar Oileán Chléire, Co. Chorcaí; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [44503/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Iarradh ar Fheidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte (HSE) an t-ábhar seo a scrúdú agus freagra a sholáthar don Teachta a luaithis is féidir. Muna bhfuil freagra ón HSE faighte ag an Teachta laistigh de 15 lá oibre déan teagmháil le do thoil le mo Oifig Phríobháideach agus déanfaidh siadsan fiosrúcháin leo faoin scéal.

Health Services Provision

155. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will examine the referral of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry for orthodontic treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44505/15]

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 he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Health Services Provision

156. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare will be assisted with care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44506/15]

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 he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

National Lottery Funding Applications

157. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health why lottery funding was refused to an organisation (details supplied) in County Louth; and if he will make a statement on

the matter. [44513/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): My Department received an application for National Lottery funding from the organisation referred to by the Deputy. Applications for National Lottery grants far exceed the resources available. The lottery fund for 2015 has recently been allocated and, unfortunately on this occasion, it was not possible to assist in this particular case. The organisation has been notified of the outcome of its application.

I would encourage this Organisation to apply again in the 2016 round of grants.

Hospital Appointments Status

158. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44517/15]

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 the Deputy directly. If he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and my officials will follow up the matter.

Health Services Provision

159. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Health why a person (details supplied) has been informed that there is a two-year waiting time to access the Health Service Executive's support services, by which time the person will be in mainstream school and will fall to the end of the executive's waiting list and will not have access to the vital supports needed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44520/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the issue raised by the Deputy relates to an individual case, this is a service matter for the Health Service Executive. I have asked the HSE to look into the particular matter raised and to reply directly to the Deputy. If she has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days she should contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Medical Card Eligibility

160. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will grant medical cards to

the 9,000 children who do not have them but who do qualify for a domiciliary care allowance, given that these children met the qualifying criteria and as such are deemed to have a disability so severe that they require care and attention substantially in excess of other children of the same age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44523/15]

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 selected disease, or is not in receipt of the specific social welfare payment.

Hospital Groups

161. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the status of the Saolta Hospital Group review of accident and emergency services at Portiuncula Hospital, Ballinasloe,

County Galway, including its purpose and its completion date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44541/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly. If he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and my officials will follow up the matter.

Hospital Services

162. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the status of the maternity review at Portiuncula Hospital, Ballinasloe, County Galway, including its completion date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44542/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to him directly. If he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and my officials will follow up the matter.

Hospital Staff Recruitment

163. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the consultant vacancies at Portiuncula Hospital, Ballinasloe, County Galway; the steps the Saolta Hospital Group is taking, through its group structure, to mitigate the impact of these vacancies; the status of the recruitment process in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44543/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter. If he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Ambulance Service Data

164. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the delay in publishing the Lightfoot Capacity review of the ambulance service; when it will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44544/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The review in question was commissioned by the HSE and, as such, the question of publication is a matter for the Executive. Accordingly, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly. If he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and my officials will follow up the matter.

Ambulance Service Response Times

165. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the location of the emergency response vehicles in the north-east region in the context of an emergency call for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44545/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to him directly. If he has

not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and my officials will follow up the matter.

Medical Card Applications

166. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application for a medical card by a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44547/15]

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 he should contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

Medical Card Data

167. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons who require chemotherapy, who have a medical card or who obtained a medical card following diagnosis, and who have to pay €75 per treatment for up to ten treatments per year in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44549/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As part of the assessment of Medical Card eligibility, the HSE's National Medical Card Unit (NMCU) does not specifically seek to establish if a person is undergoing chemotherapy treatment; nor does the NMCU collate data routinely on the number of people with a diagnosis of cancer who are granted Medical Card eligibility.

The Health Act 1970 (as amended) provides that all people ordinarily resident in the country are entitled, subject to certain charges, to public in-patient hospital services including consultant services and to public out-patient hospital services. As provided for by the Health (In-Patient Charges) Regulations (S.I. No. 543 of 2008), the current public hospital statutory in-patient charge for public in-patient and day case services is €75 per day, subject to a maximum of €750 in any twelve consecutive months. Currently, in excess of 1.7 million people qualify for a medical card. Under the Health (In-Patient Charges) Regulations, 1987 (S.I. No. 116/1987), medical card holders are exempt from this statutory charge.

Health Services Funding

168. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Health in the context of the additional €66 million out of the additional €600 million that is being allocated to the Health Service Executive West in the supplementary budget, if he will eliminate the deficit of an organisation (details supplied) in County Galway which has effectively arisen from the implementation of a Health Service Executive's reduction in funding in 2010, which has been acknowledged was incor-

rectly applied; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44550/15]

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. 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.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

169. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of applications for reinstatement, following retirement on grounds of ill health, with prior notice granted since 2004; the legislation, rules and procedures under which they were granted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44560/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): No applications for reinstatement following retirement on grounds of ill-health were received by my Department since 2004.

Dental Services Provision

170. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if dental treatment through a person's medical card, or otherwise, is available to a person (details supplied) in Dublin 15; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44587/15]

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 he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Medical Card Applications

171. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if an application for a medical card will be reconsidered for a person (details supplied) in County Meath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44590/15]

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 he should contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

General Practitioner Services Provision

172. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health if he will request Westdoc to re-establish a fully staffed cell in Roscommon town, in line with the commitment given to the public following the closure of the accident and emergency department at Roscommon County Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44613/15]

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 he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with the Executive.

Health Services Provision

173. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Health if he is aware of the serious concerns of service users about physiotherapy services within the early intervention service in County Roscommon, as service users have been unable to secure regular necessary physiotherapy sessions for the past number of months; and his plans to improve services with immediate effect in County Roscommon. [44614/15]

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. If he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Procedures

174. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of operations and procedures that have been cancelled or postponed by public hospitals in 2015 to date in tabular form. [44617/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly. If he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and my officials will follow up the matter.

Hospital Procedures

175. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of operations and procedures that have been cancelled or postponed by voluntary hospital in 2015 to date in tabular form. [44618/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly. If he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and my officials will follow up the matter.

Hospital Services

176. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of procedures procured from and the amount spent on these procedures in private and independent hospitals by the

Health Service Executive by hospital and payment in 2015 to date in tabular form. [44619/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly. If he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and my officials will follow up the matter.

Health Services Staff Data

177. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of health care professionals working in primary care as of 1 December 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44620/15]

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 he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with the Executive.

Health Services Staff Data

178. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the amount paid to each agency staff provider by the Health Service Executive in 2015 to date in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44621/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter. If he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Prescriptions Charges

179. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the amount collected in prescription charges for medical card prescriptions in each of the years 2011 to 2014 and the projection for 2015. [44622/15]

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; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

If he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Drug Treatment Programmes

180. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons who sought drug treatment and rehabilitation services by county or local health area for each of the past five years and in 2015 to date in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter [44623/15]

181. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons who ac-

cessed drug treatment and rehabilitation services by county or local health area for each of the past five years and in 2015 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44624/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 180 and 181 together.

As these are service matters, they have been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Drug Treatment Programmes Funding

182. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget for drug prevention, treatment and rehabilitation projects in each of the past five years; the projected budget for 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44625/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin): The Department of Health administers a Drugs Initiative, which primarily funds community based drugs initiatives supported by Local and Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Forces. Details of the allocations to each of the Task Forces in each of the past five years are provided in the following table. Approximately 55% of the amount allocated relates to treatment and rehabilitation projects, 35% relates to prevention, education and drug awareness projects and the remainder is primarily targeted at supply reduction measures.

€m	2011	2012	2013	2014 DOH	2014 HSE	2015 DOH	2015 HSE
LDATFs	20.65	20.24	19.48	5.13	13.82	4.43	14.52
RDATFs	9.73	9.49	8.97	1.48	7.22	1.15	7.55
Total	30.38	29.73	28.45	6.61	21.04	5.58	22.07

The data in respect of 2014 and 2015 respectively reflects the fact that the Department of Health transferred €21.04m in funding relating to treatment and rehabilitation projects to the Health Service Executive on 1 January 2014, with a further €1.02m transferring on 1 January 2015.

Hospital Appointments Status

183. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Clare will receive an appointment for surgery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44657/15]

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 de-

veloped 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 the Deputy directly. If he has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and my officials will follow up the matter.

Shannon Airport Facilities

184. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if an M142 high mobility artillery rocket system, HIMARS, was delivered through Shannon Airport during August 2015. [44461/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Air Navigation (Foreign Military Aircraft) Order 1952 gives the Minister for Foreign Affairs primary responsibility for the regulation of activity by foreign military aircraft in Ireland.

Arrangements under which permission is granted for foreign military aircraft to land at Irish airports are governed by strict conditions, including the stipulation that the aircraft concerned must be unarmed and must carry no arms, ammunition or explosives. In line with these conditions, permission would not be granted for the landing of a foreign military aircraft transporting cargo of the type referred to by the Deputy.

If the Deputy has any information regarding the carriage of cargo of this type on a foreign military aircraft in contravention of these conditions I would ask her to provide it to my office.

Irish Prisoners Abroad

185. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he is aware of the ongoing birthday postcard campaign for a person (details supplied). [44475/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I can confirm that I am aware of the initiative described and that postcards received by my Department will be forwarded to Ambassador Cole in Cairo for onward transmission to the individual concerned.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

186. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of applications for re-instatement, following retirement on grounds of ill-health, with prior notice granted since 2004; the legislation, rules and procedures under which they were granted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44559/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): No such applications for reinstatement were granted in my Department.

School Accommodation Provision

187. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application for temporary classroom accommodation by a school (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44484/15]

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 for the provision of 2 mainstream classrooms to meet its 2015/16 accommodation needs.

The school has since contacted my Department to request provision of interim temporary accommodation for 1 mainstream class until the devolved permanent accommodation project is complete. The school’s application for temporary accommodation has been 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.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

188. **Deputy Shane Ross** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an application for a student grant by a person (details supplied) in Dublin 15 will be expedited; the reason for the delay; if Student Universal Support Ireland is aware that this student will be in danger of being forced to drop out of college if the grant is not urgently approved and paid out; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44492/15]

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

189. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Education and Skills her views on correspondence from a school principal regarding the proposed special educational needs programme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44518/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Deputy will be aware

that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has a statutory role under the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act to provide me with policy advice in relation to matters concerning the education of persons with special educational needs.

The NCSE published policy advice in 2013 which identified that the current model for allocating resource teachers to schools is potentially inequitable and recommended the development of a new allocation model.

In developing its policy advice the NCSE consulted widely with education partners, representatives from the school sector, parents, and disability representative bodies.

The NCSE recommended that a new model based on the profiled needs of each school, rather than on the diagnosed disability of individual children be developed.

Although there was widespread support for the implementation of the new model, there was not time to address all of the issues in relation to the proposed new model in time to allow for it to be implemented this year.

I therefore established a pilot of the new model, which is currently underway in 47 schools, and which will run for the duration of the current school year.

The pilot will test the practical impacts of the new model prior to full implementation. It will also review the experiences of the schools who participated in the pilot, which will assist us further in developing the model.

I can also confirm that consultation will continue to take place with education partners and stakeholders prior to the implementation of any new model.

School Services Staff

190. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will accept the arbitrator's findings in the recent arbitration process into the pay and remuneration of school secretaries and caretakers which recommended that increases be made to the hourly rates paid to workers, the changes she will make to the ancillary service grant and if she will provide advice and assistance to boards of management in schools on how to proceed if these recommendations are implemented; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44531/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The majority of primary and voluntary secondary schools in the Free Education Scheme now receive capitation grant assistance to provide for secretarial and/or caretaking services. Within the capitation grant schemes, it is a matter for each individual school to decide how best to apply the grant funding to suit its particular needs and the Department does not stipulate how these services are to be obtained. Where a school uses the grant funding to employ a secretary or caretaker, such staff are employees of individual schools. My Department therefore does not have any role in determining the pay and conditions under which they are engaged. These are matters to be agreed between the staff concerned and the school authorities.

Notwithstanding the above, my Department recently engaged in an arbitration process regarding the pay of School Secretaries and Caretakers who are employed using grant funding. The Arbitrator recommended increases in the hourly rates paid to School Secretaries and Caretakers and the establishment of a minimum hourly pay rate.

The Arbitrator's recommendations have now been accepted by both sides. My Department

will shortly issue a Circular to schools giving effect to the measures to apply from 1 January 2016, i.e. an increase of 2.5% in the hourly pay rate and the introduction of a minimum hourly rate of €10.25.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

191. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of applications for reinstatement, following retirement on grounds of ill health, with prior notice granted since 2004; the legislation, rules and procedures under which they were granted; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44556/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): My Department has not received any applications since 2004 for reinstatement, following retirement of staff on grounds of ill health.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

192. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare qualifies for a higher education grant; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44593/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): Under the terms of the student grant scheme, grant assistance is awarded to students who meet the prescribed conditions of funding, including those relating to nationality, residency, previous academic attainment and means.

The Deputy will appreciate that, in the absence of all of the relevant details that would be contained in an individual’s application form and supporting documentation, it is not possible to say whether or not a particular student would qualify for a grant.

The eligibility of the individual to which the Deputy refers is a matter for SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland) to determine upon receipt of the relevant application form and supporting documentation.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

193. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status and eligibility to reactivate a higher education grant in the future for a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44594/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Deputy will appreciate that, in the absence of all of the relevant details that would be contained in an individual’s application form and supporting documentation, it is not possible to say whether or not a particular student would qualify for a grant at some point in the future. This is a matter for SUSI to determine if/when the student reappplies for grant support.

In general terms the Student Support Scheme 2015 does provide an awarding authority with discretion to award a grant for a repeat period of study in exceptional circumstances under Article 15(8). An awarding authority will treat each application for repeat funding on a case by case basis and will have regard to issues such as the nature of the exceptional circumstances,

how it impacted on the applicant's capacity to sit exams and the documentary evidence provided by the applicant. Details of how this provision applies are available on SUSI's website at <http://susi.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/2015-Student-Grant-Scheme-Guidelines-for-an-Awarding-Authority.pdf>.

Teaching Qualifications

194. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare who holds a Bachelor of Arts in early childhood education is allowed to teach at primary school level, or if further qualification is required; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44606/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Under the Teaching Council Act, the Teaching Council is, since 2006, the body with statutory authority for the recognition and registration of teachers in the State.

Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act requires that a teacher be registered with the Teaching Council in order to be paid from Oireachtas-voted funds in respect of his/her employment in schools recognised for public funding.

The recruitment and appointment of teachers to fill teaching posts is a matter for the individual school authority, subject to procedures agreed under Section 24(3) of the Education Act 1998 (as amended by the Education (Amendment) Act 2012). The Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2015-2019 sets out the procedures for appointment of teachers and special needs assistants at primary level. Under my Department's Circular 31/2011 schools are required to employ teachers who are appropriately qualified.

Gaelscoil Issues

195. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills in view of the decision to close off Gaelcholáiste access to students in north eastern Kildare outside the catchment area of the closest such school in Lucan in County Dublin, her views regarding the total immersion form of education; if the expectation for enrolments being made has now been taken away for an unacceptable period; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44652/15]

196. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills why she is insisting that parents and students of north eastern Kildare again demonstrate sufficient viability for an immersion model of education, given that this demand is already long proven and is the basis upon which several Gaelscoileanna at primary level were established; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44653/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 195 and 196 together.

On 17 November last I announced the details of the new schools to be provided nationwide in 2017 and 2018. I also announced, in view of the anticipated enrolment numbers in the Irish-medium Aonad of Maynooth Community College and the continued support for a Gaelcholáiste in the North Kildare area, that a Gaelcholáiste will be established in 2019, subject to sufficient viability of the Aonad. My Department will continue to liaise with Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board and An Foras Pátrúnachta in this regard.

Among my Department's responsibilities is to ensure that schools in an area can, between

them, cater for all pupils seeking places in an area. In relation to enrolment policies, it is the responsibility of the managerial authorities of all schools to implement an enrolment policy in accordance with the Education Act, 1998. Parents can choose which school to apply to and where the school has places available the pupil should be admitted. It is only where a school is over-subscribed that it can deploy a selection process. This selection process and the enrolment policy on which it is based must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants.

The specific school in County Dublin to which the Deputy refers was established a number of years ago to cater for all-Irish post-primary demand in the area and was built to cater for 600 pupils. There is a refurbishment project in progress to provide 4 additional classrooms. In addition, 4 temporary classrooms and a science laboratory have recently been installed. The works being undertaken will increase the school's enrolment capacity to approximately 850 pupils.

School Curriculum

197. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Education and Skills her views regarding ending religious criteria for admissions to the model schools where she is the patron; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44654/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The model schools have their origin in the set of instructions drawn up by Chief Secretary Stanley in 1831 that empowered the Commissioners for National Education (National Education Board) to, inter alia, establish a model school for the training of teachers. From 1845 onwards model schools were established and managed by local inspectors. Model schools were found to be an unduly expensive method of training teachers, and their use for this purpose ceased from about 1883 onwards, the schools continuing to function as ordinary schools.

The functions of the National Education Board were taken over by the Department of Education and the model schools continued to be managed by inspectors and funded by the Department.

The Education Act 1998 placed the patronage of schools on a statutory basis. The Minister as owner of the model schools became the Patron of the model schools in accordance with the terms of the Act.

The schools operate as Catholic or Protestant schools in accordance with the historic traditions that go back to their foundation and the community to be served at the time they were established.

The Deputy will be aware that under the Equal Status Act, schools are not permitted to discriminate in admission on any of the grounds set out in the Act. However, the Act contains an exemption which permits schools in which the objective is to provide education that promotes certain religious values, to admit a student of a particular religion in preference to others.

I published the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill in early April of this year. While no amendment to the Equal Status Act has been included in the published Admission to Schools Bill I have since made clear my view that the Equal Status Act must be amended so that all schools are required to prioritise local children, regardless of their religion while building in protection for the small number of minority faith schools which serve dispersed communities.

This is a matter that needs to be addressed as a priority for the next Government so that it can be dealt with in advance of the next school year.

School Enrolments Data

198. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of extra school places provided since March 2011 in areas (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44655/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I wish to advise the Deputy that in the first named area to which she refers, a building project to provide for a 24 classroom primary school is currently under construction and is expected to be ready for occupation in early 2016.

With regard to the second area, a 24 classroom primary school was completed in May 2015. Both schools will provide for a capacity of approximately 635 pupils each.

In the adjoining area, a further building project for a 24 classroom primary school was completed in September 2014, providing capacity for approximately 635 pupils also.

A building project for a 1,000 pupil post-primary school in the first area referred to is included in the 6 Year Construction Programme that I announced on 17 November last, and is listed to proceed to tender and construction in 2016.

My Department continues to analyse demographic data on an ongoing basis, including County Dublin, to determine where further school accommodation might be needed in the future.

Early Start Programme

199. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the Early Start programme (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44656/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Early Start Pre School programme was established in 1994/1995 in 40 primary schools in designated areas of urban disadvantage in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Galway, Drogheda and Dundalk. The programme is aimed at children aged from 3 years and 2 months to 4 years and 7 months old.

It is a one year intervention scheme to meet the needs of children from disadvantaged backgrounds who are at risk of not reaching their potential within the school system. There is one fully qualified Primary School Teacher and one qualified Child Care Worker for every 30 students in every Early Start unit. Of the 40 Primary Schools, 15 have full units, with capacity for up to 60 students, and 25 half units, with capacity for up to 30 students each.

I am not aware of any shortages of qualified teachers for Early Start Units. The 55 Primary Teachers in question are part of each Primary School’s allocation of teachers and often switch between Junior infant classes, Senior infant classes and Early Start unit classes from year to year.

NAMA Social Housing Provision

200. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will request the National Asset Management Agency to build a greater percentage of houses for social housing than the 10% that it is mandated to allocate, given the

urgent need to deliver new social housing, especially for the many homeless families (details supplied). [44521/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) funding and financial decisions are a matter for NAMA in accordance with its statutory independent commercial mandate. However, I welcome the announcement by NAMA that, within the context of that mandate, 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. In line with residential planning and regulatory requirements, developments funded by NAMA are subject to policy relating to Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000. As such, I expect 10% of the output of this investment by NAMA, or about 2,000 units, to become available for social housing.

NAMA is already playing an important role in the delivery of social housing. To the end of September 2015, a total of 1,600 NAMA residential properties had been delivered for social housing use, comprising 1,241 completed properties and 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. An additional 440 properties are to be further appraised. Overall, I expect that initiative will result in over 2,000 units being made available for social housing purposes. My Department will continue to work closely with NAMA to ensure that maximum social housing benefit is gained through NAMA activities.

Information on NAMA social housing programme is available on the website of the Housing Agency at www.housing.ie/NAMA.

Local Authority Housing Repossessions

201. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to withdraw the new regulations on the repossession of local authority houses that are abandoned, given the difficulties this is causing. [44253/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): Section 15 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014 provides for a mechanism whereby a housing authority may terminate a tenancy and take possession of a house where it is satisfied that the house had been abandoned by the tenant. Section 16 of the Act makes provisions for an application to court in respect of a tenancy terminated under section 15, by a person who was a tenant immediately before the termination of a tenancy, where he or she considers that the housing authority failed to comply with the provisions of section 15, or did not have reasonable grounds for finding that the dwelling was unoccupied by the applicant's household or that the applicant's household did not intend to occupy the dwelling as its normal place of residence.

The implementation of these provisions, which came into operation on 3 April 2015, is a matter for local authorities. However, my Department, in consultation with local authorities, is keeping the overall operation of the legislation under on-going review.

Climate Change Negotiations

202. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Lo-

cal Government the position regarding the Conference of Parties 21 in Paris, France; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43469/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): COP21 is the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and is currently taking place in Paris until 11 December 2015. 196 Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change are currently in Paris in an effort to negotiate a new legally binding global agreement on climate change.

The Paris agreement should provide an enabling platform for all Parties to pursue low-carbon, climate-resilient sustainable development taking account of national circumstances and changes in those circumstances over time. The Agreement and supporting decisions should put the world on a collective pathway to limit the average global temperature increase to less than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. An ambitious agreement is in Ireland's interests – firstly, it will protect us from the impacts of climate change; secondly, it will allow us to pursue transition to a low-carbon future on a level playing field with other countries; and finally, some of Ireland's key partner countries from a development perspective are among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

The current negotiations are challenging for all countries and compromises will be required. It will be more important than ever to demonstrate the ability of Governments to work together to solve global problems and to meet challenges in a spirit of co-operation. The agreement therefore should be fit for purpose in terms of setting out a clear direction of travel for the long term, inclusive of core rules regarding participation and transparency.

Ireland's target under the new agreement will be part of the already tabled EU target of a reduction of at least 40% in domestic greenhouse gas emissions compared to 1990 by 2030, as agreed by the European Council in October 2014. No new targets will be agreed for Ireland in Paris – this will be discussed by EU Member States in 2016 in terms of the effort sharing process to be agreed at EU level.

The outcome of the Conference will need to send a strong signal to all actors that Governments are committed to supporting the transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient future. The Taoiseach underlined Ireland's specific commitment in this respect, when delivering our National Statement at COP 21 last week.

NAMA Social Housing Provision

203. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if an agreement has been made with the National Asset Residential Property Services Limited, the National Asset Management Agency social housing special purpose vehicle, on whether local authorities will be able to lease the social housing units to be constructed by the National Asset Management Agency at below market rates; or if it will lease them at market rates; and, if the latter, the details of the leasing arrangement between the local authorities and the National Asset Residential Property Services Limited and the number of social housing units that will be made available through the National Asset Residential Property Services Limited, as part of the National Asset Management Agency's construction of 20,000 private housing units. [44439/15]

204. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if the National Asset Management Agency's plan to deliver future Part V housing on its funded developments is a result of a statutory obligation on it, or if the agency's provision

of 10% of new developments was made by mutual agreement with him; and, if the latter, if there is scope for revising upwards the percentage of new agency constructed developments that are to be leased to local authorities for social housing. [44440/15]

205. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government why the social housing units delivered via the National Asset Residential Property Services Limited, the National Asset Management Agency social housing special purpose vehicle, are to be leased to local authorities as opposed to their ownership being transferred, as is ordinarily the case under Part V. [44441/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 203 to 205, inclusive, together.

The National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) continues to play an important role in the delivery of social housing. To the end of September 2015, a total of 1,600 NAMA residential properties had been delivered for social housing use, comprising 1,241 completed properties and 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. Overall, I expect that in excess of 2,000 units will be secured for social housing purposes from this engagement with NAMA.

In addition, NAMA is funding the construction of new residential properties to help meet demand in the major urban centres. The overall programme will be funded from NAMA's own resources and will lead to the development of an estimated 20,000 units by 2020, mainly in the Greater Dublin area where the current residential supply shortage is most acute. Residential developments funded by NAMA are subject to the same planning and regulatory requirements as all other developments and this includes policy relating to Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000. As such, I expect 10% of the output of this investment by NAMA, or about 2,000 units, to become available for social housing.

NAMA sourced units are brought into social housing use through existing delivery mechanisms including the Social Housing Investment Programme, the Capital Acquisition Scheme and the Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP). The mechanism utilised is, and will continue to be considered, taking issues such as value for money, the availability of Capital Funding and project specific details into account.

NAMA's Special Purpose Vehicle - the 'National Asset Residential Property Services' (NARPS) – was established in 2013 to facilitate the sale or lease of NAMA debtor or receiver residential properties for social housing purposes. In line with a commitment in the Social Housing Strategy, its remit has been expanded to allow it to fund the purchase of Part V units which become available through NAMA's residential delivery programme. In this way, NAMA will continue to facilitate the provision of high quality units for social housing purposes in mixed tenure, sustainable communities and thus complement the extensive social housing construction programmes of local authorities also currently underway.

At the end of September 2015, 858 or 48% of the social housing units delivered by NAMA were by way of long term leasing funded by the SHCEP. I expect by year end, this will be well in excess of 50%. The current average monthly cost of operational NAMA units leased by Approved Housing Bodies or local authorities, and funded by SHCEP, is €770 per unit per month. Monthly leasing arrangements under the SHCEP achieve significant discounts on market rents and are subject to regular rent reviews. In the case of NAMA related properties, average discounts achieved are in the region of 17% for houses and 12% for apartments. In addition, under these arrangements, rents are fixed for the first six years.

In the case of properties purchased, my Department does not distinguish the financing of NAMA sourced units from other sources of social housing supply. In every case, prices paid are determined by the independently determined market value.

Information on NAMA social housing programme is available on the website of the Housing Agency at www.housing.ie/NAMA.

NAMA Social Housing Provision

206. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government in light of the current housing crisis, why only 10% of the total stock to be delivered by the National Asset Management Agency is to be social housing; if this conflicts with recent commitments to increase the supply of social housing and, given the agency's capacity to supply housing stock, if he will task it to increase this percentage above 10% as a matter of urgency. [44444/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) funding and financial decisions are a matter for NAMA in accordance with its statutory independent commercial mandate. However, I welcome the announcement by NAMA that, within the context of that mandate, 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. In line with residential planning and regulatory requirements, developments funded by NAMA are subject to policy relating to Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000. As such, I expect 10% of the output of this investment by NAMA, or about 2,000 units, to become available for social housing.

NAMA is already playing an important role in the delivery of social housing. To the end of September 2015, a total of 1,600 NAMA residential properties had been delivered for social housing use, comprising 1,241 completed properties and 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. An additional 440 properties are to be further appraised. Overall, I expect that initiative will result in over 2,000 units being made available for social housing purposes. My Department will continue to work closely with NAMA to ensure that maximum social housing benefit is gained through NAMA activities.

Information on the NAMA social housing programme is available on the website of the Housing Agency at www.housing.ie/NAMA.

Motor Tax Yield

207. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the amount of road tax paid in County Louth and the proportion of same spent in the county in each of the years 2014 to date. [44481/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): Gross motor tax receipts (including payments made online at www.motortax.ie) in County Louth were €27,827,768 in 2014. Gross receipts to 30 November 2015 were €25,257,942. Income from Motor Tax currently accrues to the Local Government Fund (LGF). Other funding sources that contribute to the LGF are Local Property Tax (LPT) and a payment from the

Exchequer. Historically the LGF provided local authorities with finance for funding for some day-to-day activities (through General Purpose Grant allocations); for non-national roads; and for certain local government initiatives. This year an allocation of LPT has replaced General Purpose Grant allocations. The LGF continues to provide support for non-national roads via a payment to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (estimated at approximately €364m in 2015).

A summary of the funding, including the LPT allocation, provided by my Department directly to Louth County Council in 2014 and to date in 2015, is set out in the following table.

Year	Total €
2014	24,827,303.62
2015 (YTD)	23,654,153.16

Central Government funding to local authorities presents a complicated picture, with transfers coming from a range of Departments and Offices, for a variety of purposes, rather than solely from my Department. Some streams of funding are delivered directly from funding departments to local authorities, while others are routed through departmental agencies. The Comptroller and Auditor General reports on the Central Government funding of local authorities as part of his Annual Report which provides an overview of the funds flowing from and through central government sources to local authorities and the purposes for which funds have been provided. The most recent report is available at the following link: <http://www.audgen.gov.ie/documents/annualreports/2014/report/en/10%20central%20government%20funding%20of%20local%20authorities.pdf>.

Housing Finance Agency

208. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will review local authority home loans taken out in the 1970s and 1980s at exorbitant interest rates which persons are still paying back at a set rate and for which they never received an opportunity to change to a variable rate; if he will grant an amnesty to these persons and terminate the loans as they have paid the amounts multiple times over; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44485/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): I assume that the Question refers to income-related loans that were advanced by individual local authorities to individual borrowers between 1982 and May 1986, the associated funds for which were advanced to local authorities by the Housing Finance Agency (HFA). A total of €403m was advanced by local authorities under the income-related loan scheme and 15,571 mortgages were made available to borrowers. The most recent information sourced from local authorities refers to amounts at 30 June 2015, at which point 111 of these loans were still active and outstanding with a corresponding total loan balance of €4.8m.

Following a review of the income-related loan scheme, the Board of the HFA approved the following initiatives to be implemented with effect from 1 July 2015 with the aim of making these loans more affordable for the borrower and to help secure a pathway to full home ownership. From 1 July 2015, inflation was eliminated on these loans and the variable rate on income-related loans was reduced to bring it in line with the standard variable mortgage rate offered by local authorities.

No new loans have issued under this Scheme since 1986 and there are no plans to alter

this position. Individual local authorities administer these loans and deal directly with borrowers. I would advise any local authority borrower who is having difficulty meeting their loan repayments to contact their local authority. To assist local authorities in dealing with borrowers in financial distress, my Department issued revised guidelines for dealing with mortgage arrears within the local authority sector in June 2014. Dealing with Mortgage Arrears – A Guide for Local Authorities is available on my Department's website by clicking on the following link: <http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Housing/FileDownload,30943,en.pdf>.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

209. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide long-term funding to the atmospheric research station at Mace Head in County Galway, given its importance in continuing to measure climate and air pollution data; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44535/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The importance of the Mace Head Atmospheric Research Station, at local and indeed global levels, is recognised by all stakeholders involved in the collection and use of climate and air pollution data. The Station is owned and operated by the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG). It provides unique data on atmospheric change including data on the build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, which is associated with climate change. The Station provides a range of scientific reports which are among the most cited in this area of science. It also supplies on-going data on levels of air pollutants to the National Ambient Air Quality Network operated by the Environmental Protection Agency and other national and European agencies.

Due to its strategic location and importance the Mace Head Research facility has received considerable amounts of research funding from national, EU, US and other sources. Support for the work of the Station has been provided by the State to NUIG through the funding of research projects and the provision of scientific support for activities at the site, in particular by the EPA, but also by other national research funding bodies. My Department does not provide direct funding to NUIG for the operation of the Station.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

210. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of applications for reinstatement, following retirement on grounds of ill health, with prior notice granted since 2004; the legislation, rules and procedures under which they were granted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44557/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): There have been no applications made by former staff of my Department to be reinstated following retirement on grounds of ill health since 2004.

Local Authority Housing Provision

211. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if local authorities will endeavour to meet the housing requirements of those

already in emergency accommodation or those who are homeless and awaiting such accommodation, such as families living apart with various relatives, with consequent disruption to the needs of children; if urgent consideration will be given to such families as a priority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44608/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): My Department's role in relation to homelessness involves the provision of a national framework of policy, legislation and funding to underpin the role of housing authorities in addressing homelessness at local level. Statutory responsibility in relation to the provision of accommodation for homeless persons rests with individual housing authorities. My Department has no involvement in operational matters, such as those raised in the Question, which are a matter for the relevant housing authorities.

NAMA Social Housing Provision

212. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is satisfied with the availability of housing through the National Asset Management Agency for local authority housing applicants who may be able to access such accommodation by way of private rental arrangement, rent support or housing assistance payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44609/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): My Department is working closely with the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) to ensure that all opportunities to identify and secure housing units for social housing use are maximised. To the end of September 2015, a total of 1,600 NAMA residential properties had been delivered for social housing use, comprising 1,241 completed properties and 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. An additional 440 properties are to be further appraised. Overall, I expect that initiative will result in over 2,000 units being made available for social housing purposes.

In addition, NAMA expects to fund the construction of up to 20,000 new residential units, predominantly in Dublin and the neighbouring counties of Wicklow, Kildare and Meath, over the next five years. In line with residential planning and regulatory requirements, developments funded by NAMA are subject to policy relating to Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000. As such, I expect 10% of the output of this investment by NAMA, or about 2,000 units, to become available for social housing.

Given the vital importance of ensuring that, for social and economic reasons, new residential supply is delivered as quickly as possible, NAMA will work closely with local authorities and with utilities to ensure that all relevant bodies co-operate effectively to deliver the programme.

Information on NAMA social housing programme is available on the website of the Housing Agency at www.housing.ie/NAMA.

Local Authority Housing Applications

213. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government how he can simplify the process of local authority housing applications and reduce the time taken to process individual applications, given that the process is greatly impeded by the amount of documentation which is required and evaluated; and if he will make

a statement on the matter. [44610/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The procedures for assessing the eligibility of households for social housing support were updated in the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and the associated Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011. The Regulations prescribed a common application form to be used by all housing authorities. The information sought in the form reflects the eligibility and need criteria set down in the housing legislation which must be met by an applicant. To ensure that a housing authority is in a position to consider a household's application properly and fairly, this form must be completed fully and all relevant supporting documentation supplied. Failure to provide full information could result in an inaccurate assessment of the household's application, including an unwarranted negative decision regarding qualification.

Regulation 12 of the Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011 prescribes the timescales for the processing of applications by housing authorities for social housing support. In order for an application to be processed by a housing authority, the application form must be fully completed and any necessary additional information submitted by the applicant within the prescribed timescale.

In general, a housing authority should not take more than 12 weeks from the time of a valid application to complete its assessment. However, different timescales may apply where the housing authority requires additional information from the applicant within the relevant period, as defined in the Regulations. This process can lead to possible extensions to the 12 week timeline.

The assessment of applications for social housing support is solely a matter for housing authorities and I would expect that any additional information sought by a local authority would be appropriate, having regard to the circumstances of the household concerned.

I am satisfied that the current assessment process provides for an open and transparent system for identifying those households in need of social housing support. However, I am mindful of the need to ensure that any such system is not unnecessarily onerous on either applicants or housing authorities, and in the context of the review of social housing assessment procedures currently being undertaken as part of the broader social housing reform agenda outlined in the Social Housing Strategy 2020, the application form is being examined to identify any potential areas for improvement.

Local Authority Housing Waiting Lists

214. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has identified the ongoing monthly housing accommodation requirement for those on local authority housing waiting lists, given the pattern of the past 12 months; if he anticipates extra measures to address a potential increase in the number of families who cannot access rental accommodation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44611/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): In terms of the social housing need, the 2013 Summary of Social Housing Assessments identified some 89,872 households nationally as qualified as being in need of social housing supports. These results are the most up-to-date and reliable figures currently available. The majority of this number, 46,584 (52%), were found to be dependent on rent supplement and were therefore already supported in terms of housing by the State.

The results of the 2013 Assessments are based on a comprehensive review of households on

housing lists on a set date, which involved local authorities contacting individual households to confirm their continued requirement and qualification for social housing support.

All households which qualified for social housing support prior to 1 April 2011 were subjected to a full review to ascertain whether they met the new requirements under the 2011 Regulations, while those which qualified after 1 April 2011 were reviewed so as to ensure their continued compliance with the 2011 Regulations.

The 2013 figure is of course subject to on-going fluctuation due to households being allocated housing and new households applying. To take a snapshot of housing need in any given county, at a point in time in 2015, and compare it to the 2013 data, which was compiled as a result of rigorous analysis, has methodological weaknesses, which would distort the overall picture of need.

In terms of the Government's overall response, a shortage of supply is at the heart of the current challenges in the housing sector and the Government is addressing this on a number of fronts.

The Government's Construction 2020 Strategy, published last year, is aimed at addressing issues in the property and construction sectors and ensuring that any bottlenecks that might impede the sector in meeting the estimated residential demand of 25,000 units per annum are resolved. My Department and other relevant Government Departments and agencies are actively implementing the range of commitments set out therein. In addition, NAMA is aiming to deliver a target of 20,000 residential units before the end of 2020. 90% of these units will be in the greater Dublin area, with approximately 75% of the units being starter homes.

With regard to social housing delivery, the Social Housing Strategy 2020 sets out clear, measurable actions to increase the supply of social housing, reform delivery arrangements and meet the housing needs of all households on the social housing list. The Strategy has been supported by two successive budgets with €1.7 billion allocated to housing, with associated delivery targets of over 33,000 units across both Capital and Current programmes. Given the pressing need to recommence a house building programme almost €3 billion in capital funding will be provided in support of the Social Housing Strategy under the Government's Capital Plan - Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021.

The unprecedented support and funding being allocated to bring vacant and boarded-up social housing units back into use is a notable example of the Social Housing Strategy's focused and realistic approach. Over 2,300 units were delivered in 2014, and I expect 2,500 units to be completed in 2015.

The implementation of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme is a key Government priority and a major pillar of the Social Housing Strategy. There are currently more than 5,400 households in receipt of HAP and the scheme has been rolled out to all categories of household in 18 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.

In recognition of the need for greater flexibility in the challenging Dublin region rental market, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform and I have signed the Housing Assistance Payment (Amendment) (No.4) Regulations 2015, which provide for the introduction of HAP in Kildare and Meath County Councils with maximum rent limits equivalent to current Rent Supplement rates applicable in the neighbouring Dublin areas. These regulations also provide for an additional 20% flexibility above the maximum rent limits that apply for the purposes of HAP in the administrative areas of Cork City Council, Cork County Council, Galway County

Council, Kildare County Council and Meath County Council, where this is necessary to source suitable accommodation for a household that is qualified for social housing support.

On 10 November 2015, Government approval was given to a package of measures to address rent stability and housing supply. The measures will act to stabilise rents in the short to medium term while the additional supply of housing comes on stream. 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 4 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.

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>.

Cognisant of the difficulty faced by households in accessing the housing market, Budget 2016 provided for an affordable rental pilot scheme, with €10 million being made available. The Scheme will be an on-going annual commitment to secure a long term increase in the supply of affordable properties to meet the needs of those households that would struggle to make rental payments under present market conditions. Details of the Scheme are currently being finalised in my Department and will be completed by end-year, for rollout in early 2016.

Through these and other actions delivered to date under the Social Housing Strategy, Minister Coffey and I have been actively supporting all local authorities to increase the supply of social housing to meet the housing needs of all households on the housing list, with flexibility to meet future demand. Moreover, in order to get the most accurate data relating to the numbers applying for social housing support, the Strategy includes a commitment to undertake social housing assessments on an annual basis from 2016 onwards.

Local Authority Housing Data

215. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of housing units allocated by local authority for each of the past seven years to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44636/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): My Department does not hold information on the allocation of social housing supports to individual households on the waiting lists of individual local authorities, whether by local authority housing or other accommodation provided by an authority. The allocation of such support is a matter for each authority in accordance with its allocation scheme made under the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009.

Flood Prevention Measures

216. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is in consultation with the Office of Public Works and the local authorities to address ongoing flood prevention and management issues arising from the experience of the past number of years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44637/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): While my Department co-ordinates the national level response to several types of severe weather emergencies, including flooding, it has no role in relation to flood prevention or flood management. The development of flood prevention and protection measures is solely a matter for the Office of Public Works, which is the Lead Agency for flood risk management.

I can advise the Deputy, however, that my Department in partnership with the Office of Public Works, published *Guidelines for Planning Authorities on the Planning System and Flood Risk Management* in November 2009 with the aim of ensuring a more consistent, rigorous and systematic approach to flood risk identification, assessment and management within the planning system. These statutory guidelines provide the basis for planning authorities to identify, assess and take appropriate steps to manage flood risk in a sustainable manner.

Wind Energy Guidelines

217. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if and when the revised guidelines on wind farms will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44638/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): In December 2013, my Department published proposed “draft” revisions to the noise, setback distance and shadow flicker aspects of the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines. These draft revisions proposed:

- the setting of a more stringent day and night noise limit of 40 decibels for future wind energy developments,
- a mandatory minimum setback distance of 500 metres between a wind turbine and the nearest dwelling for amenity considerations, and
- the complete elimination of shadow flicker between wind turbines and neighbouring dwellings.

A public consultation process was initiated on these proposed draft revisions to the Guidelines, which ran until 21 February 2014. My Department received submissions from 7,500 organisations and members of the public during this public consultation process. It is intended that the revisions to the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines will be finalised as soon as possible. In this regard, account has to be taken of the extensive response to the public consultation in framing the final guidelines. Further work is also advancing to develop technical appendices to assist planning authorities with the practical application of the noise measurement aspects of the Wind Guidelines. My Department is advancing work on the Guidelines in conjunction with the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

The revisions to the Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006, when finalised, will be issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Planning authorities, and, where applicable, An Bord Pleanála are required to have regard to guidelines issued under Section 28 in the performance of their functions under the Planning Acts.

Housing Adaptation Grant Funding

218. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if funding for housing adaptation grants in County Kildare is adequate to

meet requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44639/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): I allocated total funding for 2015 of €50.5m nationally for the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability. This represents a 10% increase on the funding available in 2014. The allocation to Kildare County Council for 2015 for the grants was €2,429,000. To date Kildare County Council has drawn down 77% of its allocation and has not sought additional exchequer funding for the grants in 2015. The detailed administration of these grant schemes, including the assessment, approval and prioritisation of grants to applicants under the various grant measures is the responsibility of the relevant local authority.

Housing Estates

219. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which various estates awaiting taking-in-charge by the local authority have been progressed in the past five years, with particular reference to addressing compliant issues to the satisfaction of Kildare County Council in respect of all or any development, the completion of which has been impeded by issues relating to the economic collapse; the extent to which he continues to liaise with the local authority in regard to such matters; the progress he expects over the next 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44641/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): Service indicators published annually by the Local Government Management Agency include details of private residential estates taken in charge by individual planning authorities, including Kildare County Council. My Department recently wrote to all planning authorities requesting details of housing estates not yet taken in charge in their respective functional areas in order to assist in the further development and implementation of policy in this area. As regards unfinished housing developments, I understand that considerable progress has been made by Kildare County Council in resolving outstanding issues, which is reflected in the annual National Housing Development Survey results published on my Department's website at:

<http://www.environ.ie/en/DevelopmentHousing/Housing/UnfinishedHousingDevelopments/> and on the Housing Agency's website at: <http://www.housing.ie/our-services/unfinished-housing-developments.aspx>.

Unfinished Housing Developments

220. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which funding made available over the past five years for the completion of unfinished estates in the administrative areas of the various local authorities has been sufficient to meet the requirements to his and the local authorities' satisfaction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44642/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): Since 2010, an annual national housing survey of unfinished housing developments has been conducted during the summer months to monitor progress. In that period, the number of unfinished housing developments has decreased by approximately two-thirds, from nearly 3,000 in 2010 to 992 in 2014. The detailed findings of the annual surveys, annual progress reports and other useful publications and information in relation to Un-

finished Housing Developments are available on the Housing Agency's website at: <http://www.housing.ie/Our-Services/Unfinished-Housing-Developments.aspx>

As Minister for Housing and Planning and Coordination of Construction 2020, I chair the National Coordination Committee on Unfinished Housing Developments. The Committee has adopted a collaborative approach amongst its constituent members to promote the work of resolving the housing situation faced by residents of unfinished housing developments.

The Government has taken a number of significant steps to address the issue of Unfinished Housing Developments. My Department launched the Public Safety Initiative (PSI) in March 2011, which provided funding to address immediate public safety issues. The types of works that have been approved to date under the PSI include the fencing off of unsecured and hazardous areas, capping of pipes, installation of street lighting and other works to secure sites. Under the PSI, there were a total of 144 claims in respect of 23 local authorities which resulted in €3.628 million being drawn down.

To assist further in addressing the legacy of unfinished housing developments, Budget 2014 contained a special provision, in the form of a targeted €10m Special Resolution Fund (SRF). The SRF is designed to encourage the resolution of the remaining tranche of unfinished developments identified in the National Housing Development Survey 2013 and, particularly, those developments not likely to be resolved in the normal way through solely developer/owner/funder action because of the presence of specific financial barriers. The SRF was particularly targeted to address the remaining unfinished developments with residents living in them and, in particular, any developments that local authorities identified, for the purposes of the Local Property Tax exemption, as in a seriously problematic condition.

On 2 May 2014, SRF allocations to 86 housing developments across the country were announced. Further information is available at the following link:

<http://www.environ.ie/en/DevelopmentHousing/Housing/News/MainBody,37940,en.htm>.

This public investment aimed to leverage an additional €12m from third parties (developers/lenders/bonds) which will be invested in these estates. The SRF has enabled very substantial progress to be made in resolving as many of the remaining unfinished developments as possible.

The 2015 National Housing Development Survey and the Annual Progress Report are due for completion shortly and I will be publishing the results. I am confident that good progress is continuing to be made in resolving unfinished developments and the reactivation of sites is now evident throughout the country.

Derelict Sites

221. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which derelict, incomplete or abandoned sites in various local authority administrative areas continue to remain a focus for him with particular reference to the urgent need to bring about early improvement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44643/15]

222. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which derelict, incomplete or abandoned sites and developments in the various towns and villages in County Kildare continue to remain a focus for him, with particular reference to the need to encourage every effort to address the issues outstanding and present in all towns and villages in a modern, business-orientated fashion; and if he will

make a statement on the matter. [44644/15]

223. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he continues to address derelict sites or abandoned developments in or adjacent to the various towns and villages which were adversely affected by the economic collapse; if he will encourage the reactivation of such development; if he will examine any administrative procedures which might impede bringing matters to an early satisfactory conclusion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44645/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): I propose to take Question Nos. 221 to 223, inclusive, together.

The Derelict Sites Act 1990 provides that local authorities are required to take all reasonable steps, including the exercise of appropriate statutory powers, to ensure that any land within their functional area does not become, or continue to be, a derelict site. To this end, local authorities have been given substantial powers under the Act in relation to any such sites, including powers to require specified measures to be taken in relation to a derelict site, to impose a levy on sites which are included in the local authority's derelict sites register, or to compulsorily acquire any derelict site. It is a matter for local authorities to determine the most appropriate use of the legislation within their respective functional areas.

Derelict sites throughout the State, particularly in urban areas, continue to remain a focus for my Department, and whereas the administration of the legislation at local level is a matter for the relevant local authority, my Department updates, on an annual basis, a Schedule of Urban Areas designated by local authorities as areas in which the derelict site levy can be applied in line with the provisions of the Act. The latest update of this Schedule (for 2015) is nearing completion.

The recently enacted Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 introduced a new measure, the vacant site levy, which is aimed at incentivising the development and use of vacant, under-utilised sites in urban areas. When it becomes operational from 2019 onwards, it is envisaged that the levy will be instrumental in bringing vacant, underutilised sites into beneficial use for housing and urban regeneration purposes. To avoid a double levy situation in the case of any individual site, the Act provides that the derelict site levy shall not be payable in respect of any land on which the vacant site levy will be payable.

Town and village renewal is being supported on an on-going basis by the suite of measures introduced by the Government as set out in the reply to the Deputy's recent Parliamentary Question No. 235 of 5 November 2015 on the matter, and in my more recent reply to the Deputy's Topical Interest Debate motion on 11 November 2015.

White Paper on Energy

224. **Deputy Shane Ross** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when he will publish the energy policy White Paper; if it deals with micro-generation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44487/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): I intend to publish the White Paper on Energy Policy in Ireland on 16 December. The White paper will discuss the role that micro-generation can play in transforming and enhancing the way homes, businesses, communities and citizens use energy.

In addition, on 31 July, 2015 the Department launched a consultation on a new support scheme for renewable electricity. As part of the emerging design process, the potential of providing support to microgeneration will be considered. While the initial phase of the consultation closed on 18 September 2015, there will be two further opportunities to contribute at key stages in the design of any new scheme.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

225. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of applications for reinstatement, following retirement on grounds of ill health, with prior notice granted since 2004; the legislation, rules and procedures under which they were granted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44554/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): My Department has granted no reinstatements since its establishment in June 2007.

Swimming Pool Programme Status

226. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he directly or through the aegis of the local authorities has engaged with the relevant support groups in north Kildare on the provision of a new swimming pool, either via the local authority or in conjunction with Maynooth university; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44640/15]

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

The current round of the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme was closed to new applicants on 31 July 2000. Since 2000, 58 projects have or are being dealt with under the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme of which 50 have been completed and the other 8 projects are at various stages of the Programme. I wish to commence the process of opening a new limited round of swimming pool allocations and I have asked my departmental officials to report back to me on this matter.

As the Deputy is aware, I met with Kildare County Council and a number of public representatives, including Deputy Durkan, in mid July. It was agreed that Kildare County Council would write to my Department on the matter but no submission has yet been received.

Road Network

227. **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. [44488/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy is aware, 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 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 (including the N70) 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. He should advise my private office if he does not receive a reply within ten working days.

Public Transport Fares

228. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the latest fare hikes introduced by Dublin Bus and the justification for the increase which will see a five-day bus pass increase to €35.50, as this will particularly affect persons who rely on public transport; and his plans to address this. [44496/15]

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. She should advise my private office if she does not receive a response within ten working days.

Airport Passenger Data

229. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of passengers who travelled through airports in the past year for which records are available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44528/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The total number of passengers that travelled through the three State airports and the four regional airports at Knock, Kerry, Donegal and Waterford in 2014 was 26,564,498.

Public Service Obligation Services

230. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of public service obligation air services he subsidises, the details of each service by destination, annual cost and number of passengers carried; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44529/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): There are currently two Public Service Obligation (PSO) air services funded by my Department operating between Donegal and Dublin and Kerry and Dublin.

A new contract for these two services commenced on 1 February 2015 following a competitive tendering process. Both routes are operated by Stobart Air at an average cost per annum of €7.6m. This contract will operate for two years initially and subject to a satisfactory review after 18 months, the contract may be extended for an additional year.

Over the ten-month period since the commencement of the new contract on 1 February up to 30 November last, a total 22,800 passengers were carried on the Donegal/Dublin PSO air service and 41,200 on the Kerry/Dublin PSO air service.

Regional Airports Closures

231. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount of capital expenditure and of operational expenditure support he paid or allocated to regional airports during the past five years and in 2015 to date, and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44530/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Details of Capex and Opex funding support provided by my Department to the regional airports for the years 2011-2014 are given in the following tables. Final figures for 2015 will not be available until after year end. However, I anticipate that, in total, Capex funding for the four regional airports at Knock, Kerry, Donegal and Waterford will amount to approximately €2.15m this year while Opex will amount to €2.27m approximately. As the Deputy will be aware, funding support this year will include Capex and Opex supports for non-economic safety and security related activities under the Public Policy Remit aspects of our new Regional Airports Programme 2015-2019. In addition to these supports, the annual cost of supporting the PSO air services on the Kerry/Dublin and Donegal/Dublin routes is approximately €7.6m. This subvention is paid directly to the air carrier, Stobart Air.

CAPEX (Capital Grants)	2014 - € ,000	2013 - € ,000	2012 - € ,000	2011 - € ,000
Donegal	432	339	0	2,111
Galway	0	0	0	222
Kerry	133	741	1,634	399
Knock	1,925	2,013	699	233
Sligo	0	0	0	238
Waterford	533	362	1,334	796
Total	3,023	3,455	3,667	3,999

OPEX (Operational Expenditure Support)	2014 - € ,000	2013 - € ,000	2012 - € ,000	2011 - € ,000
Donegal	0	0	111	42
Galway	0	0	0	2,309
Kerry	507	437	550	950
Knock	549	654	590	432
Sligo	0	0	0	387
Waterford	1,038	1,121	1,233	1272
Total	2,094	2,212	2,484	5,392

Departmental Staff Rehiring

232. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of applications for re-instatement, following retirement on grounds of ill-health, with prior notice granted since 2004; the legislation, rules and procedures under which they were granted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44564/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): There have been no applications for reinstatement, following retirement on grounds of ill health, granted since 2004 in my Department. Circular 22 of 2007: Ill-Health Retirement from the Civil Ser-

vice sets out the procedures and legislation under which such retirements may occur.

Road Network

233. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will ensure a substantial increase in the grant allocation for non-national roads to Cavan County Council in 2016, given the deteriorating condition of many roads there; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44632/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads in Cavan is the statutory responsibility of Cavan 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. Ireland has just under 100,000 kilometres of road in its network and the maintenance and improvement of national, regional and local roads places a substantial financial burden on local authorities and on the Exchequer. Because of the national financial position, there have been very large reductions in Exchequer funding available for roads over the past number of years. Funding in 2008 was €2.3 billion while funding this year is around €760 million for the national, regional and local road network. The reality is that funding will continue to be tight for the next number of years.

Local authorities are aware that it is a matter for each Council to determine its priorities and to allocate funding accordingly. Given funding constraints, my objective has to be to allocate funding to local authorities on as equitable basis as possible. The main grant categories are, therefore, based on road lengths in each local authority's area of responsibility.

The RLR allocations for next year have yet to be decided but I expect to announce the details early next year. It is important to reiterate that State grants are intended to supplement local authorities' own resources. In this context, I am emphasising to Councils that the commitment of local authorities to contribute significantly from their own resources, towards the cost of improving and maintaining the regional and local roads network is essential.

Scéim Tacaíochta Teaghlaigh

234. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pearse Doherty** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an dtabharfaidh sí sonraí faoin tacaíocht atá á cur ar fáil ag Údarás na Gaeltachta do chomhlacht i nDún na nGall (sonraí tugtha) agus gníomhaíochtaí an chomhlachta curtha ar fionraí go sealadach le déanaí; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [44502/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): Tuigim ó Údarás na Gaeltachta go bhfuil réimse tacaíochtaí - deontais caipitil agus margaíochta den chuid is mó - curtha ar fáil acu don chomhlacht atá luaite ag an Teachta ó bunaíodh an comhlacht in 2008. Tuigim ón Údarás go bhfuil deontas de €219,742 íoctha acu leis an gcomhlacht, go bhfuil foirgneamh ar léas ag an gcomhlacht ón Údarás agus go bhfuil naonúr fostaithe ar an meán ag an gcomhlacht thar na tréimhse seacht mbliana sin. Tuigim ón Údarás fosta go ndearna an comhlacht cinneadh le gairid deireadh a chur le trádáil go sealadach de bharr treoir atá faighte aige ó OPITO (Offshore Petroleum Industry Training Organization), an eagraíocht a dhéanann teastasú ar roinnt de chúrsaí oiliúna an chomhlachta. De réir mar a thuigim ón Údarás, thug OPITO treoir don chomhlacht ag deireadh mí na Samhna deireadh a chur láithreach leis na cúrsaí creidiúnaithe OPITO atá á dtairiscint agus á reáchtáil ag an gcom-

hlacht.

Tuigim ón Údarás go bhfuil gach iarracht á déanamh ag an gcomhlacht féin teacht ar réiteach ar an gceist seo. Tá teagmháil rialta idir an tÚdarás agus an comhlacht ar an ábhar. Déanfaidh an tÚdarás gach gur féidir leis, taobh istigh de na scéimeanna tacaíochta atá ar fáil dó, le tacú leis an gcomhlacht chun réiteach a fháil ar na deacrachtaí seo.

Wildlife Protection

235. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the review of section 40 of the Wildlife Act, as regards the extension of the season for controlled burning of mountain gorse and for hedge cutting; if she will finalise the necessary legislation in this Government's term; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44525/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Section 40 of the Wildlife Acts 1976, as amended, prohibits the cutting, grubbing, burning or destruction of vegetation, with certain strict exemptions, from 1 March to 31 August during the nesting and breeding season for birds and wildlife. Vegetation such as hedgerows and scrub is important as wildlife habitat and needs to be managed in the interests of both farming and biodiversity. In that regard, a review of the current legislative provisions was initiated to ensure that they remain both effective and balanced.

The submissions received, during a public consultation process on the matter, have been published on the website of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department at <http://www.npws.ie/legislation>. Following the end of the public consultation period, I established a Working Group, consisting of officials from my Department, to consider the submissions received and to report back to me with a range of proposals. I expect to announce the outcome of the review in the near future.

Any changes to the closed period for cutting, grubbing, burning or destruction of vegetation, as provided for in section 40 of the Wildlife Acts 1976-2012, would require amending legislation.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

236. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of applications for re-instatement, following retirement on grounds of ill-health, with prior notice granted since 2004; the legislation, rules and procedures under which they were granted; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44552/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department was established on 2 June 2011. I am advised that, since that date, there have been no applications for reinstatement following retirement on ill health grounds.