

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 8, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions Nos. 9 to 34, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 35 to 44, inclusive, answered orally.

North-South Interconnector

45. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his views on using an underground alternative to the North-South interconnector employing high-voltage direct-current technology; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44810/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): As the Deputy will be aware, EirGrid made a formal application for the North-South Transmission Line project to An Bord Pleanála on 9 June 2015. I am constrained, therefore, in what I can say in relation to the project other than the provision of factual information.

The North-South Transmission Line project is part of EirGrid's plans to upgrade the national electricity transmission system. It is a strategically urgent project that will remove restrictions limiting cross-border power flows between Ireland and Northern Ireland and strengthen security of electricity supply throughout the island of Ireland.

Since the project was initiated, there have been numerous studies into the option of using an underground alternative for the project.

In July 2014, a Government-appointed Independent Expert Panel provided its opinion on whether EirGrid had adequately examined this matter. It found that the studies and work undertaken were compatible with the methodologies being employed on the Grid West and Grid Link projects.

On 27 March 2015 EirGrid published a new independently peer reviewed draft Strategy which found that there remains a clear need for the North-South Transmission Line project, and that the existing proposal for a 400kV overhead line remains the most appropriate solution for the project.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

46. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural

Resources if the national high-speed broadband scheme will be rolled out to the most isolated areas first, as they are the least likely ever to receive a commercial high-speed broadband service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44661/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White):

The Government's National Broadband Plan aims to ensure that every citizen and business, regardless of location, has access to a high quality, high speed broadband service. This will be achieved through a combination of commercial investments and a State led intervention in areas where commercial services will not be provided.

Last November I published a national high speed coverage map for 2016. This map is available at www.Broadband.gov.ie. The map shows Ireland with two colours, BLUE and AMBER and was developed based on the most up to date information available at the time of publication. The areas marked BLUE represent those areas where commercial providers are either currently delivering or have plans to deliver high speed broadband services by the end of 2016. The areas marked AMBER represent the target areas for the proposed State intervention. The High Speed Map contains a breakdown of premises covered per townland.

Over 40 responses were received following the publication of the NBP proposed Intervention Strategy in July last. Non-confidential versions of these submissions have been published and can be accessed at www.Broadband.gov.ie

Meanwhile, my Department continues to review the technical and financial detail relating to potential new commercial investment proposals.

I expect to finalise the strategy and move to formal procurement phase before the end of the year.

The prospective bidder(s) are experts in network roll-out and each will offer different network architectures and technologies to deliver the network. It is proposed to engage with the winning bidder(s) on the optimum rollout strategy, and on the sequencing of the network deployment to maximise efficiencies during network build, having regard to business and consumer needs, and to areas of particularly poor service and areas of strong demand. All these factors will need to be balanced against the most efficient network rollout and will be agreed during the procurement process.

The Government is determined to ensure that the network is built out as quickly as possible and engagement with industry stakeholders has indicated that this could be achieved within 3-5 years of the contract award.

In this context, the NBP proposes that through the combination of commercial investment and State intervention, 85% of addresses in Ireland will have access to high speed services by 2018 with an ambition of 100% coverage by end of 2020.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

47. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the status of the commitment to provide high-speed broadband to every house and business in County Donegal and the deadline for this; if the Government has failed the people of County Donegal, given that 52% of homes and businesses in the county do not have access to high-speed broadband after this Government's five years in office; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44830/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White):

The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to ensure that every citizen and business, regardless of location, has access to a high quality, high speed broadband service. This will be achieved through a combination of commercial investments and a State led intervention in areas where commercial services will not be provided.

On 29 September last the Government approved an allocation of €275m for the National Broadband Plan, which will provide the initial stimulus required to deliver the Government's intervention. Combined with commercial investment, this will ensure that 85% of Ireland's premises have high speed broadband by 2018, with an ambition of 100% coverage by 2020.

The High Speed Broadband Map 2016, published on 24th November 2014 was developed by my Department to establish the National Broadband Plan (NBP) Intervention Areas. This Map shows where access to high speed broadband services provided on a commercial basis are expected to be in place by the end of 2016 and where the Government may intervene to enable access to high speed broadband.

I am informed by the commercial operators that next generation broadband services have been rolled out to 21,200 premises to date in Co Donegal with a further 27,200 expected to be served over the next 18 months. The remaining 52,000 premises in Co Donegal will be covered be the target for the proposed State intervention under the National Broadband Plan, subject to examination of any further commercial development plans in the area. The breakdown of premises covered, per townland, is available on the High Speed Broadband Map at www.broadband.gov.ie

In July last, following intensive consultations, stakeholder engagement and detailed financial, strategy, economic, legal, technical analysis, I published the draft Intervention strategy and 7 accompanying expert reports. Over 40 responses were received following the publication of the NBP proposed Intervention Strategy. Non-confidential versions of these submissions have been published and can be accessed at www.Broadband.gov.ie.

The planned period for the rollout of the State Intervention is 2016 to 2020 and the Department has revised the investment period under assessment to also include investments in the period 2016 – 2020.

Meanwhile, my Department continues to review the technical and financial detail relating to potential new commercial investment proposals. I expect to proceed to formal procurement before the end of the year.

This is a complex project and I have continually underlined the importance of a conclusive process that delivers for all citizens. This ambitious objective, combined with the need to adhere rigorously to EU State Aid and procurement law obligations, required intensive preparation, engagement with stakeholders and very detailed analysis.

Through the combination of commercial investment and State intervention, 85% of addresses in Ireland will have access to high speed services by 2018 with an ambition of 100% coverage by end of 2020.

Hydraulic Fracturing

48. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he can provide assurances that there are no potential adverse health impacts from hydraulic fracturing, if it were to proceed; and if he will make a statement on the

matter. [44823/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy will be aware, the EPA has commissioned a research programme into the potential impacts of Unconventional Gas Exploration and Extraction on the environment and human health. It should be noted that the draft Terms of Reference for this programme were the subject of a public consultation process which resulted in an amended and strengthened scope for the programme, including a key recommendation that the potential impacts from Unconventional Gas Exploration and Extraction on human health be considered as part of the project.

In this regard, the Tender Documents refer specifically to potential health impacts deriving from impacts on environmental media, including exposure to chemicals, vibration, light, noise, and the potential pollution of environmental media, including soils, air and water.

This all-island research programme will also specifically consider the potential role of Health Impact Assessment in the regulation of Unconventional Gas Exploration and Extraction projects and operations based on the experience in other countries, and will make recommendations towards developing a protocol in an island of Ireland context.

However, I would like to stress that any requirement for Health Impact Assessment into Unconventional Gas Exploration and Extraction would only arise if an application to carry out a development proposing the use of this technology were being considered.

As I have advised previously, no application to engage in Unconventional Gas Exploration and Extraction has been received in my Department, nor would any such application, if submitted, be considered until the research programme has concluded and there has been time to consider its findings. Any policy decision will be taken in the context of the objective of achieving a low carbon energy system by 2050.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

49. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when the updated area intervention map for the national broadband plan will be published; if he is aware of concerns that delays with private operator investment for expansion are occurring on account of the planned intervention; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44804/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The National Broadband Plan aims to ensure that every citizen and business, regardless of location, has access to a high quality, high speed broadband service. This will be achieved through a combination of commercial investments and a State led intervention in areas where commercial services will not be provided. The Plan aims to ensure that 85% of all premises in Ireland have access to high speed broadband by 2018, with 100% having access by 2020. Currently approximately 1.2m premises have access to services and it is expected that 1.6m premises (70%) will have access by the end of next year.

While I have no input into formulating the plans of commercial operators, I can assure the deputy that the Department strongly encourages commercial investment under the National Broadband Plan. Our objective is to ensure that through the combination of these investments and the State intervention, we will deliver quality, high speed services for every citizen, regardless of where they live or work.

The European State Aid Guidelines for Broadband require Member States to thoroughly evaluate any commercial plans so as to ensure that State Aid is confined to those areas where commercial investment in high speed broadband services is unlikely to occur in the foreseeable future. The planned period for the rollout of the State Intervention is 2016 to 2020. The High Speed Broadband Map 2016, which was published last year, related to the period up to end 2016. The Department has now revised the investment period under assessment in order to consider future Next Generation Access (NGA) investment plans of commercial operators up to 2020.

The Department has undertaken a comprehensive assessment of commercial investment plans submitted to date and has recently published a document 'Mapping future high speed broadband networks', which sets out the Department's process for assessing operator plans and the commitments it expects from operators. It is critically important that Government can be assured that such plans will materialise in full. A further update on the High Speed Broadband Map is planned to be published by my Department before the end of this year.

Wind Energy Guidelines

50. **Deputy Helen McEntee** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the status of his engagement with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government concerning justifiable and important environmental concerns expressed by the people of County Meath relating to Ireland's wind energy guidelines and the proposed North-South interconnector project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44828/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): In December 2013, the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government began a review of the existing Wind Energy Development Guidelines. The review focused on the specific issues of noise, proximity, and shadow flicker. Submissions were received from around 7,500 organisations and members of the public during the public consultation period.

This is a very technical area and the engagement between the two departments is on-going. Studies have been obtained on various aspects of the issues, particularly noise - including separation distance - and detailed assessments of various options have been undertaken by the two Departments.

Any revisions to the guidelines following the conclusion of deliberations will be introduced by issuing the revised guidelines to planning authorities under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

In terms of the proposed North-South Transmission Line project, EirGrid, in discharging its duties as operator and developer of the national transmission grid, engages with communities and citizens on an on-going basis.

There has been extensive public consultation on the North-South Transmission Link project including statutory consultation as required under Regulation (EU) No. 347/2013 on guidelines for trans-European energy infrastructure and Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended.

EirGrid has also opened offices in Navan, Cootehill, and Carrickmacross and has appointed Community Liaison Officers and Agricultural Liaison Officers who are all involved in outreach to the local communities along the intended route of the North-South Transmission Line project.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

51. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the ownership of the broadband infrastructure as part of the national broadband plan intervention strategy; the cost to the public Exchequer; and the date for the construction of this project. [44814/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to ensure that every citizen and business, regardless of location, has access to a high quality, high speed broadband service. This will be achieved through a combination of commercial investments and a State led intervention in areas where commercial services will not be provided.

The proposed State intervention under the National Broadband Plan (NBP) represents a very significant capital investment project for the State.

On 29 September the Government published its 6 year Capital Plan, *Building on Recovery*, which included an allocation of €275m for the National Broadband Plan. This will provide the initial stimulus required to deliver the Government's intervention.

Funding of €75m is committed through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); state expenditure of €150m is required before the €75m under the European Regional Development Fund can be drawn down.

On 14 July last I published a detailed draft Intervention Strategy for public consultation. The strategy addressed a number of issues in relation to the intervention among these the proposed ownership model for the infrastructure. The options ranged from a commercial stimulus model, in which a limited amount of Government funding is used to stimulate commercial investment in the intervention area, to a fully owned public utility, funded entirely by the Exchequer.

This consultation closed on 25 September last. 41 submissions were received to the public consultation and non-confidential versions of these submissions are available on the Department's website www.broadband.gov.ie.

These submissions have been carefully considered and the Intervention Strategy is now being updated in advance of moving to formal procurement by the end of the year. The ownership model is being considered as part of this process.

Regardless of which ownership option is chosen, the exact amount of funding required will ultimately be determined by a competitive procurement process. It would not therefore be appropriate in advance to speculate on the potential cost. Bidders will be expected to meet the standards set out in the finalised strategy, at least cost to the Exchequer.

The Department will design a tender in a way that maximises efficiencies and keeps the cost of the network build as low as possible. I anticipate that the physical build of this network will commence from 2016 and be completed by 2020.

The Government is determined to ensure that the network is built out as quickly as possible and engagement with industry stakeholders has indicated that this could be achieved within 3 to 5 years of the contract award. Our aim is to ensure that 85% of Ireland's premises have high speed broadband by 2018, with an ambition of 100% coverage by 2020.

Energy Resources

52. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the action he has taken to ensure Whitegate oil refinery in County Cork will remain in operation after July 2016. [44817/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The Whitegate refinery was privatised as a result of its sale by the State in 2001. Under the terms of the sale, the owners are obliged to continue to operate the refinery for a minimum of fifteen years, a commitment which remains in place until July 2016. Thereafter the future of the refinery is a commercial decision for the owners.

The Government views the continued operation of the Whitegate refinery on a commercial basis as highly desirable from an energy security and economic perspective. Security of supply remains a fundamental tenet of our energy policy. Officials from my Department and I have been in regular contact with the management of the Whitegate refinery and have also met several times with union representatives. Officials from my Department have also discussed the future of refining with the Irish Petroleum Industry Association and with other Government Departments and public bodies. I have recently met a number of my Cabinet colleagues to discuss the refinery and I updated Government on the matter last week.

The owners of the refinery, Phillips 66, advised my Department in October that they were putting the Whitegate refinery up for sale and indicated their intention to market it for sale as an operational refinery, and not as a terminal. A refinery sale would be a commercial matter between Phillips 66 and a potential purchaser. As this process is underway Whitegate will continue to be operated on a business as usual basis.

Wind Energy Guidelines

53. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he has reached agreement with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government on the regulation of wind farm projects. [44813/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): In December 2013, the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government began a review of the existing Wind Energy Development Guidelines.

The review focused on the specific issues of noise, proximity, and shadow flicker. It is set against the backdrop of the need to tackle global warming, reduce Ireland's reliance on fossil fuels, and meet our legally binding EU and international obligations including in relation to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving air quality and the generation of renewable energy, as well as real and legitimate concerns about the impact of essential energy infrastructure on local communities.

There has been ongoing engagement between the two Departments in what is a very technical area. Studies have been obtained on various aspects of the issues, particularly noise - including separation distance - and detailed assessments of various options have been undertaken by the two Departments.

Any revisions to the guidelines following the conclusion of deliberations, will be introduced by issuing the guidelines to planning authorities under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

54. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if and when high-quality, high-speed broadband will be provided in all urban and rural areas; if the frustrations experienced by the domestic, business and commercial sectors due to the lack of this provision, as compared with other jurisdictions, will be addressed; if he agrees this provision is a vital prerequisite to continued economic recovery; the areas which currently have the required quality and standard of broadband services and the timescale for its provision in the rest of the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44818/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The National Broadband Plan aims to ensure that every citizen and business, regardless of location, has access to a high quality, high speed broadband service. This will be achieved through a combination of commercial investments and a State led intervention in areas where commercial services will not be provided.

The commercial telecommunications sector is currently investing approximately €2.5 billion in network upgrades and enhanced services. These very significant investments represent a step-change in the quality of broadband services available.

Last November I published a national high speed coverage map for 2016. This map is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. The areas marked BLUE represent those areas that will have access to commercial high speed broadband services.

The AMBER areas show the target areas for the State intervention. All premises within the AMBER areas will be included in the State's intervention.

The map allows all members of the public, be they business or residential, to see whether their premises or home will have access to commercial high speed broadband services by end 2016 or whether they will be included in the Government's proposed intervention. The High Speed Map contains a breakdown of premises covered per townland.

It is anticipated that speeds of at least 30Mbps will be also delivered through the Government's intervention and the network will be designed to cater for future increased demand from consumers and business.

Consumers can also consult the websites of the various commercial operators to ascertain details of current and planned future deployment plans.

Over 40 responses were received following the publication of the NBP proposed Intervention Strategy in July last. Non-confidential versions of these submissions are being published and can be accessed at www.Broadband.gov.ie.

Meanwhile, my Department continues to review the technical and financial detail relating to potential new commercial investment proposals.

I expect to proceed to formal procurement before the end of the year. The Government is determined to ensure that the network is built out as quickly as possible and engagement with industry stakeholders has indicated that this could be achieved within 3-5 years of the contract award.

In this context, the NBP proposes that through the combination of commercial investment and State intervention, 85% of addresses in Ireland will have access to high speed services by 2018 with an ambition of 100% coverage by end of 2020.

It is envisaged that access to high speed broadband coupled with the measures being introduced under the National Digital Strategy will maximise growth potential in rural areas by

encouraging businesses to make better use of the internet so that they can reach wider markets, grow their business and create jobs.

Public Service Obligation Levy Application

55. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the State subsidies available to energy providers, including the amounts spent, by category, in each of the past ten years in tabular form; if future policy towards the subsidisation of fossil fuel-derived energy sources will change, given the specific emissions reduction targets proposed for the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44793/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The overarching objective of the Government's energy policy is to ensure secure and sustainable supplies of competitively priced energy to all consumers.

The Public Service Obligation (PSO) levy is the support mechanism used for two very important objectives. Firstly, it supports electricity generation which was constructed for security of supply purposes, including peat generation. Secondly, it supports the development of renewable electricity which is important for both security of supply and for reducing carbon emissions from electricity generation. The levy is designed to compensate electricity suppliers for the additional costs they incur by purchasing electricity generated by these producers. It has been in place since 2001. The legal basis for the PSO levy and its method of calculation are set out in Regulations made under the Electricity Regulation Act 1999 (S.I. 217 of 2002). The PSO Levy is a charge on all electricity customers without exception and is determined by the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER). The total amounts spent, and details by category, for each of the past ten years, are available in the public domain in annual CER PSO Levy Decision papers at www.cer.ie.

It should also be noted that from March 2016 the PSO levy will no longer support natural gas electricity generation, as supports for Aughinish and Tynagh thermal gas plants are terminated. Furthermore the PSO levy support for peat-fired generation at Edenderry Power Plant will end in December 2015. Lough Ree Power and West Offaly Power are the only remaining peat-fired electricity generation plants on the Irish electricity system. Support for such electricity generation will end for these plants after 2019.

The forthcoming White Paper on Energy Policy in Ireland, will inform future policy on the subsidisation of fossil-fuel derived energy sources.

Energy Conservation

56. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if Ireland will opt in to the mandatory smart metering system. [44815/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): Smart Meters are the next generation of energy device which will replace the traditional electricity and gas meters. These devices work by communicating with both the consumer and their energy provider, giving a view of actual energy usage. This provision of actual consumption information, as well as a range of possible additional services such as time-of-use tariffs, can deliver numerous benefits to both consumers and the wider environment.

European Directive 2009/72/EC requires, where the roll-out of smart meters is assessed

positively, at least 80% of consumers shall be equipped with intelligent metering systems by 2020.

The National Smart Metering Programme (NSMP) is a programme of work which aims to successfully rollout electricity and gas smart meters on a national basis. The Commission for Energy Regulation (CER), working closely with my Department, established the NSMP in 2007.

To date the programme has involved various consultation phases, the most recent of which commenced on 8 December 2015 with the publication of consultation papers on consumer policy.

Decisions on the timing and scale of any rollout of smart meters will only be taken subject to the cost-benefit analysis results which are due in Q3 2016.

Hydraulic Fracturing

57. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will call off the research project currently being carried out by the Environmental Protection Agency into hydraulic fracturing, given there is no public health research or researchers with medical expertise included in the study and there will be no external peer review component to the study; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44801/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy may be aware, the EPA has commissioned a research programme into the potential impacts of Unconventional Gas Exploration and Extraction (UGEE) on the environment and human health. It should be noted that the draft Terms of Reference for this programme were the subject of a public consultation process which resulted in an amended and strengthened scope for the programme, including a key recommendation that the potential impacts from UGEE on human health be considered as part of the project.

In this regard, the Tender Documents refer specifically to potential health impacts arising from impacts on environmental media, including exposure to chemicals, vibration, light, noise, and the potential pollution of environmental media including soils, air and water.

The research programme will also specifically consider the potential role of Health Impact Assessment in the regulation of UGEE projects and operations, based on the experience in other countries, and will make recommendations towards developing a protocol in an island of Ireland context.

However, I would like to stress that the requirement for Health Impact Assessment into UGEE, or otherwise, would only arise if an application to carry out a development proposing the use of this technology were being considered.

As I have advised previously, no application to engage in UGEE has been received in my Department, nor would any such application, if submitted, be considered until the research programme has concluded and there has been time to consider its findings.

Hydraulic Fracturing

58. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the status of research directed at examining the potential environmental and hu-

man health impacts of hydraulic fracturing commissioned by the Environmental Protection Agency; the position of the Government on hydraulic fracturing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44812/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Joe McHugh): As I have advised previously, the all-island Joint Research Programme (JRP) which is being administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and co-funded by the EPA, my Department and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency into the potential impacts from Unconventional Gas Exploration and Extraction (UGEE) on the environment and human health is on-going.

It is anticipated that the outcomes of this research programme will be published once the Steering Group, appointed to manage this programme, makes its recommendation.

There has been good progress made on the programme to date which is evident from the updates published by the EPA on its website.

I would like once again to confirm that no application to engage in UGEE has been received in my Department, nor would any such application, if submitted, be considered until the research programme has concluded and there has been time to consider its findings.

Wind Energy Generation

59. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the status of research he has carried out as part of a cost-benefit analysis on wind farms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44805/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): My Department has been working with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, EirGrid and the Commission for Energy Regulation, to assess the costs and value of choosing the path towards 40% renewable electricity generation in 2020. Quantifying the costs and benefits of reaching our renewable energy obligations is a complex task involving the examination of many interrelated variables. This work and the related findings will form the basis of a report that will be published shortly.

Our transition to a greater use of renewable energy in the energy mix has been analysed in a number of previous studies. The All-Island Grid Study, published in 2008, assessed the technical feasibility and the relative costs and benefits associated with various scenarios for increased shares of electricity sourced from renewable energy in the all island power system. The scenarios were informed by the resource available, technological readiness of the various generation technologies and cost required per generated unit. The mapping for the analysis also assessed the deployment potential based on where the resource was and an overview of environmentally designated areas. This study informed the decision to move towards achieving 40% renewable electricity generation in Ireland by 2020. It concluded that, based on assumptions set out in the report, wind energy represented a cost effective source for electricity generation.

The abundant wind resource in Ireland means that each unit of installed wind generation capacity generates more units of electricity when compared with other countries and hence needs a lower rate per generated unit of electricity in order to recover the overall costs of the project. The existing feed-in tariff, REFIT, which is funded from the Public Service Obligation levy on consumer bills, is a very cost effective support for onshore wind development, as indicated by a report published by the Council of European Energy Regulators earlier this year.

This position has been underpinned by other published reports and analyses which have examined the effect of renewables on electricity prices.

Furthermore, renewable electricity generation in Ireland in 2014 is estimated by the SEAI to have avoided €250 million worth of fossil fuels imports.

Post Office Network

60. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the status of steps to maintain the existing post office network; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44811/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The post office network plays an important role in serving the needs of business and domestic customers alike. However, the postal sector is undergoing systemic change, with migration towards electronic communications resulting in significant core mail volume decline year-on-year.

In recognition of the changing commercial environment I established the Post Office Network Business Development Group earlier this year, the remit of which is to examine the potential from existing, and new Government and commercial business that could be transacted through the Post Office network. The Group presented its initial report to me in May 2015. In summary, the initial report outlined that the future of the Post Office network would be best secured by seeking out opportunities in the following areas: financial services, including services delivered by the Department of Social Protection, and basic banking for the unbanked; Government services; social capital and enterprise; and white labelling of financial and other products.

To gain further insight into these areas, a public consultation exercise was held from 16 June to 28 July last, inclusive. Interested parties were invited to submit their views on the initial report. It is clear from the responses received that there is a strong public desire to maintain the nationwide network of post offices. The consultation responses are assisting the Group in identifying opportunities that can benefit the post office network and will inform the final report, which I expect to receive presently.

It is premature to speculate, in advance of receiving the final report, on matters until I have had the opportunity to consider in detail the findings of the Group.

Broadband Service Speeds

61. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will carry out mapping of broadband speed-up, downtime and latency by geographic area; if he has investigated mapping based on data rather than reported speeds; his views on whether speeds reported are consistent with speeds received; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44797/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to ensure that every citizen and business, regardless of location, has access to a high quality, high speed broadband service. This will be achieved through a combination of commercial investments and a State led intervention in areas where commercial services will not be provided.

Measuring speeds based on user experience, is challenging. Different technologies deliver

different speeds and are impacted by a range of factors including the number of users at a given time and the services they are accessing, distance from a cabinet, line-of-sight issues, and in-house factors including wifi. I understand that the telecommunications regulator, ComReg, recently concluded a pilot study on broadband speeds to 1,000 homes. Arising from that study, I understand that ComReg is considering the merits of establishing a permanent broadband speed test, conducting an annual survey or making available a software tool to the public to support expanded data gathering. It is also considering consulting on the possibility of including contractually binding minimum speed into contracts. I also note the new transparency provisions under Article 4 of the new European Regulation which lays down measures concerning open internet access. I look forward to developments in this area which I hope will increase the transparency of services offered by commercial operators.

The proposed State Intervention under the National Broadband Plan sets out specific speeds that will be expected from any State funded network. It also specifies the minimum speeds deemed necessary in order to define an area as “commercial”, and therefore exclude that area from the proposed State intervention.

The draft Intervention Strategy, published in July, specifies at a minimum, download speeds of 30 Mbps and an upload speeds of 6 Mbps with latency of no more than 25 milliseconds. A “High Speed Broadband Map 2016” published in 2014, shows the extent of industry commitments to end 2016 and indicates that 70% of addresses in Ireland will have access to high speed broadband within that timescale. The balance of 30%, approximately 757,000 addresses, represents the current target for the proposed State intervention.

Renewable Energy Projects

62. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his plans to increase the availability of community renewable energy initiatives; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44800/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): Various community level energy initiatives are supported by my Department through the Better Energy Areas and Communities Programme which is administered on behalf of the Department by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). That programme allows community and locally based organisations to apply for funding on a competitive basis to support sustainable energy upgrades to existing buildings and facilities. It also promotes the creation and development of locally based entities that can engage and mobilise community resources to lower energy bills and boost local employment.

One of the central themes in the Green Paper on Energy Policy, published in May 2014, was citizen empowerment. Since its publication, the Department undertook a public consultation process which included analysis of over 1,200 written submissions and thirteen stakeholder seminars on the various priority areas highlighted in the Green Paper. A recurring message coming from both the written submissions and the seminars was the role that community energy could play in our future energy systems. The views submitted on this and other matters have been considered in the formulation of the Energy White Paper, which I intend publishing tomorrow.

Wind Energy Guidelines

63. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural

Resources the consultation process he has had with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government on the publication of wind farm guidelines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44820/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): In December 2013, the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government began a review of the existing Wind Energy Development Guidelines.

The review focused on the specific issues of noise, proximity, and shadow flicker. It is set against the backdrop of the need to tackle global warming, reduce Ireland's reliance on fossil fuels, and meet our legally binding EU and international obligations including in relation to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving air quality and the generation of renewable energy, as well as real and legitimate concerns about the impact of essential energy infrastructure on local communities.

There has been ongoing engagement between the two Departments in what is a very technical area. Studies have been obtained on various aspects of the issues, particularly noise - including separation distance - and detailed assessments of various options have been undertaken by the two Departments.

Any revisions to the guidelines following the conclusion of deliberations, will be introduced by issuing the guidelines to planning authorities under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

National Energy Efficiency Action Plan

64. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the progress under the national energy efficiency action plan on retrofitting Government and public buildings; if the financial and environmental savings are known; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44807/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): Under the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP) Ireland set a target of improving energy efficiency by 20% by 2020. At the same time a more challenging target was set for the public sector of 33%. Significant progress is being made on energy efficiency in the public sector. The Annual Report on Public Sector Energy Efficiency Performance, which will be published by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) this month, will show that, on aggregate, the reporting public sector bodies have improved their energy efficiency by 17%. This means we are half way to the 33% target. The reported energy efficiency gains for 2014 amount to 1,840 gigawatt hours (GWh) which equates to a reduction in harmful emissions of 418,000 tonnes of CO₂. This reduction in energy use has led to a saving on energy spend of €121 million for 2014, with cumulative savings of €424 million having been made since the baseline year of 2009.

While this progress is very positive, there can be no room for complacency. There will be a need for more, large scale, projects if the 33% target is to be reached. The Public Sector Energy Efficiency Action Plan, which I will publish early in 2016, will further strengthen governance requirements, set clear objectives for actions in areas such as the built environment and public utilities and enhance project development assistance.

Energy Efficiency

65. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the role he envisages social enterprises performing in reducing Ireland's dependence on fossil fuels and, in particular, the impact this sector can have compared with conventional private enterprise. [44664/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): One of the central themes in the Green Paper on Energy Policy, published in May 2014, is citizen empowerment. Since its publication, the Department undertook a public consultation process which included analysis of over 1,200 written submissions and thirteen stakeholder seminars on the various priority areas highlighted in the Green Paper. A recurring message coming from both the written submissions and the seminars was the role that community energy and social enterprises could play in our future energy systems. The views submitted on this and other matters have been considered in the formulation of the Energy White Paper, which I am publishing tomorrow.

I believe that both social enterprise and private enterprise will have key roles to play in Ireland's energy future as we reduce our reliance on carbon intensive fossil fuels by delivering improvements in energy efficiency and increased deployment of renewable energy. In this regard, there are a number of schemes under the Better Energy Programme, which is administered on behalf of the Department by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), available to individuals, communities and businesses for sustainable energy upgrades.

The Better Energy Communities Scheme supports sustainable energy upgrades to buildings and facilities in the community sector as well as clusters of homes likely to be at risk of energy poverty. The scheme is open to a wide variety of actors. This includes public sector organisations, community and voluntary organisations, private sector actors and energy suppliers. The key is that each application has to demonstrate a partnership approach. Community action on energy conservation is a crucial first step for people to transform their energy use and take their own action to make our energy system more sustainable.

In 2015, the scheme received applications worth €45m from 74 projects. Successful projects have included upgrades to schools, community care facilities, fire stations, sports clubs, small businesses and homes throughout the country. A full list of the successful applications is available at: http://www.seai.ie/Grants/Better_Energy_Communities/Better-Energy-Community-Projects-2015.pdf

Energy Resources

66. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his views on the strategic importance to the State of the oil refinery in Whitegate in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44803/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): Ireland has one refinery in Whitegate, Cork. While oil has been virtually eliminated from the electricity sector, Ireland is almost completely dependent on oil for fuel in the transport sector and is heavily reliant on oil for heating. All oil consumed in Ireland is imported (either as already refined product or as crude oil that is refined at Whitegate). The refinery supplies 30-40% of the main oil products (excluding jet fuel) to the Irish market.

A study completed for my Department in 2012 on the strategic case for oil refining requirements on the island of Ireland concluded that an operating refinery provides an alternative source of product supply versus complete reliance on product imports and therefore provides

flexibility in security of supply. It also concluded that a refinery delivers economic benefits and provides employment. A further conclusion was that the existing port infrastructure would be capable of supplying the required product imports if there were no refinery on the island. The Government considered the report and concluded that the continued operation of the Whitegate refinery on a commercial basis is highly desirable from an energy security and economic perspective. Security of supply, resilience and the ability to respond to an energy crisis remains a fundamental tenet of our energy policy.

The owners of the refinery, Phillips 66, advised my Department in October that they were putting the Whitegate refinery up for sale. A refinery sale would be a commercial matter between Phillips 66 and a potential purchaser. As this process is underway Whitegate will continue to be operated on a business as usual basis.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

67. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the status of the commitment to provide fibre broadband to every house and business in County Donegal; the deadline for this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44831/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to ensure that every citizen and business, regardless of location, has access to a high quality, high speed broadband service. This will be achieved through a combination of commercial investments and a State led intervention in areas where commercial services will not be provided.

In July last I published a detailed draft Intervention Strategy for public consultation.

That strategy proposes that the State-funded network must be capable of delivering high-quality, high speed broadband of at least 30mbps download and 6mbps upload. It must also be capable of catering for higher performance in the future so as to keep pace with consumer demand. This will be a specific requirement of the tender and it will be a matter for bidders to select the technology they consider will best deliver the service.

As I have repeatedly stated, we must observe a strict policy of technology neutrality in any procurement process and therefore I am not in a position to promise connectivity through any one particular technology platform. The Department will set out a detailed service specification, including a requirement to scale up services over the lifetime of the contract, and allow bidders show how they propose to meet these contractual requirements.

Given the quality of the services we wish to see delivered, and based on the current absence of significant fibre networks in many parts of Ireland, it is likely that fibre will play a major role in any proposed solution. However, the technology platforms that will provide the final connectivity to the premise will be a matter for commercial operators to decide on.

The Government is determined to ensure that the network is built out as quickly as possible and engagement with industry stakeholders has indicated that this could be achieved within 3-5 years of the contract award.

In this context, the NBP proposes that through the combination of commercial investment and State intervention, 85% of addresses in Ireland will have access to high speed services by 2018 with all addresses passed by 2020.

More generally I am informed by the commercial operators that next generation broadband services have been rolled out to 21,200 premises to date in County Donegal, with a further 27,200 expected to be served by end 2016. The remaining 52,000 premises in County Donegal will be covered by commercial investment or be the target of the proposed State intervention under the National Broadband Plan. The breakdown of premises covered, per townland, is available on the High Speed Broadband Map at www.broadband.gov.ie.

Corrib Gas Field

68. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the reason for a delay in issuing the final regulatory approval to Shell E and P Ireland that will enable it to start producing gas from the Corrib gas field; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44662/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): On 18 August, 2015, Shell E and P Ireland Limited submitted an application to my Department for consent to operate the Corrib Gas Pipeline pursuant to section 40 of the Gas Act, 1976, as amended.

This application, which was supported by an Environmental Impact Statement and a Natura Impact Screening Statement, was the subject of a four week public consultation process. The views of prescribed bodies were also requested. All submissions received are being considered in the course of the assessment process.

Evaluation of the application is now at an advanced stage. On completion of the assessment process, my decision, together with supporting reports, will be published.

Energy Resources

69. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the discussions he has had to ensure the oil refinery in Whitegate in County Cork remains in operation as a refinery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44802/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The Whitegate refinery was privatised as a result of its sale by the State in 2001. Under the terms of the sale, the owners are obliged to continue to operate the refinery for a minimum of fifteen years, a commitment which remains in place until July 2016. Thereafter the future of the refinery is a commercial decision for the owners.

The Government views the continued operation of the Whitegate refinery on a commercial basis as highly desirable from an energy security and economic perspective. Security of supply remains a fundamental tenet of our energy policy. Officials from my Department and I have been in regular contact with the management of the Whitegate refinery and have also met several times with union representatives. Officials from my Department have also discussed the future of refining with the Irish Petroleum Industry Association and with other Government Departments and public bodies. I have recently met a number of my Cabinet colleagues to discuss the refinery and I updated Government on the matter last week.

The owners of the refinery, Phillips 66, advised my Department in October that they were putting the Whitegate refinery up for sale and indicated their intention to market it for sale as an operational refinery, and not as a terminal. A refinery sale would be a commercial matter

between Phillips 66 and a potential purchaser. As this process is underway Whitegate will continue to be operated on a business as usual basis.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

70. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his plans to roll out broadband to rural areas in west Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44821/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The National Broadband Plan aims to ensure that every citizen and business, regardless of location, has access to a high quality, high speed broadband service. This will be achieved through a combination of commercial investments and a State led intervention in areas where commercial services will not be provided.

The commercial telecommunications sector is currently investing approximately €2.5 billion in network upgrades and enhanced services. These very significant investments represent a step-change in the quality of broadband services available.

Last November I published a national high speed coverage map for 2016. This map is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. The areas marked BLUE represent those areas that will have access to commercial high speed broadband services.

The AMBER areas show the target areas for the State intervention. All premises within the AMBER areas will be included in the State's intervention.

The map allows all members of the public, be they business or residential, to see whether their premises/home will have access to commercial high speed broadband services by end 2016 or whether they will be included in the Government's proposed intervention.

It is anticipated that speeds of at least 30Mbps will be also delivered through the Government's intervention and the network will be designed to cater for future increased demand from consumers and business.

I would encourage consumers to consult the websites of the various commercial operators to ascertain details of current and planned future deployment plans.

I am informed by the commercial operators that next generation broadband services have been rolled out to over 55,000 premises to date in Co Kildare with over 12,500 more expected to be served by commercial investment. Approximately 20,500 remaining premises in Kildare will be covered either by further commercial investment or the proposed State intervention.

Over 40 responses were received following the publication of the NBP proposed Intervention Strategy in July last. Non-confidential versions of these submissions are being published and can be accessed at www.broadband.gov.ie.

Meanwhile, my Department continues to review the technical and financial detail relating to potential new commercial investment proposals with a view to updating the intervention area Map.

I expect to proceed to formal procurement before the end of the year.

The Government is determined to ensure that the network is built out as quickly as possible and engagement with industry stakeholders has indicated that this could be achieved within 3-5

years of the contract award.

In this context, the NBP proposes that through the combination of commercial investment and State intervention, 85% of addresses in Ireland will have access to high speed services by 2018 with an ambition of 100% coverage by 2020.

Electric Vehicle Grants

71. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his plans to encourage the use of electric vehicles, given the very low take-up of such vehicles by public, commercial and transport interests. [45003/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The Electric Vehicle Grant Scheme supports and incentivises, through grants of up to €5,000, the deployment of electric vehicles in Ireland. These grants are in addition to the Vehicle Registration Tax reliefs of up to €5,000 which apply to electric vehicles. In addition, where technically feasible, customers who qualify for the grant also qualify for a free domestic charge point installed by the ESB.

The extent to which electric vehicles are adopted in the short-to-medium term will depend on a range of factors including, inter alia, the strength of the economy, the overall numbers of new cars being purchased, the cost of purchasing and running electric vehicles compared to fossil fuel comparators, and the number of different electric vehicle models available to purchase. There are signs that these factors are improving. In 2015, 547 new EVs have been supported through the Electric Vehicle Grant Scheme which represents more than half of the total of 1,082 supported since the programme began in 2011.

The Electric Vehicle Grant Scheme will remain open into 2016.

Unemployment Data

72. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach the number of persons categorised as not in employment, education or training who are resident in the areas covered by the Clondalkin and Tallaght social protection offices. [45340/15]

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

The Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) is the official source of estimates of employment and unemployment in the State and the data also provides information on persons Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET). Due to methodology and sample size it is not possible to produce reliable estimates below NUTS3 region from the QNHS. The NUTS 3 Dublin region includes Dublin City, Dun Laoghaire- Rathdown, Fingal and South Dublin. The Q3 2015 estimates are the most recent QNHS figures available.

The following table shows the number of persons aged 16-24 years who are classified as being Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) by NUTS3 Dublin region in Quarter 3 2015.

Persons aged 16-24 years classified by NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) and NUTS3 Dublin region, Quarter 3 2015

-	‘000 Dublin
All persons aged 16-24	121.9
of which:	
Not in Employment, Education or Training	18.2

Source: Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS), Central Statistics Office, Ireland.

Data may be subject to future revision

Reference period: q3=Jul-Sep

Note: The indicator on people Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) corresponds to the population of the age group who is not employed and not involved in further education or training, i.e. persons who meet the following two conditions: (a) they are not employed (i.e. unemployed or inactive according to the International Labour Organisation definition) and (b) they have not received any education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey.

Import Costs

73. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach the value of imported fossil fuels in each of the past ten years to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45366/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The data requested are set out for the Deputy in the following table. It should be noted that the 2015 data include imports only up to and including September 2015.

The CSO provides trade data based on statistical returns received from enterprises within the economy and does not provide future trade projections or make economic forecasts.

Table: Imports of fossil fuels 2005 to September 2015

Year	Coal, coke and briquettes (€million)	Petroleum, petroleum products and related materials (€million)	Gas, natural and manufactured (€million)	Total (€million)
2005	173	3,315	493	3,981
2006	170	3,842	652	4,664
2007	159	4,479	1,039	5,677
2008	220	4,913	1,378	6,511
2009	199	3,299	911	4,409
2010	154	4,285	1,135	5,574
2011	231	5,324	1,354	6,910
2012	206	5,475	1,450	7,131
2013	219	5,022	1,576	6,817
2014	166	4,951	1,282	6,399
2015	143	2,956	881	3,980

Source: Goods Exports and Imports

Departmental Staff Rehiring

74. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Taoiseach the number of applications for reinstatement 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. [44565/15]

The Taoiseach: My Department has not received or granted any applications for reinstatement following retirement on grounds of ill health from former members of staff since 2004.

Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements

75. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Taoiseach if he has spoken recently to the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Mr. John Key; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44711/15]

The Taoiseach: I had a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister John Key of New Zealand in the margins of COP21 in Paris. The meeting was extremely warm and positive, covering a wide range of bilateral relations, the migrant crisis, New Zealand's wish to see progress in trade talks with the EU, as well as discussions on climate change.

Prime Minister Key updated me on the rebuilding of Christchurch, noting the role played by Irish construction workers.

Our discussions also touched on Ireland's 2020 United Nations Security Council candidacy, and Ireland's bid to host the 2023 Rugby World Cup.

Commenting on the strength of relations, I offered my support for the opening of an embassy in Wellington.

Social Welfare Benefits Data

76. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Taoiseach the number of unemployed persons who are not in receipt of a payment under the jobseeker's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44340/15]

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

The Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) is the official source of estimates of unemployment in the State. The primary classification used for the QNHS results is the ILO (International Labour Office) labour force classification. The classification for unemployed persons includes those persons aged 15-74 years who, in the week before the survey, were without work and available for work within the next two weeks, and had taken specific steps, in the preceding four weeks, to find work. The QNHS does not capture a respondent's status as measured by the Live Register.

The latest published results from the QNHS indicate that the seasonally adjusted number of persons (aged 15-74) unemployed as of the third quarter of 2015 was 197,100. While the QNHS provides quarterly benchmark estimates of unemployment, the CSO also publishes seasonally adjusted monthly unemployment estimates. The latest monthly unemployment figures for November 2015 indicate that the seasonally adjusted number of unemployed persons aged 15-74 years in that month was estimated to have been 191,700.

The Live Register is compiled from returns made for each local office to the Central Statistics Office by the Department of Social Protection. It comprises persons under 65 years of age in the following classes:

- All Claimants for Jobseeker's Benefit (JB) excluding systematic short-time workers.
- Applicants for Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) excluding smallholders/farm assists and other self-employed persons.
- Other registrants including applicants for credited Social Welfare contributions but excluding those directly involved in an industrial dispute.

It should be noted that the Live Register is not designed to measure unemployment as per the ILO unemployment classification used by the QNHS.

It includes part-time workers (those who work up to three days a week), seasonal and casual workers entitled to Jobseeker's Benefit or Allowance.

Census of Population Data

77. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Taoiseach the number of persons aged over 80 years in 2015; and the forecast annual increase in that number to 2021. [45009/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Central Statistics Office publishes annual population estimates in August with a mid-April reference period. The latest results were published on August 26 2015 and estimated that in mid-April 2015 there were approximately **142,900** persons aged 80 years and over usually resident in the State.

The Central Statistics Office also publishes population projections for the State after each Census, the most recent set of projections were published in April 2013 and cover the years 2016-2046. The projections are based on assumptions relating to future trends in fertility, mortality and migration. Two sets of assumptions were chosen for fertility, one for mortality and three for migration.

The base year used was 2011, using the Census of Population results.

For the purpose of the tables provided, only the assumptions relating to mortality and migration are relevant. The fertility assumptions are not relevant as all persons that will be aged 80 years or over in the years 2016-2021 were already born in 2011.

Mortality Assumption

The long-term rate of improvement in life expectancy is assumed to be 1.5 per cent over the period 2016-2046.

Migration Assumptions

M1: Net migration returning to positive (net inflow of persons) by 2016 and rising steadily thereafter to plus 30,000 persons annually by 2021.

M2: Net migration returning to positive by 2018 and rising thereafter to plus 10,000 persons annually by 2021.

M3: Net migration remaining negative for the whole period.

Table 1 shows the estimated population for those aged 80 years and over for 2015.

Table 2 shows the projected population for those aged 80 years and over for the years 2016-2021.

Table 3 shows the projected population change for 2015-2021. The population change was calculated using estimated population data for the year 2015 and projected population data for the years 2016-2021.

Table 1 Estimated Population aged 80 years and over for 2015

Year	Number
2015	142,900

Source: Central Statistics Office

Table 2 Projected Population for those aged 80 years and over by Criteria for Projection and Year

Year	M1	M2	M3
2016	148,600	148,500	148,400
2017	153,500	153,400	153,300
2018	158,200	158,100	157,900
2019	163,800	163,600	163,300
2020	169,900	169,500	169,100
2021	175,600	175,100	174,700

Source: Central Statistics Office

Table 3 Projected Population change for those aged 80 years and over by Criteria for Projection, 2015-2021

Population Change	M1	M2	M3
Total	32,700	32,200	31,800
Annual Average	5,450	5,367	5,300

1 2015 data is sourced from the current annual population estimates.

Source: Central Statistics Office

Departmental Properties

78. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Taoiseach the ground rents payable by his Department or agencies under his remit, by named property, by name of landlord and by amount payable, in 2015 and in 2016 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45061/15]

The Taoiseach: The properties occupied by my Department and the National Economic and Social Development Office are provided and managed by the Office of Public Works.

Humanitarian Assistance Scheme

79. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will provide compensation measures for home owners in County Donegal to assist with

the financial impact of recent flood damage; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44682/15]

80. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will ensure emergency funds are put in place following the flooding in Athlone, County Westmeath to support those who have had damage caused to their properties. [44744/15]

81. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection in the context of the severe flooding that has caused huge damage to dwelling houses in the Athlone area of County Westmeath, and especially in Parnell Square, Deerpark and the Strand and Clonbonny areas, the level of assistance that can be provided to those persons who have been forced to evacuate their homes due to the severe flooding as a result of the rising levels of the River Shannon; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45403/15]

138. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the level of assistance she provides under the emergency flood relief scheme; if she will provide a helpline to enable speedy access to the financial assistance that is urgently required, given that residents in these flood-prone areas are losing all their possessions, including their dwelling houses and accommodation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45402/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Kevin Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 79 to 81, inclusive, and 138 together.

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government is the lead Department for severe weather emergencies and the Office of Public Works has responsibility for capital flood relief activities.

The Department of Social Protection (DSP) has activated its Humanitarian Assistance Scheme, administered by the local Community Welfare Service (CWS), to assist householders affected by the current weather conditions. The situation in all affected areas, including Athlone and Donegal, is being monitored and CWS staff are engaging with the local authorities and other agencies to ensure supports are being provided to those affected as swiftly as possible. Staff are assessing and meeting the demand for assistance by the public as the needs arise and are visiting the homes of persons affected.

In dealing with emergency events of this nature, the DSP generally adopts a three stage approach as follows:

The humanitarian assistance scheme, which is means tested, is available to assist people whose homes are damaged by flooding and who are not in a position to meet costs for essential needs, household items and in some instances structural repair. The means assessment for Humanitarian Assistance is more generous than that applied under the supplementary welfare allowance scheme in general. For example, a family consisting of a couple and two children with a gross household income of €70,000 or less will receive 100% of the amount allowable in respect of their application. For each whole €1,000 of household income above the €70,000 the couple will be required to make a personal contribution of 1% toward the amount allowable. The amount allowable in any particular case refers to the amount the officer administering the scheme determines is required to replace essential losses and to make any essential repairs.

The Government has not set a limit on the amount that can be paid to an individual household under this scheme. Levels of payment depend on the relative severity of damage experienced and the household's ability to meet these costs.

The current situation in Athlone is being reviewed and assessed by local CWS officials on an ongoing basis. The Department's input is being co-ordinated with the other emergency ser-

vices at a local level including Westmeath County Council in ensuring that those who require assistance as a result of the flooding can access CWS services as required. Emergency CWS clinics have been established in Grace Park Road Athlone, operating mornings and afternoons.

Similarly, officials in County Donegal have been in contact with individuals who have suffered damages following flooding and a small number of claims have been made.

People seeking assistance under the scheme should contact their local DSP Intreo Centre or CWS office who will be able to offer assistance. Department contact phone numbers for persons in affected areas are available on the Department's website, as follows:

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

82. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection why a person (details supplied) in County Kildare who is in receipt of jobseeker's allowance does not qualify for the Christmas bonus payment. [44678/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): A bonus of 75% of the normal weekly payment was paid in December 2015 to people getting a long-term social welfare payment. For clients in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance (JA), long term is defined as over 15 months or over 390 days of unemployment. Periods spent on JobBridge internships are not reckonable for this purpose.

The current JA claim for the person concerned commenced on 28 September 2013. In the meantime, he has had two internship periods of nine months. As the person concerned had not been in receipt of a JA payment for the required number of days of unemployment, he was not eligible for the bonus payment.

Carer's Allowance Applications

83. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for carer's allowance by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44679/15]

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

Carer's Allowance Applications

84. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will urgently examine an appeal under the carer's allowance scheme for a person (details supplied) in County Kerry, as all medical evidence has been submitted; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44689/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the person concerned has been in receipt of Carer's Benefit for the maximum period of 104 weeks from 5 December 2013 to 2 December 2015.

An application for carer's allowance from the person concerned was received on 14 October 2015. The application is currently being processed and, once complete, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Jobseeker's Allowance Appeals

85. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if an appeal under the jobseeker's allowance scheme will be expedited for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44705/15]

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 registered in that office on 24 November 2015. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When these papers have been received from the Department, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral appeal hearing.

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

Carer's Allowance Applications

86. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44738/15]

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

Disability Allowance Applications

87. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an appeal under the disability allowance scheme by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44745/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that an application from the person concerned for disability allowance (DA) was received by the department on 04 August 2015. The claim was disallowed on 29 September 2015 and the person in question was notified of the decision and the reason(s) for it and of her rights of review and appeal.

The person concerned requested a review of this decision. This review is ongoing and the application has been referred to a Social Welfare Inspector (SWI) for a report on the person's means and circumstances. Once the SWI has submitted his/her report to DA section, a decision will be made on the review and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Fuel Allowance Eligibility

88. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection why a person (details supplied) in County Kildare has been refused a fuel allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44752/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The administrative guidelines in respect of employment schemes stipulate that scheme participants can only be paid Fuel Allowance where they had applied for or were awarded Fuel Allowance prior to commencing on the scheme and where they satisfy or continue to satisfy the conditions.

The person concerned has been a participant on the Kildare Centre for the Unemployed Community Employment Scheme since 5 November 2012. At the date of commencement on the scheme, she had been in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance from 15 October 2009 but was not in receipt of and had not made a claim for Fuel Allowance during that period. Accordingly, Fuel Allowance is not payable in this case.

Jobseeker's Allowance Applications

89. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection to clarify the figure taken as means from self-employment accounts when accounts are submitted in respect of the spouse of applicants under the jobseeker's allowance scheme (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44762/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): In self-employment cases, income is taken to be the gross profit less allowable work-related expenses over 12 months. The net profit is taken as means.

Business-related allowable expenses may include depreciation of machinery or equipment where appropriate to the nature of the self-employment.

Any drawings taken from the business are not an allowable expense. However, where a person has taken drawings from the business which is greater than the level of income thus calculated, the drawings are assessed as cash income.

Social Welfare Benefits

90. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the full-year cost of providing an in-work benefit to all working families to guarantee an hourly income rate of €11.75 per hour. [44864/15]

91. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the full-year cost of providing an in-work benefit to all individual workers ensuring a minimum hourly income rate of €11.75 per hour. [44865/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 90 and 91 together.

The cost implications of an In Work Benefit proposal are very complex to estimate and require significant resources to prepare. A significant effort is also required to test the robustness of any calculations.

In the first instance a significant effort would have been invested in establishing how an in-work benefit scheme would operate and how it would go about achieving an objective of ensuring that individual workers and/or families would be guaranteed an hourly income rate of €11.75 per hour.

In order to undertake such an extensive exercise then data from a wide range of different sources including the Department of Social Protection, CSO and Revenue data, would have to be collated and an appropriate model created. The calculations involved in modelling a reform of this nature are complex and would require significant resources while taking considerable time to complete. The Department is therefore not in a position to provide the costing requested.

State Pension (Contributory)

92. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will address a matter (details supplied) regarding pension contributions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44868/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The State pension is a very valuable benefit and is the bedrock of the Irish pension system. Therefore, it is important to ensure that those qualifying have made a sustained contribution to the Social Insurance Fund over their working lives. State pensions account for the single largest block of social welfare expenditure, and while expenditure on pensions is increasing because of demographic pressures, this is being successfully managed within the overall welfare budget. This year (2015), the Department will spend an estimated €6.675 billion on pensions – 34.4% of all welfare expenditure and an increase of €168 million over 2014. The overall concern of the Government in recent budgets has been to protect the primary weekly social welfare rates where possible. Maintaining the rate of the State pension and other core payments is critical in protecting people from poverty.

A number of changes have been made to the State Pension (Contributory) in the context of State pension reform, to provide for sustainable pensions in the future. “*Developing the National pensions System – Final Report of the National Pensions Board*” published in 1993, recommended that the number of paid contributions required to qualify for a contributory pension should be increased to 520 (10 years) contributions. The necessary legislation to effect these recommendations was contained in Section 12 of the Social Welfare Act 1997 (now incorporated in the Social Welfare Consolidated Act 2005) which provided for the implementation of the change in two stages, with the paid contribution requirement being standardised at 260 from 2002, rising to 520 from April 2012.

Social welfare supports will continue to be available to those who need it most and where a person fails to meet the qualifying conditions of an insurance based scheme, a means tested assistance payment may be available provided they satisfy the qualifying conditions, such as the State Pension (Non-Contributory), the maximum rate of which is 95% of the maximum rate of the State Pension (Contributory).

Disability Allowance Payments

93. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry under the invalidity benefit scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44902/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned has been awarded disability allowance with effect from 16 September 2015. The first payment will be made by his selected payment method on 30 December 2015.

Arrears of payment due will issue as soon as possible once any necessary adjustment is calculated and applied in respect of any overlapping payments or in respect of outstanding overpayments (if applicable).

Illness Benefit Applications

94. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application under the illness benefit scheme by a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44907/15]

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

An application for illness benefit from the person concerned was made from 20 Oct 2015. According to the records of the department the person concerned has no contributions paid or credited in 2013. Illness benefit, therefore, could not be paid.

Disability Allowance is a weekly allowance for people with a disability aged between 16 and 66. The disability must be expected to last for at least one year. The person concerned must pass a medical exam, a means test and be habitually resident in Ireland to satisfy the conditions for receipt of this allowance.

No application for disability allowance has been received in my department from the person concerned to date. Further information on disability allowance is available on my department's website www.welfare.ie.

The person concerned is currently in receipt of supplementary welfare allowance.

Free Travel Scheme

95. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will introduce a travel allowance for persons with disabilities in rural Ireland who wish to work part-time but who cannot do so as there is no public transport and their travel pass is insufficient; if there is an allowance they can apply for to assist them to allay these costs while the legislation is still being finalised for the mobility allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44910/15]

97. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will introduce a travel allowance for persons with disabilities in rural Ireland who wish to work part-time but cannot do so as there is no public transport and their travel pass is insufficient; if there is an allowance they can apply for to assist them to allay these costs while the legislation is still being finalised for the mobility allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44913/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 95 and 97 together.

The current free travel scheme provides free travel on the main public and private transport services for those eligible under the scheme. These include road, rail and ferry services provided by companies such as Bus Átha Cliath, Bus Éireann and Iarnród Éireann, as well as Luas and services provided by almost 80 private transport operators. Persons resident in Ireland who are over 66 and persons in receipt of certain social welfare payments, including disability allowance, invalidity pension, partial capacity benefit (under certain conditions) and carer's allowance, are eligible for the scheme.

My Department also provides annual funding contribution of €1.5 million towards the Rural Transport Programme (RTP) which is administered by the National Transport Authority. The rural transport programme provides services to people whose travel needs are not met by existing bus or train services. The Programme aims to enhance and sustain nationwide accessibility, through community based participation, particularly for those at risk of social exclusion.

Under the supplementary welfare allowance scheme (SWA) the Department of Social Protection may award a travel supplement in any case where the circumstances of the case so warrant. The supplement is intended to assist with ongoing or recurring travel costs that cannot be met from the client's own resources and are deemed to be necessary. Every decision is based on consideration of the circumstances of the case, taking account of the nature and extent of the need and of the resources of the person concerned.

The Government decided that the detailed preparatory work required for a new Transport Support Scheme and associated statutory provisions should be progressed by the Minister for Health. I am informed that the Minister for Health is seeking a solution which would best meet the aim of supporting people with severe disabilities who require additional income to contribute towards the cost of their mobility needs, while remaining within the available budget and satisfying all legal and equality concerns.

Social Welfare Benefits

96. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the level of payment for a person (details supplied) in County Kildare with particular reference to the attached documentation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44912/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned is working on a casual basis and as such her means have been assessed based on documentation provided. Her claim has been reviewed taking into consideration the documentation provided by the Deputy and it has been confirmed that she is in receipt of the correct rate of payment. It is open to the person concerned to request a review of her means if there is a change in her circumstances.

Question No. 97 answered with Question No. 95.

Carer's Allowance Applications

98. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44915/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The application for carer's allowance in respect of the person concerned was awarded on 3 December 2015 and the first payment will issue to the person's nominated post office on 24 December 2015. The person concerned has been notified directly with the details of this decision.

Arrears of allowance due from 20 August 2015 to 23 December 2015 will issue to the nominated post office in due course.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

99. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if the Christmas bonus will be paid to a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny. [44923/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned currently is in receipt of a weekly social welfare payment with which Christmas bonus is not payable.

An application for DA was submitted on 6 July 2015. Based upon the evidence supplied, it was refused on medical grounds and on the grounds that he failed to supply information requested by a deciding officer and which was necessary to establish his means and other relevant circumstances.

The person in question was notified in writing of this decision on 16 November 2015. The person was also notified of his right to a review of this decision or to appeal it to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office.

Carer's Allowance Payments

100. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if a carer's allowance and the respite grant will be immediately paid to a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; if she will review the case of overpayment. [44930/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Firstly, on behalf of myself and the Department, I would like to offer the person in question our sincere sympathies on her bereavement.

Carer's allowance (CA) was awarded to the person concerned on 13 August 2015 and was awarded for the period 4 June 2015 to 2 September 2015. This covers 6 weeks payment after the death of the person being cared for and the Carer's Support Grant (CSG) formerly known as the Respite Care Grant.

However, the person concerned has an outstanding One-Parent Family Payment debt amounting to €8,376.04. It is the Department's policy to seek recover of all debts due and can withhold payments due to reduce the amount outstanding.

The Department has previously sought recovery from the person concerned in 2013 and 2014 but she failed to offer a method of recovery.

Now that she has requalified for payment, arrears of CA and CSG are being withheld to reduce her debt. Pending further enquiries in relation to the information you have provided, the Department has been agreed to release 50% of CA arrears. Arrangements will now be made to pay this as soon as possible.

Disability Allowance Applications

101. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application under the disability allowance scheme by a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44935/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned has been awarded disability allowance with effect from 7 October 2015. The first payment will issue on 6 January 2016.

Arrears of payment due will issue as soon as possible once any necessary adjustment is calculated and applied in respect of any overlapping payments or in respect of outstanding overpayments (if applicable).

Rent Supplement Scheme Payments

102. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection why a reduced level of rent supplement is being paid to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; if the rate will be increased as a matter of urgency; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44937/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The client concerned is in receipt of their maximum entitlement to Rent Supplement based on her weekly income from One Parent Family payment and maintenance. The Department requested the client provide an up to date Rent Supplement form and lease agreement confirming any increase in her monthly rent on 9 December 2015. On receipt of same, client's ongoing entitlement can be reassessed.

Disability Allowance Eligibility

103. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will award a backdated increase to a person (details supplied) in County Limerick who is in receipt of a disability allowance which had been recently reduced to €42 per week based on spousal income, as this income has now ceased from 13 November 2015 and the spouse is now due to recommence employment on a casual basis; if she will confirm that arrears will issue for the full amount of disability allowance to the applicant for the period from 13 November to date, as no other income has been received in the household; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44944/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the above named person was in receipt of disability allowance (DA) at the maximum rate up to 24 November 2015. Following a review of her entitlement recently, it was established that the person concerned had means derived from spouse's employment.

On 1 December 2015, based upon payslips provided, a deciding officer decided that the person concerned had a reduced entitlement to DA from 25 November 2015. The person concerned was notified of this decision and the reason(s) for it.

If there has been a change to the circumstances of the person concerned, she may forward any relevant documentation to disability allowance section and the case will be reviewed.

School Transport Provision

104. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the assistance available for a person (details supplied) in County Laois to assist with school transport; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44947/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): A recurring expense such as providing transport to college is not a matter for the Department as this not a once-off/unexpected cost.

However, if the family have an exceptional or unexpected cost at any time they can apply under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance scheme, for a single payment to help meet essential, once-off, exceptional expenditure, which a person could not reasonably be expected to meet out of their weekly income. These payments are known as Exceptional Needs Payments (ENPs).

There is no automatic entitlement to such payments. ENPs are payable at the discretion of the Department's representative 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.

Social Welfare Eligibility

105. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 76 of 3 December 2015, the statutory basis for not providing a Christmas bonus to a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9, given that the person has not been in full employment for many years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44955/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An additional payment bonus for recipients of long-term social welfare payments is provided for under the Social Welfare (Temporary Provisions) Regulations 2015 (S.I. No. 529 of 2015). The regulations provide that named long-term welfare payments will attract a once-off additional sum of money known as the Christmas bonus. Jobseeker's benefit is not specified as a scheme to attract the bonus and therefore clients in receipt of jobseekers benefit are not entitled to the additional once-off income.

The person concerned was employed on a Community Employment scheme from January 2010 to January 2015 and is currently in receipt of jobseeker's benefit. As there is no legal provision for payment of an additional sum to clients in receipt of jobseeker's benefit, the person has no entitlement to the bonus.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

106. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the categories of weekly social protection payments not covered by the Christmas bonus; if she will review these with a view to expanding the qualifying payments; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44969/15]

122. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the categories of persons who will not receive the Christmas bonus in 2015 but who would have received it before it was cut; the cost of reinstating the Christmas bonus for these categories;

and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45175/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 106 and 122 together.

The Christmas Bonus was introduced in 1980 and was paid annually, at varying rates, until it was abolished in 2009. Last year, I was pleased to partially restore the Bonus, with a 25% payment, and on Budget Day this year, I announced 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 at a cost of circa €197 million.

The bonus, since its re-introduction, is paid to all of the schemes that previously benefited from its payment, with the addition this year of the new Back to Work Family Dividend.

As in previous years, Jobseeker's Allowance recipients must have been in receipt of their payment for a minimum of 15 months (390 days) in order to qualify for the bonus. Time spent on Jobseeker's Benefit prior to receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance counts towards the calculation of the 15 month period. Short-term welfare payments, such as Jobseeker's Benefit, Maternity Benefit, Illness Benefit and FIS, have never been eligible for the Bonus, and similar arrangements continue to apply this year.

The Christmas bonus (when paid in the past) was administered for SWA recipients by the Community Welfare Service (CWS) of the HSE. The CWS transferred into this Department in late 2011. Prior to the abolition of the Bonus in 2009, there was variation in the administration of the bonus across HSE areas. When the bonus was re-introduced last year, entitlement was standardised for SWA recipients in line with Jobseeker's Allowance. It should be noted that persons on Basic SWA (with a duration of less than 15 months) who are awaiting a decision on a long term scheme (to which the Bonus applies) will receive the Bonus if entitlement to the relevant scheme is backdated to cover the week in which the Bonus would have been payable for 2015.

There are currently no plans to review the schemes eligible for the bonus.

Carer's Allowance Applications

107. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if a decision has been made on 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. [44971/15]

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

Invalidity Pension Applications

108. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of applications for social protection payments by persons (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44972/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Invalidity pension (IP) is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or inca-

capacity and who satisfy the pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions.

The department received a claim for IP for the person concerned on the 16 September 2015. The person concerned was refused IP on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. He was notified on the 11 December 2015 of this decision, the reasons for it and of his right of review and appeal.

Disability allowance (DA) is a weekly allowance paid to people with a specified disability who are aged over 16 and under 66. The disability must be expected to last for at least one year and the allowance is subject to a medical assessment, a means test and a habitual residency test.

The department received a claim for DA for the person concerned on the 2 October 2015. The person concerned was refused DA on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. He was notified on the 12 November 2015 of this decision, the reasons for it and of his right of review and appeal. An appeal was lodged with the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO) on the 7 December 2015. The SWAO will be in touch with the person in question in due course in relation to the progress of their appeal.

The person in question is currently in receipt of supplementary welfare allowance and his wife is in receipt of IP in her own right. His wife may apply to have him included as a qualified adult on her IP claim or the person concerned may apply for illness benefit (IB) which is a short-term payment for persons who are incapable of work and who satisfy the PRSI conditions.

Community Services Programme

109. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection her views on the Pobal minimum wage increase and its effects on workers (details supplied) in County Kerry. [45018/15]

114. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection why she has not increased the funding contribution for the community services programme administered by Pobal in 2016 as a result of the new minimum wage of €9.15 taking effect on 1 January 2016 and in recognition of the extra financial burden this will place on community groups; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45120/15]

124. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will review a matter (details supplied) to help ensure the viability of the community services programme; the additional cost of increasing the community service programme support in line with the 50 cent per hour increase in the national minimum wage; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45200/15]

127. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection why the grant payable to community organisations under the community services programme employment scheme is not being increased to meet the increased minimum wage of programme participants. [45245/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Kevin Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 109, 114, 124 and 127 together.

The Department of Social Protection supports service provision through a number of programmes and schemes. The Community Services Programme supports community companies that operate on a community business or social enterprise model. Companies supported by the CSP generate and use income from the services they provide to pay staff, meet overhead costs

and to contribute to future development. The CSP provides a contribution to the wage cost on the basis that the services are not fully self-financing or the cost of provision would be prohibitive on users.

Currently, there are 398 active contracts in place with community companies at a cost of €42 million per annum. The Programme directly supports 2,110 full-time positions. Of these positions, a financial contribution of €32,000 per annum is made to support the employment of managers, of which there are 312 currently. Funds are also provided as a contribution to the cost of employing people in some 1,800 full-time equivalent positions. The Department estimates that some 2,800 people are employed across these companies with direct CSP support. Another 1,100 people are employed in these companies without public funding support. Additionally, the companies provide some 1,500 work placements through CE, the Rural Social Scheme and Tús. These companies are valuable to the social fabric of the country and provide very good quality services, particularly in poorer urban areas and rural villages where services are not widely available.

Since the CSP became operational in 2006, it has helped companies to move from a situation where the minimum wage was paid to a position today where 60% of employees are paid above this level. The Department is committed to working with the remaining companies to work towards paying a reasonable wage. The resurgent economy will support this move. A core requirement of the Programme is that service providers generate non-public revenues from their operations by the sale of goods, charging fees for services delivered or fundraising.

Companies in contract with CSP must be not-for-profit, social enterprise or community business in nature. This does not mean that they should not aspire to make reasonable returns from their activities that allow for a good wage to be paid. The CSP operates very clearly on the basis that it provides a “contribution only” to offset the wage costs of service provision. However, it is entirely a matter for each service provider to set their own wage levels.

The Deputies should note that some 45% of non-management staff are paid the minimum wage in companies in contract to the CSP, contrary to the requirements of the programme to pay the local pay rate. Ten percent were paid above the proposed living wage of €11.50 per hour and the remaining 45% are paid between these ranges. The development of the Programme and the companies in recent years has ensured that the majority of companies do not continue to operate with a low pay model.

The Department is working with Pobal to put in place arrangements that will allow companies to apply in a structured manner to access short-term financial support, if that is needed to deal with the issues identified. The arrangements which are being prepared will be notified to companies early in the New Year.

Departmental Expenditure

110. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the ground rents payable by her Department or agencies under her remit, by named property, by name of landlord by amount payable, in 2015 and in 2016 and in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45060/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department of Social Protection is not aware of any ground rents payable for any property either under our remit or payable by an Agency under our remit.

Disability Allowance Applications

111. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45064/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department has received an application for disability allowance from the above named person on 12 November 2015. On completion of the necessary investigations on all aspects of the claim a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

The processing time for individual disability allowance claims may vary in accordance with their relative complexity in terms of the three main qualifying criteria, the person's circumstances and the information they provide in support of their claim.

Departmental Funding

112. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the supports available for the establishment and operation of men's sheds; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45085/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Kevin Humphreys): The Department of Social Protection does not provide support targeted specifically for the establishment and operation of men's sheds. The Department does provide funding to assist local organisations and agencies to implement projects addressing the social and economic circumstances of recipients of welfare payments, to enhance their employability through education, training and personal development opportunities and to improve their quality of life. Where projects are eligible to be supported, this can be done under the range of schemes and programmes the Department delivers in support of activation and social inclusion objectives.

One-Parent Family Payment Eligibility

113. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection her policy on the payment of single-parent payments; her views on the concerns of single fathers who express concern at the fact that they feel discriminated against, where most single-parent payments are paid to the female in situations where both parents, living separately and apart, are awarded joint custody and take equal responsibility for the cost of rearing the child; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45093/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The one-parent family payment (OFP) is a payment for both men and women aged under 66 years who are bringing up a child or children without the support of a partner.

To qualify for the one-parent family payment a person must meet the conditions of the scheme as set down in legislation. These conditions include the requirement that the applicant has main care and charge of at least one child who is residing with them.

When the Deciding Officer determines who has main care and charge of the child(ren) the decision is based on the actual circumstances of the case as well as any Court Order that may be in place. In cases where there is an actual 50-50 split of equal and shared parental responsibilities between both parents, it is deemed that neither parent has main charge of the child(ren), and

as such, neither parent would have an entitlement to the one-parent family payment, however, they may be eligible for an alternative income support payment from the Department.

The eligibility rules for the one-parent family payment do not discriminate between genders. The payment is available to both men and women in the same manner once they meet the conditions of the scheme. The majority of one-parent family payment recipients are women as in most cases they have main care and charge of the child(ren).

In circumstances where one parent qualifies and is in receipt of the one-parent family payment, the other parent can apply for an alternative income support payment from the Department.

Question No. 114 answered with Question No. 109.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

115. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of a person (details supplied) who is unemployed and available for work but who is in receipt of no State benefit and who was informed of not being entitled to sign on for credits; if she will outline the options open to this person; the person's current payments and the person's position regarding credits under the State pension, contributory, scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45138/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned is currently claiming credited contributions at her local Intreo Centre; there is no record of her being advised that she is not entitled to do so. Following the Deputy's question, the Intreo Centre has contacted the person concerned. An appointment has been arranged for her to attend the office on Wednesday 16 December 2015 in order to ascertain her circumstances, and advise her of the various options open to her with regard to credits and payments.

Carer's Allowance Applications

116. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45146/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Carer's allowance (CA) is a social assistance payment, made to persons who are providing full-time care and attention to people who have a disability such that they require that level of care and who satisfy a means test.

The person concerned re-applied for CA on 17 July 2015. The application has been referred to a social welfare inspector (SWI) to assess means and to confirm that all conditions of the scheme are satisfied.

Once the SWI has reported, a deciding officer will make a full decision and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Carer's Allowance Applications

117. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45148/15]

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 3 November 2015. A request for information, omitted from the application, issued to her on 26 November 2015.

Once the requested information is supplied, a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Carer's Allowance Applications

118. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45150/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The application for carer's allowance in respect of the person concerned was awarded on 28 November 2015 and the first payment issued to the person's nominated bank account on 3 December 2015.

Arrears of allowance due from 20 August 2015 to 2 December 2015 have also issued.

Carer's Allowance Applications

119. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for carer's allowance by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45152/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Carer's Allowance (CA) is a social assistance payment, made to persons who are providing full-time care and attention to a person who has a disability such that they require that level of care and who satisfy a means test.

I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person concerned on the 22 September 2015. The application has been referred to a local social welfare inspector (SWI) on 28 November 2015 to assess means and to confirm that all the conditions for the scheme are satisfied.

Once the SWI has reported, a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Family Income Supplement Data

120. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the number of families who have a person employed in the public service and who are in receipt of, or have been in receipt of, family income supplement, by cost, for each of the years 2010 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45153/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The family income

supplement (FIS) is designed to provide support for employees, with families, who have low earnings.

It should be noted that the expenditure for public servants who are receiving FIS is included in the overall expenditure figure given. A separate breakdown of expenditure for public servants is not currently available.

The total numbers in receipt of FIS, the number of public servants and the total annual expenditure since 2010 are given in the table.

Table --- FIS Numbers and Expenditure 2010-2015

Year	Expenditure - € million	Recipients - Families	Number of Public Servants	% Public Servants in receipt of FIS
2010	186.0	28,223	3,151	11%
2011	204.5	28,876	2,976	10%
2012	223.3	32,307	2,860	9%
2013	261.5	44,159	3,777	9%
2014	297.7	50,306	3,902	8%
2015	349.2**	54,229***	3,822	7%

** Estimate *** end October 2015

Carer's Allowance Applications

121. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45154/15]

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 11 November 2015, who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

Question No. 122 answered with Question No. 106.

Data Protection

123. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if a record is kept of calls made by private investigators to her Department on behalf of financial institutions seeking information on social protection recipients; if figures are available; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45182/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department takes its responsibilities in relation to data protection very seriously. Every effort is made to ensure that personal customer data is used solely for business purposes and that it is not compromised in any way. The Department has data protection and information security policies,

standards, procedures and guidelines in place governing the use of its computer systems and customer data.

It is not appropriate, nor permissible, for customers' personal data to be disclosed to private investigators acting on behalf of financial institutions. The Department is very aware of the threat posed by those who attempt to illegally elicit personal data.

All allegations of data breaches are fully investigated and the Department cooperates fully with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner in all its investigations. Data accesses by staff are logged and are subject to audit. In addition, telephone logs are maintained and can be accessed to help aid investigations. The telephone logs give the telephone numbers of callers but not their identities. In the event of an investigation the identity of the caller can be ascertained. 8.1 million telephone calls were answered by the Department in 2014. It would not be feasible or practical to identify all callers.

A range of specific measures are in place to strengthen data protection governance and compliance within the Department.

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

A number of alerts have issued to all staff notifying them of bogus calls to the Department and giving information on modus operandi and persona adopted by the bogus callers.

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

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

Question No. 124 answered with Question No. 109.

Disability Allowance Applications

125. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection when a claim for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied) will be facilitated; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45210/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department has received an application for disability allowance from the above named person on 24 November 2015. On completion of the necessary investigations on all aspects of the claim a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

The processing time for individual disability allowance claims may vary in accordance with their relative complexity in terms of the three main qualifying criteria, the person's circumstances and the information they provide in support of their claim.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

126. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive a decision on an appeal under the invalidity pension scheme; the reason for the delay; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45213/15]

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 who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

Question No. 127 answered with Question No. 109.

Carer's Allowance Applications

128. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection when a decision will be made on an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [45249/15]

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 16 October 2015.

The application has been referred to a local social welfare inspector (SWI) on 14 November 2015 to assess the level of care being provided, assess means and confirm that all the conditions for receipt of carer's allowance are satisfied.

Once the SWI has reported, a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

129. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive a decision on an appeal under the carer's allowance scheme; the reason for the delay; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45252/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Carer's Allowance (CA) is a social assistance payment, made to persons who are providing full-time care and attention to a person who has a disability such that they require that level of care.

Following a review, it was determined that the person in respect of whom CA was being paid, no longer required full-time care and attention.

The person concerned was notified on 18 November 2015 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

The additional information included with this question will be accepted as a request from the applicant for a review of this decision. Once the review is completed, the person in question will be notified directly of the outcome. In the meantime, carer's allowance will remain in payment.

Farm Assist Scheme Eligibility

130. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection why a person (details supplied) in County Roscommon has not been awarded farm assist; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45253/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an oral hearing of the appeal of the person concerned took place on 2 December 2015 and that the Appeals Officer is now considering the appeal in the light of all of the evidence submitted, including that adduced at the oral hearing. The person concerned will be notified of the Appeals Officer's decision when the appeal has been determined.

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

Domiciliary Care Allowance Review

131. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of a review under the domiciliary care allowance scheme by a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45260/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for domiciliary care allowance was received from the person concerned on the 30th April 2015. This application was not allowed as the child was not considered to satisfy the qualifying conditions for the allowance. A letter issued on the 12th August 2015 outlining the decision of the deciding officer to refuse the allowance.

A review of this decision was requested on 9th September 2015 and additional information on this child's condition/care needs was supplied. The additional information provided, together with the original application, was recently re-examined by a deciding officer with the benefit of the opinion of another medical assessor. The deciding officer does not consider that a revised decision is warranted at this time, as the child is not considered to satisfy the qualifying conditions for the allowance. A letter outlining the position issued to the person concerned on 11 December 2015.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

132. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an appeal under the invalidity pension scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45267/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an oral hearing of the appeal of the person concerned took

place on 1 December 2015 and that the Appeals Officer is now considering the appeal in the light of all of the evidence submitted, including that adduced at the oral hearing. The person concerned will be notified of the Appeals Officer's decision when the appeal has been determined.

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

Carer's Allowance Payments

133. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection when payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45268/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Following a successful appeal, the application for carer's allowance in respect of the person concerned was awarded on 21 November 2015 and the first payment issued to the person's nominated bank account on 26 November 2015.

Arrears of allowance due from 21 August 2014 to 25 November 2015 have also issued.

Carer's Allowance Eligibility

134. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection when a decision on a carer's allowance will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45328/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Carer's Allowance (CA) is a social assistance payment, made to persons who are providing full-time care and attention to a person who has a disability such that they require that level of care.

Following a review, it was determined that the person in respect of whom CA was being paid, no longer required full-time care and attention. The person concerned was notified on 18 November 2015 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

To date, no request for a review or appeal has been received from the person concerned.

European Globalisation Fund

135. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the number of persons categorised as not in employment, education or training from the Tallaght and Clondalkin social protection office areas who have been referred to the Lufthansa Technik European globalisation adjustment fund programme to date, the criteria by which these persons were selected, the future plans to refer more of these persons to the fund to ensure the maximum level of their participation in the programme. [45341/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Kevin Humphreys): The Department of Social Protection referred 213 people who were not in employment, education or training (NEET) to the Lufthansa Technik European Globalisation Fund (EGF) pro-

gramme in October 2014 and a further 150 were referred in June 2015, giving a total of 363 referrals since the programme started.

The original 213 who were referred in October 2014 were all selected from the Tallaght Intreo Centre. The 150 referred in June 2015 were spread across a number of offices, with 50 selected from the Tallaght Intreo Centre, 25 from the Clondalkin Intreo Centre, 50 from the Newbridge Local Office and 25 from the Maynooth Branch Office. These clients were randomly selected from clients under 25, in receipt of jobseeker's allowance or benefit and who were not working part-time.

A meeting is being arranged between the EGF Managing Authority in the Department of Education and Skills and representatives from the Department of Social Protection to explore further measures to maximise the NEET level of participation in the programme.

Carer's Allowance Applications

136. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the steps she will take to expedite an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45400/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): There is no record of an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned. However, the applicant's partner is in receipt of CA for the provision of full-time care and attention to two of her children.

CA is in payment to her since 5 September 2013 for one child and on 16 September 2015 she was awarded CA in respect of a second child from 5 March 2015.

Payment and arrears were issued to her nominated bank account on 24 September 2015. CA is in payment at the maximum rate.

Question No. 137 withdrawn.

Question No. 138 answered with Question No. 79.

Carer's Allowance Applications

139. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will expedite an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45407/15]

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 22 September 2015.

A request for information, which was omitted from the application, issued to the person concerned on 11 December 2015. Once all information has been supplied, a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Community Employment Schemes Operation

140. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will assist back into training and employment citizens, especially women, who do not have a recent social insurance record, given recent positive statements on this matter by the Minister of State at her Department; if she will commence this change for retraining and community employment programmes before the conclusion of the 31st Dáil; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45423/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Kevin Humphreys): Community Employment (CE) is the largest employment programme administered by the Department and is a valuable resource for both jobseekers and communities. Currently, there are almost 22,500 participants and nearly 1,400 supervisors employed on the programme at a cost of approximately €373m in 2015.

As the Deputy is aware, CE aims to enhance the employability and mobility of disadvantaged and unemployed persons by providing work experience and training opportunities for them within their communities. In addition, it helps long-term unemployed people to re-enter the active workforce by breaking their experience of unemployment through a return to a regular work routine.

Currently to be eligible for CE, a person must be in receipt of one of a number of social welfare payments such as Jobseeker's Allowance or One Parent Family Payment for 52 weeks. This is in keeping with commitments in *Pathways to Work* to target initiatives at those who are long-term unemployed. However, it should be noted that there is special provision for individuals who are stabilised drug users and ex-offenders. They are not required to be in receipt of a social welfare payment in order to be referred to CE by an appropriate agency.

The adult dependant of a social welfare claimant is not eligible for CE in their own right as eligibility rests with the main claimant only. Persons engaged in short-term, part-time employment may be eligible for CE if they have been employed no more than 30 days in the previous 12 months. If they exceed 30 worked days in that time, then they fall outside the definition of long-term unemployed for the programme eligibility purposes, as they have proved themselves to be capable of finding and retaining employment.

There are a range of options available to unemployed people who do not qualify for CE, including upskilling and training provided by the Education and Training Boards (ETB), Springboard and Skillnets courses funded through the Department of Education. DSP's Intreo offices are also in a position to advise clients on the interventions that best suit their individual needs, regardless of their social welfare status.

The Government is committed to supporting as many people as possible to participate more fully in employment and to become more self-sufficient by providing supports that address barriers they may encounter in finding and sustaining employment.

Carer's Allowance Applications

141. **Deputy Emmet Stagg** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the reason for the delay in awarding a carer's allowance to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare. [45432/15]

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 16 October 2015.

15 December 2015

Carer's allowance was awarded to the person concerned on 11 December 2015 and the first payment issued to their nominated post office on that date.

Arrears of allowance due from 22 October 2015 to 11 December 2015 have also issued.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

142. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if further medical evidence submitted by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry in support of an appeal for the carer's allowance scheme was reviewed before a decision issued. [45442/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer having fully considered all of the available evidence, including that adduced at oral hearing, decided to disallow the appeal of the person concerned. Under Social Welfare legislation, the decision of the Appeals Officer is final and conclusive and may only be reviewed by the Appeals Officer in the light of new evidence or new facts.

If there is any new evidence or new facts relevant to this case they can be submitted to the Social Welfare Appeals Office and the Appeals Officer will review the case.

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.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance Eligibility

143. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if supplementary welfare will be facilitated for a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45453/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned has been refused supplementary welfare allowance on the basis that her means are in excess of the statutory limit for receipt of this payment. Means are derived from a combination of her earnings from employment and maintenance payments. The person concerned has been advised of the outcome of her supplementary welfare allowance application.

A one parent family payment in the case of the person concerned is currently suspended pending receipt of documentation requested in order to complete a review of her entitlement to this payment.

Carer's Allowance Payments

144. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection when payment of a carer's allowance will commence for a person (details supplied) in County Mayo if that person's appeal is successful. [45662/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Following a successful appeal, carer's allowance was awarded to the person concerned and she was notified of this on 7 December 2015.

The first payment issued to the person's nominated post office on 10 December 2015.

Arrears of allowance due from 8 January 2015 to 9 December 2015 were issued by cheque on 7 December 2015.

Carer's Allowance Payments

145. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection when arrears of carer's allowance will be paid to a person (details supplied) in County Mayo if that person's appeal is successful. [45663/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Following a successful appeal, carer's allowance was awarded to the person concerned and she was notified of this on 7 December 2015.

The first payment issued to the person's nominated post office on 10 December 2015.

Arrears of allowance due from 8 January 2015 to 9 December 2015 were issued by cheque on 7 December 2015.

Flood Risk Insurance Cover Provision

146. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to put in place a State-sponsored insurance scheme, to be availed of by residents in flood-prone areas who are not in a position to secure insurance through the normal sources, which will be specifically available for premium contributions on an annual basis thereby guaranteeing that the residents will have insurance in the event of suffering significant damage to their businesses and accommodation due to severe flooding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45404/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am very much aware of the difficulties that the absence of flood insurance cover can cause to householders and businesses. However, neither I nor the Central Bank of Ireland, have the power to direct insurance companies to provide flood cover to specific individuals.

With this in mind, the Government's strategy on insurance and flooding is focused on ways to address the increased availability of flood insurance. This involves:

- a) prioritising spending on flood relief measures;
- b) development and implementation of plans by the Office of Public Works (OPW) to implement flood relief schemes; and
- c) the transfer of data in relation to completed flood defence schemes to the insurance industry by the OPW.

Progress is continuing on the implementation of this strategy which was agreed in 2010. For example, the OPW is carrying out an assessment of flood risk throughout the country under the National Catchment Flood Risk Assessment & Management (CFRAM) Programme.

This programme includes the production of a comprehensive suite of flood risk maps and the development of flood risk management plans for the areas most at risk. The plans will consider the best possible options, both structural and non-structural, for dealing with the risks on a long-term basis.

My Department continues to contribute to the whole-of-Government approach to the flooding issue via the work of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Flooding which is being led by the OPW, under the aegis of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. This Committee is due to report to Government on the current strategy on flooding, including insurance, in Spring 2016.

NAMA Social Housing Provision

147. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance if, under the proposal for the National Asset Management Agency to build 20,000 units over the coming years, there should be a fair balance between the provision of private housing and social housing (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44704/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I would refer the Deputy to my response to Parliamentary Question 72 of 10th December 2015, among others, on the same topic.

In that response, I pointed out that NAMA is not a property developer. NAMA's role is, like the owner of any non-performing loan, 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.

The Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government has responsibility for planning legislation. Part V of the Planning and Development Act dictates the required provision of social housing as part of new residential developments. Residential projects delivered by NAMA debtors and receivers, which may be funded by NAMA, 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 housing units for social housing. The 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.

Similarly, I have recently explained that NAMA cannot subvent the supply of social housing. Section 10 of the NAMA Act requires NAMA to act in a commercial manner to obtain the best financial return for taxpayers. In line with NAMA's obligations under Section 10, all residential projects will be required to pass a stringent commercial viability threshold before NAMA approves funding and funding will only be made available if it is expected to increase the overall recovery for NAMA from the security being funded. NAMA must act akin to a private sector commercial entity. In essence any funding that NAMA may provide must be expected to enhance NAMA's overall recovery on its loans. More specifically, any funding provided by NAMA must be provided on commercial terms to its debtors and any resulting units constructed must be sold at the prevailing market rate to ensure that NAMA is maximising the recovery on its loans.

With NAMA estimating that 20,000 residential units may be delivered under its Residential Funding Programme between 2016 and 2020, the corresponding Part V contribution of 2,000 social housing units should not be forgotten. As with any delivery of housing, the Part V contribution is a meaningful contribution to social housing supply.

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.

Therefore, NAMA's contribution to the housing market and, by association, social housing, is ongoing, timely and welcome. The core housing issue that we currently face is that of insufficient supply across all types of housing including social housing. It is only by substantially increasing housing supply generally, particularly in the greater Dublin area, that we can deliver a sustainable solution to the current housing situation. By increasing the level of housing output, Part V will ensure the direct supply of a certain amount of social housing. An increase in the level of housing output will also increase the affordability of housing generally, which in turn will have a positive effect on the ability of local authorities to provide social housing directly.

NAMA will continue to play a role in addressing this shortage but, for the reasons outlined above, it is not feasible to expect the Agency to be a panacea or to provide units on anything other than commercial terms.

The Government has a number of strategies in this regard, which I have previously remarked on - namely our Social Housing 2020 strategy, which will provide 35,000 new social housing units over the period to 2020, a significant increase in funding for addressing social housing and homelessness to tackle more immediate issues facing families, and the recently announced amendments to rent reviews.

Tax Code

148. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the details of the total net discretionary revenue measures in each year from 2017 to 2021 as per the economic and fiscal outlook provided with budget 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44784/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The levels of discretionary revenue measures for the period 2015 to 2021 are set out in Table A6 on page C.49 of the Budget 2016 book.

A breakdown of measures for the period 2017 - 2021 is set out in the following table.

Discretionary revenue Measures	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
€ billion					
Carryover of Budget 2016 measures	-0.30				
Carryover of 2016 non-indexation of Tax system	0.10				
Carryover from previous Budget measures	0.01	0.01	0.04	0.01	0.00
Total	-0.19	0.01	0.04	0.01	0.00
% of GDP	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Source: Department of Finance

Carryover of Budget 2016 measures takes account of the full year cost against the first year cost as outlined in the Taxation measures described on pages A.5 to A.8 of the Budget 2016 book.

It should also be noted that there is a provision for indexation of the income tax system included in the baseline Budget figures. The potential additional revenue that would be generated from a political decision not to proceed with indexation is included as a discretionary revenue measure in the fiscal space calculations in Tables A8 and A9. This additional revenue, including carryover, is estimated at approximately €0.4bn a year. The final choice of measures will be a matter for decision by the next government.

Departmental Staff Data

149. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of vacancies that exist in his Department, by post, the timeframe for each vacancy that has been unfilled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44960/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I wish to inform the Deputy that my Department is committed to the Civil Service Workforce Planning process, has a robust Recruitment and Selection policy which feeds into an ongoing Resource Review conducted and directed by the Executive Board. This process identifies on a case by case basis, both current and upcoming resource requirements in my Department.

As part of the workforce planning my Department is currently running internal competitions for Principal Officer (currently 1 vacancy) and Assistant Principal Officer (currently 1 vacancy) and PAS (Public Appointments Service) is finalising an Administrative Officer competition for which we currently have 22 vacancies and we expect to have candidates available in mid-January. My Department is also awaiting the assignment, by PAS, of one Executive Officer and five Clerical Officers.

A vacancy will occur at the end of January 2016 for a Press Officer and a competition to fill this vacancy will be completed this week.

Central Bank of Ireland Staff

150. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of vacancies that exist in the Central Bank of Ireland by post, the timeframe for each vacancy that has been unfilled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44961/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Central Bank has provided me with the following information about 56 vacancies that exist in the organisation. This would translate into an overall vacancy rate at the Bank of approximately 3% of its total staff complement.

Directorate	Competition Name	Campaign Open Since:	No. of Roles:	Time Open (weeks):
Credit Institutions Supervision	Senior Supervisor	03/11/2015	1	5.3
	Head of Banking Supervision: Analysis	03/11/2015	1	5.3

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Directorate	Competition Name	Campaign Open Since:	No. of Roles:	Time Open (weeks):
	Bank Supervisor	26/11/2015	1	2.0
Currency & Facilities Management	Environmental Officer	06/11/2015	1	4.9
	Environmental Health & Safety Officer	06/11/2015	1	4.9
	Environmental Health & Safety Manager	06/11/2015	1	4.9
Economics	Economist	24/11/2015	1	2.3
Enforcement	Deputy Head of Enforcement Division	23/07/2015	1	20.0
	Operations Executive	03/12/2015	1	1.0
	Enforcement Executive	13/11/2015	1	3.9
Financial Operations	Office Manager	13/11/2015	1	3.9
	Team Lead, Purchase Programme Desk	02/12/2015	1	1.1
Human Resources	HR Manager	02/11/2015	1	5.4
	HR Business Partners	02/11/2015	2	5.4
Information Management & Technology	Information Security Manager	23/09/2015	1	11.1
	Information Security Specialist	15/10/2015	1	8.0
	Senior Project Manager	14/10/2015	2	8.1
Insurance Institutions Supervision	Prudential Analytics Manager	27/07/2015	1	19.4
	User Acceptance Tester	29/10/2015	2	6.0
	Senior Supervisor - Insurance	20/10/2015	5	7.3
	Supervisor - Insurance	20/10/2015	5	7.3
	Supervisor - Insurance	20/10/2015	5	7.3
	Actuary	20/10/2015	2	7.3
	Trainee Actuary	20/10/2015	3	7.3
Markets Supervision	Senior IT Audit Manager	24/08/2015	1	15.4
	Primary Markets Regulated Disclosures Team Manager	29/10/2015	1	6.0
	Deputy head - Investment Firms & Funds Supervision	10/11/2015	1	4.3
	Stockbroking and Markets Team Supervisor	24/11/2015	1	2.3

Directorate	Competition Name	Campaign Open Since:	No. of Roles:	Time Open (weeks):
Policy & Risk	Markets and Investment Firms Policy Professional	22/10/2015	1	7.0
	Investment Funds Policy Expert	23/10/2015	2	6.9
	Markets and Investment Firms Policy Professional	12/11/2015	1	4.0
	Policy Expert	07/12/2015	1	0.4
Resolution & Corporate Affairs	Lawyer - Contracts & Procurement	17/09/2015	1	12.0
	Senior Operational Risk Analyst	02/11/2015	1	5.4
	Head of Specialist Resolutions Unit	27/11/2015	1	1.9
	Media Relations Officer	03/12/2015	1	1.0
Senior Management	Deputy Governor (Central Banking)	12/10/2015	1	8.4
Total:			56	

Credit Union Regulation

151. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Finance in the context of recent submissions and consultations with all of the stakeholders associated with the broader credit union movement, if he will now take steps to defer the implementation of the CP88 regulations, which the Central Bank of Ireland is intent on imposing on the credit unions, which will ultimately undermine the development of safe and vibrant credit unions, and which, as currently drafted, will impose lending restrictions on amounts and terms, saving restrictions, investment restrictions, liquidity restrictions and impose a one-size-fits all approach in terms of a regulatory reserve ratio of at least 10% of total assets rather than a risk-based reserve assessment, and which, in effect, undermines the ethos of member-owned co-operatives; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45042/15]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I have been informed by the Central Bank that it has been necessary to put lending restrictions in place in credit unions where there are regulatory concerns and resultant risk to members' savings. These lending restrictions are reviewed on a regular basis to determine whether or not they are still set at appropriate levels.

In February 2015 the Central Bank commenced a lending restriction review initiative, whereby credit unions that are subject to a lending restriction, but are satisfied that they have made the necessary improvements and have embedded these improvements in robust risk sensitive lending practices, could apply for a review of their lending restriction. The closing date for receipt of applications to review lending restrictions under this initiative was 30 September 2015.

The Central Bank further informs me that at this stage where a review has been completed 74% of the applicant credit unions have had their lending restriction lifted and are now operating under the board's stated credit risk appetite. C.40% of credit unions that applied made their application in September. The majority of these applications are still in the process of review.

This review has reduced the number of credit unions with lending restrictions as currently approximately 35% of credit unions have a lending restriction compared with 52% at the start of the review process.

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

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

Departmental Bodies Expenditure

152. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the ground rents the Department or agencies under its remit will pay, by named property, by name of landlord and by amount payable in 2015 and in 2016 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45055/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In response to the Deputy's query I would like to advise that as the Office of Public Works manages and maintains the State's property portfolio the Minister with responsibility for the Office of Public Works is better placed to advise you on ground rents paid with respect to all properties managed by that Office. My Department and certain bodies under its aegis are provided with accommodation by the Office of Public Works. The Department of Finance does not pay ground rent. With regard to agencies under the aegis of the Department, please find, in tabular form, details of the ground rent payable by agencies:

Body	Ground rents payable 2015	Ground rents payable 2016	Name of property	Landlord
Office of the Appeals Commissioners	Nil	Nil	-	-
C & AGs	Nil	Nil	-	-
Central Bank	Nil	Nil	-	-
Credit Reviewer	Nil	Nil		
Credit Union Advisory Committee	Nil	Nil	-	-
Credit Union Restructuring Board	Nil	Nil	-	-
Disabled Drivers Medical Board of Appeal	Nil	Nil	-	-
Financial Services Ombudsman Bureau	Nil	Nil	-	-
Financial Services Ombudsman Council	Nil	Nil	-	-
Investor Compensation Company Ltd	Nil	Nil	-	-
Irish Bank Resolution Corporation	Nil	Nil	-	-

Body	Ground rents payable 2015	Ground rents payable 2016	Name of property	Landlord
Irish Financial Services Appeals Tribunal	Nil	Nil	-	-
Irish Fiscal Advisory Council	Nil	Nil	-	-
National Asset Management Agency	€1397	€1397	Graving Docks, Grand Canal D2	Waterways Ireland
National Treasury Management Agency (excluding NAMA)	Nil	Nil	-	-
Office of the Revenue Commissioners	Nil	Nil	-	-
Social Finance Foundation	Nil	Nil	-	-
Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland	Nil	Nil	-	-

Tax Relief Data

153. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons who were accepted under the living over the shop scheme and the cost of relief, by county, for the past five years in tabular form. [45089/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that, due to their obligation to observe the confidentiality of taxpayers' information and the low numbers availing of this scheme, it is not possible to provide the information requested by the Deputy on a county by county basis. However, to provide some indication of the distribution of the scheme, the Deputy may be interested in the indicative breakdown based on Revenue administrative region as shown in the table for 2013 (the most recent year for which data are available). The total cost of the scheme in 2013 was €1 million, with 43 cases availing.

Revenue Region	Number of Claimants	Tax Cost of €1m
Dublin	44%	57%
South West	26%	15%
Border Midlands & West	9%	14%
East/South East	21%	14%

The overall cost and numbers availing for the Living Over The Shop scheme for earlier years is available on the Commissioners' Statistics webpage (<http://www.revenue.ie/en/about/statistics/index.html>) and can be accessed directly at <http://www.revenue.ie/en/about/statistics/property-incentives.pdf>. Updates will be published in due course for later years.

Living City Initiative

154. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Finance to consider the circumstances

of a person (details supplied) in County Cork for relief under the living city initiative; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45132/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I refer to the individual's letter in relation to the Living City Initiative scheme. The Living City Initiative was first introduced in 2013 for the Limerick and Waterford areas. The scope of the Initiative was subsequently extended to Dublin, Cork, Galway and Kilkenny and broadened to incorporate houses constructed prior to 1915.

A tax relief must be designed within certain parameters and eligibility will be subject to certain conditions. In order to avail of the tax relief under the scheme, there are a number of conditions that must be met including:

- The property must be located within the 'special regeneration area' (SRA) and the individual has clarified in his letter that his property is indeed located within the special regeneration area of Cork city.

- The second condition is that the property must have been originally built for use as a dwelling prior to 1915. So, for example, an old derelict church which is to be converted into a dwelling does not qualify, since it was not originally built as a dwelling. A property, which was originally built as a dwelling, may have been refurbished or converted for another purpose in the meantime. Expenditure on such a building qualifies. Similarly, expenditure on an apartment in a large Georgian house by the owner/occupier will qualify for the relief even if no work has been carried out on the rest of the building.

I have been informed that the planning policy section in Cork City Council has not reached a final decision as yet and they would welcome a further meeting with this individual to reassess his application. This individual should contact the planning section to arrange a mutually convenient time.

Small and Medium Enterprises Supports

155. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding grant funding to small and medium enterprises; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45176/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The responsibility for grant funding for such projects would not be a matter for me as Minister for Finance. Such grant funding may fall under the remit of the Local Enterprise Office (e.g the Business Expansion Grant may be available subject to eligibility). Standard capital allowances may also be available regarding a refurbishment subject to the relevant legislation, guidelines and case law.

IBRC Liquidation

156. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Finance if the Irish Banking Resolution Corporation was fully tax compliant, with all taxes due paid and up to date, at the time of the appointment of the special liquidator; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45183/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): On the appointment of the Special Liquidators, Irish Bank Resolution Corporation Limited was already in dialogue with the Revenue Commissioners in relation to an open tax audit. I am advised by the Special Liquidators that

they continue to work with the Revenue Commissioners to close out the tax audit and some other additional tax issues that have come to their attention. As these are matters which are still being reviewed and discussed between IBRC Limited (in Special Liquidation) and the Revenue Commissioners it would not be appropriate for either me or the Special Liquidators to comment any further at this time.

Tax Relief Costs

157. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of increasing the overall limit of €1 million in chargeable gains for qualifying for capital gains tax entrepreneur relief to €5 million, €10 million and €15 million. [45226/15]

158. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of reducing the capital gains tax entrepreneur relief rate from 20% to 10% while increasing the limit for chargeable gains to €5 million, €10 million and €15 million; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45227/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 157 and 158 together.

I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that, as tax returns do not separately identify “entrepreneurial” gains from other gains, there are no data available to accurately cost these proposed measures. However, on the basis of making various assumptions, it is very tentatively estimated that the cost of increasing the overall limit of €1 million in chargeable gains qualifying for Capital Gains Tax Entrepreneur Relief to €5 million, €10 million and €15 million would likely exceed €20 million, €27 million and €30 million respectively.

It is further estimated that the cost of reducing the Capital Gains Entrepreneurial Relief rate from 20% to 10% while increasing the limit for chargeable gains to €5 million, €10 million and €15 million would likely exceed €56 million, €69 million and €74 million respectively.

These estimates assume no behavioural change.

Tax Reliefs Application

159. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to increase the stamp duty on farm transfers from 1% to 2% from January 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45231/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I announced in my last Budget speech that I was extending the relief from stamp duty on transfers of agricultural land (including farm houses and buildings) to those farmers who meet certain criteria in relation to age and educational qualifications, known as ‘young trained farmers’. The relief was due to finish on 31 December 2015 but the current Finance Bill provides for an extension for a further three years until 31 December 2018.

I have no plans at this time in relation to rates of Stamp Duty.

VAT Exemptions

160. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Finance the recommendations the charities working group made in respect of the imposition of value added tax on charities; if he has accepted these and if they will be implemented. [45256/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Earlier this year, I agreed to the establishment of a Working Group comprising representatives from the Department of Finance, the Revenue Commissioners and the Irish Charities Taxation Reform (ICTR) group to examine options available to reduce the VAT burden of charities. A report from the group was provided to me in my deliberations ahead of Budget 2016 and is available on the Budget 2016 website.

Charities are exempt from VAT under the EU VAT Directive. This means that they do not register for VAT and cannot recover VAT incurred on goods and services that they purchase. This non-entitlement to VAT deductibility is a general feature of VAT exemption.

While the Report acknowledged the additional burden the VAT exemption imposes on charities, I decided at this time not to introduce any new tax relief in this area.

Excise Duties

161. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Finance if he will assist small rural golf clubs (details supplied) which are finding it difficult to survive by reducing the value added tax limit or excise; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45351/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Alcohol is a controlled substance which can only be sold in a Club under licence. The Registration of Clubs Acts 1904 to 2008 provide for the grant and renewal of certificates of registration for clubs by the District Courts. Club registration, including the annual renewal of registration, is subject to an excise duty of €505. This rate was provided for under the Finance Act 1992 and has not been adjusted since. Overall, the licence fee is a relatively small percentage of the annual turnover. To reduce the rate of excise duty would send the wrong signal, particularly in the light of the recent public health proposals on alcohol approved by the Government. Licence fees are among the issues considered annually as part of the Budget and Finance Bill process. However, I am not convinced of the need to change the rate of this excise duty at this time.

Property Tax Yield

162. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Finance the percentage of the local property tax revenue the Revenue Commissioners retain and the percentage passed on to the local authorities if a property is in arrears; the percentage of the local property tax, including arrears and penalties; when collected, that the Revenue Commissioners retain; and the percentage passed on to the local authorities. [45352/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that all Local Property Tax collected by Revenue, including arrears, interest and penalties is remitted by Revenue to the Central Fund.

Section 157 of the Finance (Local Property Tax Act) 2012 provides that the Minister for Finance shall, commencing in the year 2014, pay into the Local Government Fund an amount equivalent to the Local Property Tax (including interest paid thereupon) paid into the Central Fund that year.

Details of proposed expenditure from the Local Government Fund are set out in the Revised

Estimates Volume for Public Services as published annually by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. In accordance with decisions taken by Government, Local Property Tax (LPT) proceeds are used to fund programmes and services provided by local authorities.

The LPT allocations to individual local authorities amounting to €459m for 2015 and €453m for 2016 are published on the website of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government at the following link <http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/LocalGovernment/Administration/#d.en.35400>.

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

Specifically, LPT information including LPT collected by Local Authorities, is available at <http://www.revenue.ie/en/about/statistics/lpt-compliance.html>.

Property Tax Application

163. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45412/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The introduction of a local property tax is part of a broader approach to the taxation of property. The aim is to replace some of the revenue from transaction based taxes, which have proven to be an unstable source of Government revenue, with an annual recurring property tax, which international experience has shown to be a stable source of funding.

The Government decided that the LPT should be centred on the principles of equity, transparency and simplicity; and that a universal liability should apply to all owners of residential property with a limited number of exemptions and reliefs. Limiting the reliefs available allows the rate to be kept to a minimum for those liable persons who do not qualify for relief.

Properties in managed estates, to which management fees apply, would have been purchased by their owners in the knowledge that they would be taking on commitments to partake in, and to fund, the management of the estate, and that it was the intention that many such estates would not be taken in charge by local authorities, nor would it be appropriate for local authorities to do so.

Management fees in these estates can include services such as refuse collection, maintenance of common areas as well as a sinking fund for certain repairs to the buildings, depending on circumstances. These are costs which homeowners in other households have to fund themselves for their own properties.

Revenue from the LPT accrues to local authorities and supports the provision of local services. Local authorities provide a broad range of services in the public realm, which benefit the wider community. The proper functioning of these services are important for the wellbeing of every community and household. These include: fire and emergency services; road maintenance and cleaning; street lighting; spatial and development planning and other similar services; regulatory and inspection functions and business support services, as well as libraries, parks, and other recreation and cultural public amenities. The benefits of these services accrue to all members of society.

A requirement to pay management fees is not relevant in determining whether a property is subject to the LPT. Accordingly, whilst those who are liable for management fees to property management companies may be exempt from LPT for another reason, or may be entitled to avail of a deferral arrangement under the provisions contained in the legislation, there is no specific exemption for the payment of management fees. There are no plans to change the basis of liability to LPT.

Flood Relief Schemes Funding

164. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when he will provide funding for flood prevention at a location (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44934/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): No application has been received to date by the Office of Public Works (OPW) under its Minor Flood Mitigation Works & Coastal Protection Scheme from Kerry County Council (KCC) for Kenmare, Co Kerry.

However, it remains open to KCC to apply to the OPW for funding under this Scheme for mitigation measures that meet the Scheme's eligibility criteria, including a requirement that the works have a cost/benefit ratio of at least 1.5:1 and are estimated to cost not more than €500,000. The provision of funding by the OPW would also have regard to the OPW's overall allocation for flood risk management.

On 11th February, 2014 the Government allocated specific funding to local authorities for repair of public coastal defence infrastructure that was damaged in the Winter 2013/14 storms, of which €1.2m was allocated to County Kerry. KCC submitted to the OPW a programme of proposed works in relation to its allocation that included projects in the Kenmare area. All of this specific storm repairs funding has now been disbursed to Kerry County Council.

Flood Relief Schemes

165. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding flooding in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45136/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): The Office of Public Works (OPW) carries out an annual programme of Arterial Drainage Maintenance to a total of 11,500km of river channel and approximately 730km of embankments. This OPW programme maintains those arterial drainage schemes completed by the OPW under the Arterial Drainage Act 1945. The maintenance ensure the schemes are kept in proper repair and in an effective condition to the standard of the completed scheme. The annual maintenance programme typically involves some clearance of vegetation and removal of silt build-up on an average five-yearly cycle.

The property referred to by the Deputy is situated on the bank of a channel that forms part of the River Feale Catchment Drainage Scheme which was carried out by the OPW under the Arterial Drainage Act, 1945. The maintenance of this Scheme forms part of the annual maintenance programme. The OPW South Western Drainage Maintenance Division continues to make extensive efforts within existing resources to maintain the River Feale Drainage Scheme as part of its overall maintenance programme.

Flood Relief Schemes

166. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he or C oras Iompair  ireann has been requested to give consent to the Foynes flood relief scheme in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45195/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): Limerick City and County Council (LCCC) developed a flood relief scheme for Foynes and received approval for the proposed scheme under Part viii of the Planning and Development Act. The Local Authority sought approval from the Office of Public Works to fund the scheme and this approval has been issued. LCCC is currently in discussions with Iarnr d  ireann in relation to the proposed scheme works.

Coastal Protection

167. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the Office of Public Works will grant temporary permission to carry out emergency coastal erosion preventative works in a case (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45317/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): The Office of Public Works is not the competent authority under planning regulations or foreshore regulations/legislation to grant any sort of temporary permission to carry out emergency coastal erosion preventative works. This is a matter for the Local Authority or, in the case of Foreshore licences, the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government.

The only approval that the OPW is authorised to grant in this context is for funding under its Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme. I understand that officials from my Office have recently met with counterparts from Donegal County Council to advise on this option and, while I am advised that an application has recently been received from Donegal County Council for works at Lagg beach, no application has to date been received in this Office for works at Ballyliffin.

Flood Prevention Measures

168. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the action the Office of Public Works will take following the serious flooding in County Donegal over the weekend and the recommendations it has provided to Donegal County Council to date; if he will expedite a number of reports on flooding that have already been commissioned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44680/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): The core strategy for addressing the significant areas at significant risk and impact from flooding in Donegal, is the Office of Public Works' (OPW) Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme. Donegal has 27 locations among the 300 locations nationwide that are being assessed under the Programme the purpose of which is to implement the EU Floods Directive and national flood policy.

The Programme, which is being undertaken by engineering consultants on behalf of the OPW working in partnership with the Local Authorities, involves the production of predictive

flood mapping for each location, the development of preliminary flood risk management options and the production of flood risk management plans.

Twenty-six of the Donegal areas are being progressed under the North West – Neagh Bann Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) study, with Raphoe being progressed separately. The study is being undertaken by engineering consultants on behalf of the OPW, working in partnership with the local authorities.

A national public consultation on the draft flood maps is currently on-going until 23 December 2015. Details are available at the local authority offices at County House, Lifford and Letterkenny Public Services Centre, Neil T Blaney Road, Letterkenny and on the consultation website http://maps.opw.ie/flood_draftmap_consult/.

The Programme involves the development of preliminary flood risk management options and flood risk management plans. In relation to assessment of flood risk in Raphoe, the flood risk management options report is nearing completion by consultants on behalf of the OPW. Public consultation on these options will be held early in 2016. Feedback received during the public consultation will then inform the relevant Flood Risk Management Plan to be prepared for consultation and completion by the end of 2016.

The 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.

Further information is available on the study website: www.northwestcframstudy.ie.

Investigation of flooding, in the first instance, is a matter for each local authority to investigate and address. Donegal County Council may carry out flood mitigation works using its own resources. The Council may also apply to the Office of Public Works (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. Details are published on the OPW website www.opw.ie.

Flood Relief Schemes Funding

169. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the details of the funding provided by the Office of Public Works to each county council to carry out drainage maintenance works for in each of the years 2011 to date, in tabular form. [44716/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): The Office of Public Works (OPW) does not provide funding to Local Authorities to carry out drainage maintenance works.

The OPW carries out its own programme of Arterial Drainage Maintenance. A total of

11,500km of river channel form part of the Arterial Drainage Schemes, and approximately 730km of embankments. While new Arterial Drainage Schemes are no longer being undertaken, the OPW has a statutory duty to maintain the completed schemes in proper repair and in an effective condition. The annual maintenance programme typically involves some clearance of vegetation and removal of silt build-up on an average five-yearly cycle. The location of the Schemes undertaken throughout the country is provided in the spreadsheet.

The purpose of the Arterial Drainage Schemes was primarily to improve the drainage of agricultural lands to enhance production. This typically involved lowering or widening river beds to facilitate the drainage and discharge of neighbouring lands and drainage channels. While not the primary purpose of the Schemes, they did also provide enhanced conveyance capacity where they passed through towns, villages and dispersed rural communities that in turn has reduced the flood risk to properties in these areas.

Drainage Districts are areas where drainage schemes to improve land for agricultural purposes were constructed under the Arterial Drainage Act, 1925. 170 Drainage District Schemes were established, covering 4,600km of channel. The statutory duty of maintenance for these schemes lies with the Local Authorities concerned.

Arterial Drainage Schemes

Scheme	Counties	Benefitting Area (Acres)
Brosna	Offaly, Westmeath, Laois	86,200
Glyde & Dee	Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Cavan	26,300
Feale	Kerry	26,500
Corrib-Clare	Galway, Mayo, Roscommon	74,900
Owenogarney 1	Clare	2,100
Nenagh	Tipperary, Offaly	6,500
Deel & Swillyburn	Donegal	3,500
Shannon1	Clare	1,800
Ballyteigue/Kilmore	Wexford	2,300
Maine	Kerry	11,600
Fergus1	Clare	5,400
Inny	Westmeath, Longford, Meath, Cavan	50,000
Moy	Mayo, Sligo, Roscommon	61,000
Broadmeadow & Ward	Meath, Dublin	7,400
Swilly, etc.1	Donegal	3,200
Killimor/Cappagh	Galway	12,600
Deel	Limerick, Cork	11,900
Shannon1	Limerick	12,100
Duff	Leitrim, Sligo	3,600
Corrib-Headford	Galway, Mayo	19,400
Owenvarragh	Wexford	2,600
Carrigahorrig	Tipperary, Offaly	3,800
Boyne	Meath, Westmeath, Louth, Cavan, Kildare, Offaly	119,000
Groody	Limerick	3,000

Scheme	Counties	Benefitting Area (Acres)
Maigue	Limerick, Tipperary, Cork	30,500
Corrib-Mask-Robe	Mayo, Galway	24,000
Boyle	Roscommon, Sligo, Mayo	26,800
Bonet	Leitrim, Sligo	3,200
Monaghan Blackwater	Monaghan	5,850
	TOTAL	647,050

Note 1: Estuarine Embankment Scheme

Sale of State Assets

170. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will list all State-owned companies or companies that the State has had shares in that have been sold in the past five years and in the past ten years, and list them in tabular form. [44740/15]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Report of the Review Group on State Assets and Liabilities, published by my Department in April 2011, listed the Irish State companies that had been sold since 1991. The only company in that list in which shares were sold in the past 10 years was Aer Lingus (2006).

In relation to the Commercial State sector, which comprises the companies for which I am primarily responsible, the additional companies in which shares were sold in more recent years, under the Government's State Assets Disposal Programme, were Bord Gáis Energy, ESB's shareholdings in two joint venture operations in the UK and Spain respectively, and the remaining State's shareholding in Aer Lingus.

Sale of State Assets

171. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will list, in tabular form, all State-owned companies and companies that the State has shares in. [44741/15]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As the Deputy is aware, State-owned companies are used for a variety of reasons including, for example, not for profit companies established to achieve certain policy objectives or implement certain government policies via a separate and distinct implementation body, with its own appropriate corporate governance framework. At the other end of the scale, the State also owns a much smaller group of companies, generally referred to as commercial State bodies, which operate in the market place on a commercial basis. Some State companies, in turn, establish further subsidiary companies for commercial or operational reasons.

In the timeframe available to me for responding to the Deputy's question - in light of the detailed and extensive review and consultative process required - it would be very challenging for my Department to produce a definitive comprehensive list of every company which has been established by any Government Department or agency or State body.

However, a list and detailed examination of the companies in the commercial state sector - which is the area for which I am primarily responsible - was set out in the Report of the Review Group on State Assets and Liabilities published by my Department in April 2011. There has

been some restructuring of the sector since that report was produced, notably in relation to Ervia (formerly Bord Gáis Éireann), Coillte and Bord na Móna, but the only significant addition since that report is the establishment of Irish Water in 2013.

Flood Relief Schemes Status

172. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 221 of 1 December 2015, if he will outline the unresolved technical aspects of a flood relief scheme (details supplied) in County Clare and when these matters will be addressed allowing the project to move to tender and construction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44779/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): As you are aware, the Ennis South Flood Relief Scheme is being progressed by Clare County Council (CCC) as the contracting authority under its powers, and with funding and advice as appropriate from the Office of Public Works (OPW).

CCC and the OPW are working together to ensure that all possible options are examined to ensure maximum protection for properties along with maximum value for State funding. OPW and Council staff are working diligently to ensure the scheme progresses as quickly as possible.

The OPW remains committed to the progression of the works, and provision has been included in its multi-annual capital funding programme to this end.

Flood Relief Schemes Funding

173. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if all the funding required has been provided to carry out remedial flood prevention works in Mallow, Bandon, Clonakilty and Skibbereen in County Cork, and the progress on the works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44840/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): The Office of Public Works is fully committed to progressing all the flood defence projects for County Cork as quickly as possible.

The Mallow North and Mallow South and West flood defence schemes are completed and are operational. Some additional works are being undertaken on the Mallow South and West Scheme.

The second stage of a tender competition for a civil works contractor for the Bandon Flood Relief Scheme is underway. Tender documentation has been issued to the shortlisted candidates and tenders are due back in early January.

The Skibbereen Flood Relief Scheme has already 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 agency must await the formal Confirmation of the Scheme by the Minister. It is hoped that this process will be completed in January 2016, which will allow construction of the Scheme to be commenced in mid-2016.

In relation to the Clonakilty Flood Relief Scheme, a preferred scheme design option was

presented at a statutory Public Exhibition which took place from 15th December 2014 to 20th January 2015. All the observations received from concerned parties have been answered. Detailed design of the scheme is underway which will be followed by a procurement process for a civil works contractor and the formal Confirmation of the Scheme 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.

Once the contractors are appointed to undertake the construction of these schemes and the works are underway, it is expected that they will take up to two and a half years to complete.

The OPW has made provision for the cost of implementing these Schemes in its financial profiles over the years 2016-2019.

Flood Relief Schemes Status

174. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the flood relief schemes in County Cork at planning, construction and post-construction phases; the commencement and completion dates for each scheme; the funding envisaged for all such schemes and the funding for such schemes in the years 2011 to 2015 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44841/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): The table sets out the details for all major flood relief schemes in County Cork at planning, construction and post-construction phase, the period of construction, a breakdown of the annual funding for such schemes over the 2011-2015 period.

Scheme	Stage	Period of Construction	Cost €000 2011	Cost €000 2012	Cost €000 2013	Cost €000 2014	Cost €000 2015 *
Co Cork							
Mallow North	Construction completed	2008 - 2010	472	285	400	211	24
Mallow South & West	Construction completed	2011 - 2014	4185	3108	987	609	837
Fermoy North	Construction completed	2009 -2011	1021	537	1015	250	79
Fermoy South	Construction completed	2012 - 2015	193	5315	8748	4190	347
Bandon	Tender/ Confirmation**	Expected 2016-2018	187	114	562	441	197
Skibbereen	Confirmation**	Expected 2016-2018	-	8	321	-	310

Questions - Written Answers

Scheme	Stage	Period of Construction	Cost €000 2011	Cost €000 2012	Cost €000 2013	Cost €000 2014	Cost €000 2015 *
Lower Lee (Cork City)	Design	Expected 2017 - 2021					
Blackpool	Design/ Public Exhibition	Expected 2017 - 2019	6	0	93	478	296
Glashaboy (Glanmire)	Design	Expected 2017 - 2018	-	-	-	90	-
Douglas/ Togher	Design	Expected 2017 - 2018	-	-	-	146	-
Crookstown	Design	Expected 2017 - 2018	-	-	-	-	-
Ballyma- keera	Design	Expected 2017 - 2018	5	11	41	3	-
Clonakilty	Detailed Design following Public Exhibition	Expected 2017 - 2018	-	-	3	163	319
Midleton	Appointment of consultants	Expected 2017 - 2018	-	-	-	-	-

*Expenditure to end November 2015

**Confirmation = Approval under Arterial Drainage Acts by Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform

The expected construction periods indicated are based on current best estimates having regard to the fact that many schemes are at a very early stage.

In relation to the funding of schemes, the Government has provided a total capital allocation of €430 million for flood risk management over the years 2016-2021 and this will be sufficient to meet the funding requirements of all the above indicated scheme yet to commence construction.

In addition to the above major schemes, Cork city and county councils have carried out more localised minor flood relief works either using their own funding or with funding provided through the Office of Public Works Minor Flood Mitigation and Coastal Protection Scheme.

Sports Facilities Provision

175. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 299 of 17 November 2015, if he or the Office of Public Works have received correspondence from South Dublin County Council regarding the acquisition of lands (details supplied) by way of a deed of waiver and assistance in expediting this request as a matter of urgency to assist the council in providing a sports facilities for the local community. [44849/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): I am advised by the Commissioners that the position remains unchanged from the response provided to the Deputy on 17 November last (PQ 229), in that the Commissioners of Public Works have no record of receiving an application from South Dublin County Council seeking a waiver of a parcel of land at Knockmitten Park, Clondalkin arising from the dissolution of Western Investments Ltd.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

176. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the full-year cost of the full restoration of financial emergency measures in the public interest reductions, pension-related deductions and pay deductions in respect of employees earning €65,000 or less in pay bands of €5,000. [44920/15]

191. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the full-year cost of the full restoration of financial emergency measures in the public interest reductions, pension-related deductions and pay deductions in respect of employees earning €110,000 or less in pay bands of €5,000 to €65,001. [45418/15]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 176 and 191 together.

The nearest data currently available within the Department to that sought by the Deputy are based on the estimated breakdown of public service employee numbers on a whole time equivalent basis by mid-point of salary range up to €112,500 at end September 2014. Numbers of public servants have since increased on foot of Government decisions to recruit additional staff in certain key front line public services. The pay ranges employed reflect the pay reductions effected under the FEMPI Acts, in January 2010 and July 2013.

It should also be noted that the measures applied under the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) legislation were applied in a different way. Progressive pay reductions were applied to gross remuneration in 2010 and 2013; in contrast, the pension related deduction has been applied, also on a progressive basis, as an ongoing annual deduction affecting net pay, following those pay reductions.

These estimates set out in the table do not include the effect of the measures that will apply to salaries of public servants under the recent FEMPI Act 2015, which implements the terms of the Lansdowne Road Agreement. Costs have been rounded to the nearest €m.

Salary Range	Current Average Pay (Post FEMPI Pay Reductions)	Numbers at end September 2014	Estimated Cost of Reversing FEMPI Pay Reduction (Including Employer PRSI) €m	Estimated Cost of Reversing FEMPI Pension Related Deduction (Including Employer PRSI) €m
0- 25,000	22,500	18,939	25	9
25,000 to 30,000	27,500	22,247	36	25
30000-35000	32,500	38,875	79	70
35000-40000	37,500	37,284	92	91
40000-45000	42,500	47,715	139	147
45000-50000	47,500	26,601	90	99
50000-55000	52,500	21,169	81	93
55000-60000	57,500	22,540	96	114
60000-65000	62,500	14,781	70	84
65000-70000	67,500	10,314	104	66
70000-75000	72,500	9,233	102	65
75000-80000	77,500	6,746	81	52
80000-85000	82,500	3,016	40	25
85000-90000	87,500	2,101	30	19
90000-95000	92,500	1,223	19	12
95000-100000	97,500	1,031	17	11
100000-125000	112,500	1,583	32	20
		285,399	1,133	1,002

Flood Relief Schemes Status

177. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will indicate the nature of the legal challenges that have to be overcome in relation to flood prevention works in Bandon, County Cork; how these challenges may delay the works if their resolution will incur an expense by the taxpayer; the details of this expense; when the works will proceed to tender; when the works will proceed, and the amount of money budgeted for the works. [44931/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): In November 2013, the first stage of the procurement process for a civil works contractor to undertake the Bandon Flood Relief Scheme was commenced. This involved submission of a suitability assessment questionnaire by interested contractors. Following completion of this first stage assessment the process was challenged by an unsuccessful applicant on the grounds that they considered their application was not properly assessed by reference to the stated criteria. Following legal correspondence it was decided to terminate the process in April 2014. The process was started again in July 2014 but was again challenged at the first stage suitability assessment in December 2014 by unsuccessful candidates similarly on the grounds that they considered their applications were not properly assessed. Formal legal proceedings were initiated by one of the unsuccessful candidates and following lengthy legal correspondence matters were resolved and a shortlist was confirmed in March 2015. Relatively minor legal and consultants' fees were incurred as a result of these legal challenges. There were no

payments to prospective contractors involved.

The contract is currently at tender stage with tenders due back in early January 2016.

The Scheme will be submitted very shortly to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform for Confirmation under the Arterial Drainage Acts. The Minister is required under environmental legislation to carry out an independent assessment of the Scheme's Environmental Impact Statement and this will run in tandem with the tender assessment process. Works are expected to commence in mid 2016.

The Bandon Flood Relief Scheme is a major urban scheme and has a budget commensurate to the scale and complexity of the works. Given that the project is at tender stage it would not be appropriate to indicate the project budget figure as this could compromise the tender process. Provision for expenditure on the scheme is included in the OPW's multi-annual budget profiles for the period 2015–2019.

Departmental Properties

178. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when a decision will be made as to whether the former Department of Social Protection property (details supplied) in County Mayo is available for reallocation or disposal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44952/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): The OPW's policy relating to non-operational properties is, firstly, to identify alternative State use. If there is no other State use for a property the OPW will then consider disposing of the property on the open market, if and when conditions prevail, in order to generate much needed revenue for the Exchequer. If no State requirement is identified or if a decision is taken not to dispose of a particular property the OPW would consider community involvement subject to the receipt of an appropriate business case which would indicate that the community/voluntary group has the means to insure, maintain and manage the property and that there are no ongoing costs for the Exchequer.

The property at Prospect Avenue was vacated by the Department of Social Protection when it relocated to the Intreo Office on James Street, Westport. The OPW has been in the process of considering the future of the vacated property and the applications received from interested parties in line with the above policy.

However, recent flooding events in the area has meant that the Department of Social Protection now require the property at Prospect Avenue on a temporary basis while issues relating to flooding are addressed. At the end of this time, the OPW will re-consider the applications by interested parties.

Appointments to State Boards

179. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he operates an age restriction policy in terms of board appointments whereby persons who reach 70 years of age while still serving have to resign from their particular board notwithstanding their wish to continue to serve; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45044/15]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Notwithstanding any practice that may apply in the case of an individual board and of which, in the absence

of further details from the Deputy, I am currently unaware, I can assure him that the Government has no policy of age restrictions in regard to service on State boards.

Under the Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards that I issued in November 2014, detailed specifications for such roles are to be drawn up by the Department of the Minister making the appointment in conjunction with the Public Appointments Service. The 2014 Guidelines make no reference to an upper age limit, and while positions have been filled on 70 boards to-date under these Guidelines, my understanding is that none of the specifications for these appointments provided for an upper age-limit for board service.

Flood Prevention Measures

180. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will arrange for the Office of Public Works to carry out an assessment of all rivers in County Clare with a view to introducing a programme of river dredging and maintenance through the provision of multi-annual funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45066/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): Drainage Districts are areas where drainage schemes to improve land for agricultural purposes were constructed under the Arterial Drainage Act, 1925. 170 Drainage District Schemes were established, covering 4,600km of channel. The statutory duty of maintenance for these schemes lies with the Local Authorities concerned.

The Office of Public Works (OPW) carries out its own programme of Arterial Drainage Maintenance to a total of 11,500km of river channel and approximately 730km of embankments. These are arterial drainage schemes completed by the OPW under the Arterial Drainage Acts 1945 and 1995, whose purpose was primarily to improve the drainage of agricultural lands to enhance production. This typically involved lowering or widening river beds to facilitate the drainage and discharge of neighbouring lands and drainage channels. While not the primary purpose of the Schemes, they did also provide enhanced conveyance capacity where they passed through towns, villages and dispersed rural communities that in turn has reduced the amount of flooding that could occur in these areas.

While new Arterial Drainage Schemes are no longer being undertaken, the OPW has a statutory duty to maintain the completed schemes in proper repair and in an effective condition. The annual maintenance programme typically involves some clearance of vegetation and removal of silt build-up on an average five-yearly cycle.

The term dredging is sometimes used to describe such channel maintenance operations. Maintenance of channels is carried out using suitably rigged hydraulic excavators which remove the build up of water entrained silt and vegetation from the channel bed thus restoring the original channel conveyance capacity to the standard of the completed scheme. It does not involve any further deepening or widening of the existing channel.

For channels impinging on or within Natura 2000 Sites assessments under the Habitat Regulations are undertaken in advance of the works and for many schemes a five yearly environmental assessment is now place. OPW maintenance operations are carried out in accordance with OPW Environmental Management Protocols and Standard Operating Procedures.

Local flooding issues are a matter, in the first instance, for each Local Authority to investigate and address, and County Councils may carry out flood mitigation works using their own resources. The OPW operates the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme. This purpose of this scheme is to provide funding to Local Authorities to undertake

minor flood mitigation works or studies 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.

The Government's core strategy for addressing those areas at most significant risk and impact from flooding is the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme. There are 300 locations nationwide being assessed under the Programme and Plans that will consider all feasible options to manage the flood risk in each area are due to be available for public consultation in mid 2016 and completed by the end of 2016.

Flood Relief Schemes Status

181. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of all flood relief schemes in County Cork at planning, construction and post-construction phase; the commencement and completion dates for each scheme; the funding envisaged for all such schemes and the annual funding for such schemes in the years 2011 to 2015 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45201/15]

182. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of all flood relief schemes in County Kerry at planning, construction and post-construction phase; the commencement and completion dates for each scheme; the funding envisaged for all such schemes and the annual funding for such schemes in the years 2011 to 2015 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45202/15]

183. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of all flood relief schemes in County Clare at planning, construction and post construction phase; the commencement and completion dates for each scheme; the funding envisaged for all such schemes and the annual funding for such schemes in the years 2011 to 2015 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45203/15]

184. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide an update with regard to all flood relief schemes in County Tipperary at planning, construction and post construction phase; the commencement and completion dates for each scheme; if he will provide, in tabular form, a breakdown of funding envisaged for all such schemes, as well as the annual funding for such schemes over the 2011-2015 period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45204/15]

185. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of all flood relief schemes in County Waterford at planning, construction and post construction phase; the commencement and completion dates for each scheme; the funding envisaged for all such schemes and the annual funding for such schemes in the years 2011 to 2015 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45205/15]

186. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of all flood relief schemes in County Limerick at planning, construction and post construction phase; the commencement and completion dates for each scheme; the funding envisaged for all such schemes and the annual funding for such schemes in the years 2011 to 2015 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45206/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 181 to 186, inclusive, together.

The following table sets out the details for all major flood relief schemes in the counties

Questions - Written Answers

indicated at planning, construction and post construction phase, the period of construction, a breakdown of the annual funding for such schemes over the 2011–2015 period.

Scheme	Stage	Period of Construction	Cost €000 2011	Cost €000 2012	Cost €000 2013	Cost €000 2014	Cost €000 2015 *
Co Cork							
Mallow North	Construction completed	2008 - 2010	472	285	400	211	24
Mallow South & West	Construction completed	2011 - 2014	4185	3108	987	609	837
Fermoy North	Construction completed	2009 -2011	1021	537	1015	250	79
Fermoy South	Construction completed	2012 - 2015	193	5315	8748	4190	347
Bandon	Tender/ Confirmation**	Expected 2016-2018	187	114	562	441	197
Skibbereen	Confirmation**	Expected 2016-2018	-	8	321	-	310
Lower Lee (Cork City)	Design	Expected 2017 - 2021					
Blackpool	Design/ Public Exhibition	Expected 2017 - 2019	6	0	93	478	296
Glashaboy (Glanmire)	Design	Expected 2017 - 2018	-	-	-	90	-
Douglas/ Togher	Design	Expected 2017 - 2018	-	-	-	146	-
Crookstown	Design	Expected 2017 - 2018	-	-	-	-	-
Ballymakeera	Design	Expected 2017 - 2018	5	11	41	3	-
Clonakilty	Detailed Design following Public Exhibition	Expected 2017 - 2018	-	-	3	163	319

Scheme	Stage	Period of Construction	Cost €000 2011	Cost €000 2012	Cost €000 2013	Cost €000 2014	Cost €000 2015 *
Midleton	Appointment of consultants	Expected 2017 - 2018	-	-	-	-	-
County Kerry	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
County Clare							
Ennis Upper	Construction Completed	2008-2010	2,222	5	-	-	-
Ennis Lower	Construction Substantially complete	2013-2015	169	94	9,659	4,074	765
Ennis South	Design	Expected 2016-2018	-	187	-	-	116
County Tipperary							
Templemore	Confirmation**	Expected 2016-2018	-	40	-	125	47
Clonmel West	Complete	2008 – 2010/2014 (separate phase)	3,419	539	331	1,077	178
Clonmel North & East	Complete	2010 - 2012	7,856	3,590	455	121	41
County Waterford							
Waterford City Phase 1	Complete	2009-2010	600	63	-	-	-
Waterford City Phases 2,3,4	Substantially complete	2012-2015	-	3,120	3,851	4240	2108
County Limerick							

Scheme	Stage	Period of Construction	Cost €000 2011	Cost €000 2012	Cost €000 2013	Cost €000 2014	Cost €000 2015 *
King's Island Limerick City	Design/ Environmental Screening and Assessment	Too early to be specific but possible construction in late 2017/early 2018; construction expected to take 18/24 months	-	-	-	691	-
Foynes	About to appoint Contractor	Estimated - Summer 2016	-	-	-	36	-

* Expenditure to end November 2015

** Confirmation = Approval under Arterial Drainage Acts by Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform

The expected construction periods indicated are based on current best estimates having regard to the fact that many schemes are at a very early stage.

In relation to the funding of schemes, the Government has provided a total capital allocation of €430 million for flood risk management over the years 2016-2021 and this will be sufficient to meet the funding requirements of all the above indicated scheme yet to commence construction.

In addition to the above major schemes, the local authorities for the counties concerned may have carried out more localised minor flood relief works either using their own funding or with funding provided through the Office of Public Works Minor Flood Mitigation and Coastal Protection Scheme.

Labour Court Recommendations

187. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will implement the Labour Court recommendation (details supplied) to introduce a pension scheme for community employment scheme supervisors and assistant supervisors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45263/15]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As the Deputy will be aware unions representing CE Supervisors and Assistant Supervisors have sought the provision of Exchequer funding to implement a Labour Court recommendation relating to the provision of a pension scheme dating back to 2008. However the position has remained that it is not possible for the State to provide funding for such a scheme to employees of private companies even if those companies are or were reliant on State funding.

Notwithstanding this the matter has remained under review and I recently held a construc-

tive meeting with SIPTU and IMPACT trade unions in relation to this matter. Having listened to their respective positions I have reconvened the Community Sector High Level Forum which ceased operation some years ago in order that this matter is fully examined, having regard to costs and precedent.

The forum commenced its work on 27 November 2015 and I anticipate that it will produce a final report for consideration over the next number of months.

Flood Risk Insurance Cover Provision

188. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when he received the report of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform on hearings regarding the provision of insurance in areas at risk of flooding, if he will implement its recommendations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45264/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): The report from the Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform was forwarded to my Office by the Clerk to the Committee on 27 May of this year. The report contains a number of observations and recommendations which inform and support the Office of Public Works in its ongoing engagement with Insurance Ireland in relation to the exchange of information on completed OPW flood defence schemes and the availability of insurance against flooding in the protected areas. Recommendations 5, 6, 7 & 8 of the report are policy matters and have been brought to the attention of the Department of Finance.

The subject of insurance against the risk of flooding is one of the issues being considered by the Inter-Departmental Committee which is developing whole-of-Government policies to support the OPW Flood Risk Management Plans. This Committee will be reporting to Government by Spring 2016.

Flood Relief Schemes Status

189. **Deputy Colm Keaveney** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the actions the Office of Public Works has taken following the environmental impact statement report on the Dunkellin river and Aggard stream flood relief scheme prepared by the RPS Group and published in October 2014; the progress on these actions; the reason for the delay in implementing the recommendations; the recommendations that have been rejected and the reason; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45325/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): Galway County Council (GCC) is the Contracting Authority with overall responsibility for the management and implementation of the Dunkellin River and Aggard Stream Flood Relief Scheme, which is being funded by the Office of Public Works.

GCC appointed the Engineering and Environmental Consultants needed to complete the design and to attain the necessary statutory permissions for the scheme which is being progressed through An Bord Pleanála (ABP) under the Strategic Infrastructure Act. I should point out that any queries the Deputy may have in relation to the Environmental Impact Statement and its implementation should be addressed to the Council.

I am however, advised that GCC and their consultants finalised the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) for the Scheme in October 2014. The

scheme was submitted to An Bord Pleanála for consideration in November 2014 for planning approval in line with Section 175 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. A number of submissions from interested parties were received by An Bord Pleanála in relation to the proposals and the Board issued a request for further information (RFI) to GCC on 2nd March 2015.

The Council requested an extension of time in which to respond to the Board's request and the period for response was extended to 10th July 2015. In light of the significant additional data submitted by the Council, An Bord Pleanála requested that both the Statutory Authorities who were advised of the Planning Application and the general public be made aware of the additional information and that further submissions or observations could be made to the Board within a specific time frame. An Oral Hearing on the proposed scheme commenced on Tuesday 27th October 2015. The hearing concluded on Tuesday the 3rd of November 2015 and An Bord Pleanála has indicated that it would be making a decision on the application as expeditiously as possible.

We must wait for An Bord Pleanála to issue its determination on the proposals but, subject to this, I can assure the Deputy that the Government remains fully committed to the provision of a flood relief scheme for the Dunkellin River and Aggard Stream and the OPW has made provision for the cost of implementing the scheme in its Multi-Annual Budget Profiles into the future.

Flood Relief Schemes Status

190. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the steps he is taking to advance the flood relief scheme promised for residents in the Clonbonny, Parnell Square, Deerpark and the Strand areas of Athlone, County Westmeath, which have been subject to the threat of flooding and the destruction of their properties, businesses and accommodation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45406/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): The core strategy for addressing the significant flood risks in Athlone and in the Shannon River Basin District generally, is the Office of Public Works' (OPW) Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme. Athlone is one of 66 locations in the Shannon River Basin District and 300 locations nationwide that are being assessed under the Programme the purpose of which is to implement the EU Floods Directive and national flood policy. The Programme, which is being undertaken by engineering consultants on behalf of the OPW working in partnership with the Local Authorities, involves the production of predictive flood mapping for each location, the development of preliminary flood risk management options and the production of flood risk management plans. Under the Shannon CFRAM Study, draft predictive flood maps for Athlone have been produced and were the subject of a Public Consultation Day in Athlone on 17 February 2015. The draft maps are scheduled to be finalised following the national statutory consultation process, which is currently under way until 23 December, 2015. Details are available at the Civic Offices, Church St., Athlone, and on the consultation website http://maps.opw.ie/flood_draftmap_consult/.

A further Public Consultation Day will be held in Athlone this week on Thursday 17 December 2015 to present and discuss preliminary flood risk management options to manage the flood risk. Further information is available on the Shannon CFRAM Study website www.shannoncfрамstudy.ie.

Following the finalisation of the flood mapping and the identification of preliminary flood

risk management options, the final output from this important project will be integrated Flood Risk Management Plans containing specific measures to address in a comprehensive and sustainable way the significant flood risks identified in the Shannon River Basin District. The CFRAM Programme will be used to determine national priorities for future State investment in flood defences.

Westmeath County Council had submitted applications to the OPW for funding under the Minor Flood Mitigation Works & Coastal Protection Scheme in 2010 for flood mitigation measures for Athlone. While funding was approved for measures at The Strand, other applications were not cost beneficial and it was considered that all flood relief measures for Athlone as a whole, be progressed under the CFRAM Programme.

Question No. 191 answered with Question No. 176.

Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

192. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views on the ongoing negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and the worries of many non-governmental organisations and trade unionists that it will provide further means for large corporations to abuse, intimidate and overlook small, locally-based farmers, particularly in reference to Colombia. [45191/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I am pleased to report that negotiations between the EU and the US on trade and investment have accelerated and solid progress has been made.

The 11th round in these negotiations took place in Miami from 19th – 23rd October, 2015.

During this round, negotiators discussed all three pillars of the proposed agreement namely market access for EU and US companies, regulatory cooperation and trade rules.

There was substantial progress on market access for EU and US companies in all three areas including tariffs, services and public procurement. A second tariff offer was exchanged and both sides have now arrived at a level of proposal in terms of tariff line coverage which will assist and benefit further negotiations. There was also discussion in relation to public procurement and it is envisaged that there will be an exchange of market access proposals on public procurement by February 2016.

The negotiations also provided an opportunity to clarify some of the main principles of regulatory cooperation. These included the fact that any cooperation is possible only if the level of protection for consumers stays the same or improves and any form of regulatory cooperation will not change or affect the EU regulatory and democratic process.

On the 12th November 2015, the EU Commission published and formally presented to the US its proposal for a new and more transparent system for resolving disputes between investors and states – the Investment Court System. This proposal is the outcome of a lengthy public consultation process with the Member States, the European Parliament, stakeholders and the public. The Commission’s proposal aims at safeguarding Government’s right to regulate and creates a new system composed of a first instance tribunal and an appeal mechanism based on clearly defined rules, with qualified judges and transparent proceedings.

The EU’s trade policy aims to ensure that increasing trade mutually supports economic growth, environmental protection and social development and that it does not come at the ex-

pense of the environment or labour rights. Coherence and mutual supportiveness among these elements are the basis for achieving sustainable development.

The EU offers easy access to its market for the poorest countries in the world. It is also the largest provider of aid for trade. By targeting EU support at projects that will boost the capacity for trade, it provides long-lasting development projects. The EU is also mindful of the impact of an EU-US trade agreement and other major bilateral agreements on other partners, especially developing and least-developed countries.

The Treaty of Lisbon enshrines sustainable development as a fundamental principle of the EU action and this informs and guides the EU policy-making process. Strong involvement of civil society and a high level of transparency of Government's actions are core elements to the EU's approach to Trade and Sustainable Development.

On the 6th November 2015, the European Commission published its proposal for a chapter on trade and sustainable development, including labour and the environment, in the ongoing EU-US trade talks, which covers conservation, sustainable management of resources, wildlife, forestry and fisheries, as well as other substantive matters including opportunities for joint initiatives in third countries to further labour rights and environmental protection.

After entry into force of the EU-US agreement, the developing countries and the least developed countries will continue to have preferential access to the EU and US markets via the Generalised Scheme of Preferences. If successful, the agreement will have an impact in gradually eliminating the margin of preference in the competitive relation between developing country and least developed countries products and EU/US goods. Studies have confirmed that the economic activity generated by trade liberalisation between the EU and US will create net benefits for developing countries.

A final impact assessment on sustainable development and the EU-US Trade Negotiations will be published early next year.

Colombia is not a party to the negotiations on a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.

Job Retention

193. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the actions he has taken to protect jobs at a production facility (details supplied) in County Cork, given that the owners have declared their intention to sell the facility. [44795/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Action Plan for Jobs which the Government initiated in 2012 has a singular focus on sustaining and growing employment in the country. The Action Plan for Jobs has been an annual process whereby changes right across Government have been developed, and then implemented with a strict timetable overseen from the Taoiseach's Office. The focus of the actions is to achieve key targets, principally getting 100,000 people back at work and improving the business environment for growing strong enterprises. To date, over 135,800 jobs have been created, including an additional 20,000 employed in the South West region from the start of the APJ process in Q1 2012 to Q3 2015.

My Department coordinates the development of the annual Action Plans across government departments. While I do not have direct responsibility for energy policy, which rests with my colleague the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, we have discussed

this issue in the broader context of sustaining and growing jobs in the South West region. Specifically in July this year we launched the South West Regional Action Plan for Jobs, developed following a consultation process with private and public sector stakeholders in the region, with the objective of growing employment in the South West by over thirty thousand by 2020.

Today there are over 158 IDA Ireland supported foreign subsidiaries in the region employing more than 30,500 people, 717 Enterprise Ireland supported companies employing 26,600 people, together with 4,500 employed in 910 Local Enterprise Office supported firms. Employment in IDA and EI assisted firms combined has increased by 7,600 between 2012 and 2014. My Department and agencies are committed and are actively engaged in the region to retain and grow employment and this will be a central focus of our efforts in the implementation of the South West Action Plan for Jobs.

The Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources has responsibility for energy policy and has previously stated the Government's primary conclusion on the strategic case for oil refining is that the presence of an operational refinery on the island provides flexibility, enhancing the options available to the State in the event of an oil supply disruption, by providing an alternative source of product thus mitigating a complete reliance on product imports. In light of that conclusion, the Government had agreed that Minister White's Department should liaise with the Irish oil industry and appropriate public bodies to determine any policy options that might facilitate the commercial future of refining in Ireland.

I understand that the Minister expects to brief the Government on the issues again, and I and my Department remain engaged on this agenda to help to ensure a secure, sustainable and competitive supply of oil for Ireland.

My intention is to publish the 2016 Action Plan in mid-January 2016. My Department is currently developing the 2016 Action Plan and is engaging bilaterally with enterprises and Government Departments to identify actions to ensure that the 2016 Plan is as ambitious and impactful as possible and keeps us on track to achieve our goal to have 2.1 million people in employment by 2018.

Enterprise Ireland Staff

194. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the details of the different sections within Enterprise Ireland including the numbers of employees in each section. [44965/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The total number of Whole Time Equivalent Employees (WTE) in Enterprise Ireland is 658.5. This figure consists of 564 Irish based staff and 94.5 overseas local based staff.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the different sections within Enterprise Ireland, and the numbers employed within each section.

Table 1

Section	WTE Staff
Development and Support Services	157
Finance and Investment Services	66
Industry Sectors	104
Innovation Network	77.5

Section	WTE Staff
International Sales and Partnering	159.5
Start Ups	94.5
Total	658.5

Business Parks

195. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the status of an application for funding of a feasibility study on a business park (details supplied) in County Tipperary, including if it is complete and the grant awarded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45010/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): As part of Government's Action Plan for Jobs: Regional Initiative, I announced details of a 5-year strategy aimed at accelerating jobs recovery in every part of the country. In May 2015, as part of this initiative, Enterprise Ireland launched a Community Enterprise Initiative. This competitive scheme was open to organisations, groups and alliances, to collaboratively seek to promote entrepreneurship, create jobs, foster innovation and export opportunities for business.

As the Deputy points out, I understand that Tipperary County Council bought the site in Roscrea from Shannon Group, and in this regard, matters concerning the development of the site are primarily a matter for the Council.

I understand from Enterprise Ireland that a feasibility study grant was applied for under the Community Enterprise Initiative Scheme. The results of the Community Enterprise Initiative Scheme are not in the public domain at present as the evaluation of all submissions is being completed. The applicants to the Community Enterprise Initiative Scheme will receive a formal response from Enterprise Ireland early next year.

Trade Data

196. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the level of trade between Ireland and New Zealand in the years 2013 and 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45012/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The latest year for which full trade figures (goods and services) are available is 2013. These show that total trade between Ireland and New Zealand in 2013 amounted to €283 million. This comprises €213 million in exports and €70 million in imports. Details are set out in the following tables.

In 2014, goods exports to New Zealand increased by 4% to €91 million and goods imports from New Zealand were down by 16% to €47 million. 2014 services figures for individual countries will be available shortly from the CSO.

The most recent goods figures for 2015 show that the value of goods exports to New Zealand have continued their upward trend, with growth of 3%, to €71 million for the first 9 months of this year, compared to the same period in 2014. Goods imports from New Zealand for the same period rose by 18% to €38 million, again compared to Jan-Sep last year.

The principal goods exported to New Zealand from Ireland in 2014 were *Medical & pharmaceutical products*; and *Infant foods & other misc. edible products & preparations*. In 2014

Ireland's principal imports from New Zealand were *Non-alcoholic Beverages, Beer and Wine* and *Vegetables & fruit*.

Enterprise Ireland's market advisers work with their client companies to find a tailored solution, through a range of services, to help them to access the New Zealand market or accelerate their growth in the market.

Goods Trade, Ireland- New Zealand

Year	Exports(€m)	Imports(€m)
2013	88	56
2014	91	47
Jan-Sep 2014	69	33
Jan-Sep 2015	71	38

Services Trade, Ireland – New Zealand

Year	Exports(€m)	Imports(€m)
2012	111	18
2013	125	14

Departmental Properties

197. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the ground rents he or agencies under the remit of his Department pay, by named property, by name of landlord and by amount payable, in 2015 and in 2016 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45058/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Accommodation for my Department is provided by the Office of Public Works (OPW) in buildings which are either State owned or leased by OPW on our behalf. Therefore, my Department does not directly own or rent any properties for which we are liable to pay rents or ground rents.

Any rents or ground rents payable by Agencies of my Department are a matter for the individual Agencies concerned for which I have no direct function.

I have asked all Agencies under the aegis of my Department to advise me of any such rents for the dates concerned, and I will communicate that information to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Job Creation Data

198. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of net jobs created since the Action Plan for Jobs was established in each nomenclature of territorial units for statistics 3 region, in 2015 to date in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45199/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Action Plan for Jobs has been an annual process whereby changes right across Government have been developed, and then implemented with a strict timetable overseen from the Taoiseach's Office. The focus of the actions is to achieve key targets, principally getting 100,000 people back at work and improving the business environment for growing strong enterprises.

The APJ has focused on three main areas:

- programmes that have made it easier for enterprises to establish and grow jobs;
- sectors that can be successfully developed; and
- measures that allow Irish business compete more successfully.

It has been a successful policy approach:

- the job target has already been exceeded 21 months ahead of the target date of end 2016;
- the jobs are in sectors which have solid and sustainable foundations with good prospects;
- Irish competitiveness has significantly improved.

In 2015, we have deepened the action plan process by developing Regional Action Plans which can drive the same sort of collaboration at Regional level. Since the start of the Action Plan for Jobs process 135,800 new jobs have been created, on a seasonally adjusted basis. Employment has grown in all regions of the country, as set out in Table 1.

Table 1. Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment by NUTS 3 Region, Q1 2012 & Q3 2015

-	2012 Q1	2015 Q3	Change Q1 2012 - Q3 2015
Border	174,500	195,400	20,900
Midland	104,800	119,200	14,400
West	177,100	180,200	3,100
Dublin	541,500	605,600	64,100
Mid-East	228,800	231,200	2,400
Mid-West	150,400	157,400	7,000
South-East	181,300	207,400	26,100
South-West	266,600	286,500	19,900

Source: CSO StatBank

Table 2 sets out the annual net change in full and part time employment for each year since the launch of the Action Plan for Jobs in 2012 in firms supported by the enterprise agencies, Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland. The 2015 Annual Employment Survey of agency-assisted clients is currently being completed by my Department.

Table 2. Net Change in Employment in Enterprise Agency assisted-clients, full and part time jobs, NUTS 3 Regions, 2012, 2013 & 2014

-	2012	2013	2014
Border	227	1,137	1,453
Midland	294	667	906
West	815	1,216	827
Dublin	4,174	7,478	6,079
Mid-East	587	968	1,349
Mid-West	352	812	1,003
South-East	-69	-148	930
South-West	2,336	2,207	3,049

Source: Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation Annual Employment Survey

My intention is to publish the 2016 Action Plan in mid-January 2016. My Department is currently developing the 2016 Action Plan and is engaging bilaterally with enterprises and Government Departments to identify actions to ensure that the 2016 Plan is as ambitious and impactful as possible and keeps us on track to achieve our goal to have 2.1 million people in employment by 2018.

EU Directives

199. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation when the legislation to give effect to Directive 2014/56/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council will be finalised, if it will require public interest entities to rotate their auditors or to re-tender for audit services every ten years, as provided for in the directive; if a very strict interpretation of the directive will harm Ireland's competitive position; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45349/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Audit Directive (2014/56/EU), amending Directive 2006/43/EC on statutory audits of annual accounts and consolidated accounts, and the Audit Regulation (EU) No. 537/2014 on specific requirements regarding the statutory audit of public-interest entities (PIEs), were adopted on 16 April, 2014.

The Regulation applies in Ireland as and from 17 June 2016, and the Directive is to be transposed into Irish law by the same date. The Regulation adds to the provisions of the Directive by introducing stricter requirements for the statutory audits of public-interest entities, such as listed companies, credit institutions, and insurance undertakings. It provides, inter alia, that public-interest entities shall appoint a statutory auditor or audit firm for a period not longer than 10 years. At the end of that period, all PIEs must re-tender for audit services.

Member States then have an option to allow PIEs to reappoint the same auditor for a second period of up to 10 years. Therefore, an engagement between a particular statutory auditor or audit firm and a PIE could be for a total period of 20 years at most, subject to the requirement on the PIE to put its audit out to tender after the first 10 years.

In developing the proposed approach to the Member State options, including the possibility to extend the duration of an audit engagement to 20 years, my Department conducted a public consultation process late last year on the options in both the Regulation and the Directive. The outcome of that consultation, together with input from stakeholders since then, will inform our approach. The impacts of the measures on a range of factors, including national competitiveness, will be taken into account.

My Department is preparing a General Scheme of a Bill to transpose the EU rules into Irish law. I intend to bring that Scheme to Government shortly, with a view to publishing it after that.

Work Permits Applications

200. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if and when an application for a work permit by a person (details supplied) in County Kildare will be processed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45377/15]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Depart-

ment does not appear to have received an application for an Employment Permit for the person referred to in this Question.

Harbours and Piers Expenditure

201. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount he has spent on the harbour in Daingean Uí Chúis, County Kerry, since the approval of Statutory Instrument No. 233 of 2007, which transferred the management of the harbour to him, by year, the purpose of each spending allocation, the benefits of this investment to the local fishing industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44951/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An Daingean Harbour was designated as a Fishery Harbour Centre with effect from 14 May 2007. On 19 October 2007 responsibility for the management of the Fishery Harbour Centres passed from the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources to my Department. The harbour was previously in the ownership and management of the Dingle Harbour Commissioners.

An Daingean Fishery Harbour Centre is first and foremost a working fishery harbour, however it is also a very important tourist and leisure destination. Capital investment in the harbour reflects this broad range of activities.

My Department administers an annual Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme for the repair, maintenance and development of Department owned harbours and marine infrastructures. I am happy to inform the Deputy that €5.2m has been invested in the Harbour between 2007 and 2014, in addition I have allocated €2.2m for the purposes of capital developments in this years Capital Programme.

The following tables give a summary of the capital investments made at An Daingean Fishery Harbour Centre from my Departments Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme for the years 2007-2014 and the funding allocated for 2015.

Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2007	
Project	Expenditure €
Safety and Maintenance	80,000
Harbour Dredging	55,000
Removal of slipway	169,000
Small Craft Slipway	3,000
Total	307,000

Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2008	
Project	Expenditure €
Safety and Maintenance	248,121
Disability Access	79,653
Harbour Dredging	63,058
Removal of slipway	6,537
Berthing Pontoons	612,752
Total	1,010,121

Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2009	
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Project	Expenditure €
Safety and Maintenance	275,298
Disability Access	19,915
Berthing pontoons	115,725
Total	410,938

Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2010	
Project	Expenditure €
Safety and Maintenance	365,745
Disability Access	58,197
Marina Piles	624,875
Total	1,048,817

Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2011	
Project	Expenditure €
Safety and Maintenance	389,725
Disability Access	17,855
Marina Piles	287,513
Total	695,093

Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2012	
Project	Expenditure €
Safety and Maintenance	423,922
Disability Access	19,832
Channel Navigational Aids	26,107
Total	469,861

Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2013	
Project	Expenditure €
Safety and Maintenance	435,940
Disability Access	19,543
Channel Navigational Aid	3,500
Marina Pontoon Replacement Programme	377,622
Water Meters	3,764
Total	840,369

Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2014	
Project	Expenditure €
Safety and Maintenance	221,293
Disability Access	15,369
CCTV Upgrade	60,983
Main Pier sheet pile condition survey	25,215
Boatyard Slipway Removal	128,492
Total	451,352

Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2015	
Project	Allocation €
Safety and Maintenance	250,000
Disability Access	10,000
Main Pier Sheet Pile Remedial Works	200,000
Navigation Buoys Replacement	130,000
Upgrade of Harbour Entrance	150,000
Harbour Workshop & Marina Users Facilities	40,000
Remove Old Boatyard Slipway	1,500,000
Total	2,245,000

Food Safety Standards

202. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine whether he will strongly oppose the use of acid washes such as peroxyacetic acid for poultry meat in upcoming discussions with other European Union member states in the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed-Section Biological Safety of the Food Chain; to advise what he knows and intends regarding this development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45065/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The subject of acid washes for poultry meat forms part of a package of proposals by the European Commission on decontamination of poultry carcasses and 'skin-on' parts from *Campylobacter*. This is currently the subject of discussion with Member State veterinary experts at the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed-Section Biological Safety of the Food Chain (SCPAFF). Ireland's position is that the use of such substances should be viewed as a last resort where all other interventions, including sanitary dressing, fail to address the campylobacter levels on poultry carcasses, and we would also support the broader and more holistic approach of enhanced bio-hazard controls at farm level.

In relation to *Campylobacter* in poultry, I recently established a working group chaired by Dr Pat Wall to look at issues across the entire supply chain and set targets accordingly. The group includes representatives from industry and retailers who aim to be proactive and deal with the issue at source and to look collectively at potential solutions, with support from the FSAI and DAFM. I expect this group to report in 2016.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

203. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a payment under the basic farm payment scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal, the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44685/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted an application for the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme which was received in my Department on 29 May 2015.

Two commonage parcels claimed by the person named have been over claimed. The commonage evidence supplied by applicants of these commonage parcels is currently being exam-

ined. On completion of this exercise, appropriate payments will issue to the nominated bank accounts of all the herd owners concerned.

Live Exports

204. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 248 of 24 November 2015, the status of negotiations between the Irish authorities and their Chinese counterparts on restrictions on the live export of shellfish; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44688/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Further to my reply to the Deputy's question on 24 November 2015, the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) issued a formal response to the communication from the Chinese authorities on Friday 27 November and circulated a copy of the response to representatives of the Irish live crab export industry. The SFPA response, inter alia, puts forward Ireland's views on the suitability of the European testing requirements for live crab and includes a comprehensive technical report on the matter compiled by relevant technical and scientific experts in the SFPA and the Marine Institute. In addition, the SFPA has offered to facilitate further dialogue with the Chinese import authorities in keeping with the Memorandum of Understanding I referred to in my reply of 24 November, and has invited the Chinese authorities to visit Ireland in 2016 to examine our official control systems, laboratories and crab production establishments.

I acknowledge the concerns live crab exporters have at this time and I note that the SFPA has provided regular updates to industry representatives on the matter. I remain satisfied that the procedures which are in place for monitoring the safety of Irish seafood, including live crab, meet the stringent European standards and consumers can continue to have high confidence in the quality of Irish seafood.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

205. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 108 of 19 November 2015, if a person (details supplied) in County Cork has received payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44698/15]

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 29 May, 2015. Processing of the application under both schemes has been finalised, and payments will issue shortly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

206. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Louth will receive payment under the basic farm payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44746/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Basic Payment Scheme was received in my Department from the person named on 15 March, 2015. As he has not established any entitlements under this Scheme, no payment is due him.

The person named farmed as part of a joint venture under the 2013 Single Payment Scheme. Under the 2014 Single Payment Scheme, a Transfer of Entitlements application was submitted to have the original holding divided into two separate farming entities. As the joint venture established the allocation right in 2013 it was necessary for both parties to submit a Review of Entitlements application form under the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme to establish the number of entitlements to be attributed to each of the new farming entities. As this Review form has not been received to date, my Department will make direct contact with the relevant parties concerned with a view to having the entitlements situation rectified as soon as possible and payment issued shortly thereafter.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

207. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Louth will receive payment under the basic farm payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44747/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme application on 7 May 2015. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases Remote Sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a Remote Sensing eligibility inspection. This inspection has now been completed and the results have been finalised. Payments due under the Basic Payment Scheme issued to the nominated bank account of the person named on 10 December 2015. Processing of the payments due under the Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme has recently been finalised and payment will issue to the person named shortly.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

208. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Louth will receive payment under the basic payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44748/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Basic Payment Scheme was received in my Department from the person named on 20 April 2015. Full payment under the Scheme has issued to the nominated bank account of the person named. The advance payment issued on 19 October and the balancing payment issued on 1 December.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

209. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Louth will receive payment under the basic payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44750/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme application on 25 May 2015. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases Remote Sensing (i.e. satellite)

inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a Remote Sensing eligibility inspection. This inspection is currently being processed with the intention of issuing any payments due under the Direct Payments Schemes as soon as possible. In the event that any queries arise officials in my Department will be in contact with the person named.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

210. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Louth will receive payment under the basic payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44751/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme application on 29 April 2015. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases Remote Sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a Remote Sensing eligibility inspection. This inspection is currently being finalised with the intention of issuing any payments due under the Direct Payments Schemes as soon as possible. In the event that any queries arise officials in my Department will be in contact with the person named.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

211. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when persons (details supplied) in County Cork will receive payment under the basic payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44753/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Two of the persons named farmed separately under the 2013 Scheme. In 2014, the three persons named above entered into a Milk Production Partnership agreement and submitted a 2014 Transfer of Entitlements application to have their entitlements transferred to the above herd number. They subsequently entered into a Registered Farm Partnership under the 2015 Scheme year. The allocation rights attributed to the individual parties under the 2013 Scheme are now being transferred to the Farm Partnership to allow for the number of entitlements to be established for each partner under the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme. This process will be completed shortly and payment will issue shortly thereafter.

Animal Experimentation

212. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the Dog Breeding Establishments Act 2010 permits the breeding of dogs for the purpose of experimentation; and if he will protect the welfare of these dogs. [44757/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Responsibility for the Dog Breeding Establishments Act 2010 is a matter for the Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government. Implementation of the regulations relating to animals used in medical experiments is the responsibility of the Health Protection Regulatory Authority

which comes under the aegis of the Department of Health.

Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme

213. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if qualifying young farmers under the targeted agricultural modernisation scheme who need planning permission for work and who will soon turn 40 years of age or will exceed the five-year rule will be given 14 weeks to secure planning permission from the time of the application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44777/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The closing date for the first tranche of the Young Farmers Capital Investment Scheme was the 25 September 2015. I am aware that there were a number of applicants who submitted their application prior to this closing date but who had issues with obtaining the full and final planning permission for investment items proposed, as required under the Terms and Conditions of the Scheme.

In the case of those Young Farmers who had submitted an application and who would otherwise be precluded from applying under the next tranche of the scheme, because of their age or because they had now been farming for longer than five years, my Department provided an extension until the 11 December to allow submission of the required planning permission.

GLAS Administration

214. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will deal with a scenario where parties to partnership agreements between older and younger farmers, which have not yet been processed by his Department due to technical difficulties, cannot access the green low-carbon agri-environment scheme within the current deadline of 14 December 2015; the alternative for these farmers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44788/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Any partnership which submitted a 2015 claim for the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) was eligible to apply for GLAS under both tranches 1 and 2. However, partnerships which were created after the closing date for the 2015 BPS were not eligible to apply for GLAS because the BPS declaration on which the application is founded was not made in the name of that partnership, but rather in the name of its individual members. This is the same rule that applies to individual applicants, i.e. a BPS declaration must have been submitted for 2015 in the name of the proposed GLAS applicant. It is important to note that individual members of these new partnerships remained eligible to submit applications for GLAS Tranches 1 or 2 in their own right, and of course these partnerships will be perfectly entitled to make an application as a partnership now under Tranche 3.

I am aware, however, that there were a small number of cases where members of a newly established partnership found themselves unable to submit individual applications under the current tranche, as the agent-client links based on their original herd numbers had been broken. In these cases the applicants should contact my Department and arrangements will be made to facilitate the submission of applications under the individual herd numbers.

Scéimeanna Talmhaíochta

215. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara cén uair a dhéanfar íocaíocht faoin Scéim Buníocaíochta agus faoi Scéim na Limistéar Srianta Nádúrtha le feirmeoir i gContae na Gaillimhe (sonraí leis seo) do 2015; cén fáth go bhfuil moill ar an íocaíocht seo; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [44847/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Fuarthas iarratas faoin Scéim Buníocaíochta/Scéim na Limistéar Srianta Nádúrtha ón duine a ainmnítear an 30 Márta, 2015. Tá próiseáil an iarratais faoin dá scéim ar bun faoi láthair. Ar chríochnú an phróisis seo, déanfar athbhreithniú breise ar an iarratas ag féachaint le híocaíocht a eisiúint go díreach do chuntas ainmnithe bainc an duine a ainmnítear ag an dáta is luaithe is féidir.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

216. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue under the 2015 basic payment scheme and the areas of natural constraint scheme to a person (details supplied) in County Galway; the reason for the delay; the number of entitlements this person has; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44850/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraints (ANC) Schemes was received from the person named on 27 May 2015.

Processing of the ANC application was completed and payment issued on 2 November 2015 in relation to Mountain Area land. Further information was received from the person named on 28 November 2015 regarding the status of his land vis a vis the support under the ANC scheme for island land. This information is currently being reviewed.

The person named also submitted a 2015 Private Contract Clause application to my Department to have 9.33 hectares and the corresponding entitlements transferred to him by lease. The transferor under this application was also transferor to a third party under a separate Private Contract Clause. My Department wrote to the transferor on 1 December requesting further information in relation to a land lease in order to finalise processing of these two applications. This information has now been received and the application pertaining to the person named can now be processed to allow for the transfer of land and corresponding entitlements. Payment under the Basic Payment Scheme will issue as soon as possible.

Basic Payment Scheme Eligibility

217. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person (details supplied) in County Cork whose holding was the subject in previous years of a Department satellite and ground inspection and whose 2015 application was amended accordingly has found that an application has again been the subject of penalty for ineligible grounds; if he will offer a rational explanation for this given the previous approval of the lands involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44862/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme application on 28 April 2015. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases Remote Sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue. The application of the person named was selected for a Remote Sensing eligibility inspection.

Following this inspection a maximum eligible area (MEA) of 108.65 Ha was determined. Payments issued on this basis under the Basic Payment and the Areas of Natural Constraint Schemes to the nominated bank account of the person named on 1 December 2015 and 26 November 2015 respectively. The person named was notified of the inspection findings on 18 November 2015 and of their right to seek a review. To date no such request has been received.

The person named was also selected for a remote sensing inspection in 2012 and a determined area of 124.23 HA was found as this area was greater than the total claimed area of the person named no penalty was incurred and payments on this basis under the Single Farm Payment and Disadvantaged Areas Schemes issued to the nominated bank account on 5 December 2012 and 10 December 2012 respectively.

Organic Farming

218. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the process used to set organic standards for produce both produced on land and in aquaculture; the steps he has taken to ensure the standards are comparable in respect of the use of medicines, antibiotics, feed, fertiliser and other products used in production; if any analysis has been carried out on the comparative standards used to certify land-based production and aquaculture production as organic; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44896/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Organic Standards for terrestrial and aquaculture products are harmonised at European Union level by Regulation. These organic regulations set down in some detail the technical standards of organic production. The relevant regulations are:

- Council Regulation (EC) No. 834/2007 of 28 June 2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91

- Commission Regulation (EC) No. 889/2008 of 5 September 2008 with detailed rules on production, labelling and control

- Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1235/2008 of 8 December 2008 with detailed rules concerning import of organic products from third countries.

On the 1 of July 2010, new rules covering organic aquaculture production of fish, shellfish and seaweed entered into force. Regulation 710/2009 set conditions for the aquatic production environment and impacts on other species. It deals with the separation of organic and non-organic units and specifies animal welfare conditions including maximum stocking densities. It also lays down regulations in respect of the use of veterinary medicines, including those used as part of compulsory eradication schemes, and sets out the general rules on disease prevention and parasite control.

The rules of both land-based and aquaculture production systems are harmonised at EU level. The organic standards implemented by the Organic Certifying Bodies are based on these harmonised rules. All organic operators must, at a minimum, be inspected annually. This annual inspection, carried out by the approved Organic Certifying Bodies includes detailed checks to ensure compliance with the rules of organic production. The Department of Agriculture, Food and The Marine, being the competent authority for the sector, has oversight of the production system. Organic operators must also be compliant with all horizontal legislation applicable to the production process and product.

Separate organic standards are agreed for both land based and aquaculture production. While

there are many elements of organic certification common to both production systems, those elements that differentiate the two organic production systems are identified and dealt with separately in the regulations. These regulations are subject to ongoing review and amendment. The Commission Regulatory Committee on Organic Production, which is representative of all Member State delegations, reviews and updates the standards for organic production, while a separate independent scientific committee (ECTOP), established by the EU Commission, also reviews the standards, produces reports and provides technical advice.

Basic Payment Scheme Eligibility

219. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question Number 344 of 6 October 2015, the status of the appeal concerned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44899/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Review of Entitlements measure of the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme was submitted online on the 27 May 2015 in which the person named requested to have her entitlements topped up to the national average under the ‘force majeure’ category of the National Reserve.

Under EU Regulation ‘*force majeure*’ is defined as:

- (a) The death of the beneficiary;
- (b) Long-term professional incapacity of beneficiary;
- (c) A severe natural disaster gravely affecting the holding;
- (d) The accidental destruction of livestock buildings on the holding;
- (e) An epizootic or a plant disease affecting part or all of the beneficiary’s livestock or crops respectively;
- (f) Expropriation of all or a part of the holding if that expropriation could not have been anticipated on the day of lodging the application.

As the circumstances outlined do not pertain to the person named, she does not qualify under Force Majeure. A further appeal was made under the ‘Specific disadvantage’ category of the National Reserve on the 17 September, 2015. This appeal is processed and a letter has issued to the person named informing her of the outcome of the appeal which was also unsuccessful. In 2014, the person named received a total payment including Grassland Sheep Scheme of €2,438.28. Under the convergence model of the new CAP reform the person named will benefit from an increased value to her entitlements. Her total payment including greening will reach approximately €6,166 by 2019. This will result in an increase of approximately 150% from her 2014 Direct Payments.

Forestry Premium Payments

220. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a forestry premium payment to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44900/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The appli-

cant's final premium payment for his plantation has been withheld due to outstanding remedial works on the site. The contract was referred to the Forest Service's District Inspector for an on-site inspection and he has now reported that another growing season is required to determine the effects of the fertiliser that has been applied. The Forest Service will send the applicant a *Declaration of Completion of Works* form that should only be submitted when the plantation has reached the standard required under the scheme but not before the end of September 2016 (the end of the next growing season).

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

221. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a payment under the basic payment scheme to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44917/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Transfer of Entitlement Allocation Right and Reference Value application to my Department to transfer entitlements by way of gift. This application is currently being processed and payment under the Basic Payment Scheme will issue as soon as possible.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Applications

222. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment under the agri-environment options scheme 1 will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44933/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named commenced their AEOS 1 contract on 1 September 2010 and has been paid in full for the 2010-2014 scheme years. The first instalment of 85% of the annual payment in respect of the 2015 scheme year issued on the 11 December 2015. It is expected that the final 15% payment will issue shortly.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

223. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment under the basic payment scheme and the areas of natural constraint scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Roscommon; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44936/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraints Schemes was received from the person named on 21 May 2015. Processing of the Areas of Natural Constraints application has recently been finalised and payment will issue shortly, directly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

The person named submitted a 2015 Transfer of Entitlement Allocation Right and Reference Value application to my Department. My Department wrote to the person named regarding further information required in relation to land parcels to facilitate processing of the application. This application has now been fully processed and payment under the Basic Payment Scheme will issue in the coming days.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

224. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person (details supplied) in County Mayo has not received farm payments; the reason the transfer of entitlements has taken so long to be finalised; if he will expedite the application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44970/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Transfer of Allocation Right and Reference Value application to my Department. This application sought the transfer of allocation rights and values by inheritance. There were issues regarding leased land that required to be clarified with the person named in order to process the application. These issues have now been clarified, the application has been processed and payment under the Basic Payment Scheme will issue in the coming days.

Single Payment Scheme

225. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Wexford under the single payment scheme, the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45038/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department received a 2015 Transfer of Entitlement Allocation Right and Reference Value application from the person named. This application has been processed and payment under the Basic Payment Scheme issued to the person named on 10 December.

Departmental Properties

226. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the ground rents he or agencies under the remit of his Department pay, by named property, name of landlord and amount payable, in 2015 and 2016 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45048/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department does not pay any ground rent. The information in relation to agencies under the aegis of my Department is a matter for the agencies themselves.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

227. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 296 of 17 November 2015, the status of an application by a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45067/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As stated in Parliamentary Question No. 296 of 17 November 2015, a request was received from the person named on 28 October to have a determination made in this case reviewed within the Department. This review has now been completed and the results of the review were issued in writing to the person named on 2 December. The file will now be processed in line with the decision made in that review.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

228. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Wexford under the single payment scheme, the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45081/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named entered into a Registered Farm Partnership agreement with another person under the 2015 Scheme year. A total 71.51 entitlements have now been established for this Partnership and payment to the value of €23,978.51 will issue in the coming days.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

229. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Wexford under the single payment scheme, the reasons for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45082/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Basic Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 25 May, 2015. Processing of the application under the above scheme has been finalised, and payments will issue shortly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

230. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Wexford under the single payment scheme; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45083/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Records held by my Department indicate that the person named was added to the registration details of the herd number quoted above in 2015. This herd number was previously registered in the name of one other person who established Basic Payment Scheme Entitlement Allocation Rights and Reference Values. In 2015, both parties entered into a Registered Farm Partnership with another person who had also established Basic Payment Scheme Entitlement Allocation Rights and Reference Values in their own right.

Under the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme, an application was submitted to transfer each of these sets of entitlement rights by merger into the three names now registered on the above herd number. Processing of these applications have recently been finalised, and payments will issue shortly to the nominated bank account of the Farm Partnership concerned.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Applications

231. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine why payment did not issue under the areas of natural constraint scheme for 2015 to a person (details supplied) in County Galway, if donkeys that were considered eligible under the 2014 disadvantage area based scheme are also considered eligible under the 2015 areas of natural constraint scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45116/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme was received from the person named on 29 May, 2015. Payment has not issued to the person named as the holding concerned cannot be confirmed as satisfying the Scheme's minimum stocking density requirements.

Under the 2015 Areas of Natural Constraints 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. While donkeys continue to be considered as a qualifying animal for inclusion in the stocking density calculations, only those donkeys registered in the name of the applicant and in accordance with EU regulation 504/2008 will be considered under the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme.

Five donkey passports were received from the person named. Upon examination, three were deemed eligible and two deemed ineligible. EU Regulation 504/2008 requires all equines to be micro chipped and passports obtained by year end or within six months of birth, whichever date occurs later. The person named was notified in writing of these findings on 10 November 2015 and informed of the option to pursue the matter with the Agricultural Appeals Office.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Applications

232. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine why payment did not issue under the areas of natural constraint scheme for 2015 to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare, if donkeys that were considered eligible under the 2014 disadvantaged area based scheme are also considered eligible under the 2015 areas of natural constraint scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45117/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme was received from the person named on 28 May 2015. Payment under the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme has not issued to the person named as the holding concerned cannot be confirmed as satisfying the Scheme's minimum stocking density requirements.

Under the 2015 Areas of Natural Constraints 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. While donkeys continue to be considered as a qualifying animal for inclusion in the stocking density calculations, only those donkeys registered in the name of the applicant and in accordance with EU regulation 504/2008 will be considered under the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme.

Three donkey passports were received from the person named. Upon examination two were deemed eligible and one was deemed ineligible. EU Regulation 504/2008 requires all equines to be micro chipped and passports obtained by year end or within six months of birth, whichever date occurs later. The person named was notified in writing of these findings on 4 December, 2015 and advised of the option of submitting further information at this stage.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Applications

233. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a decision on an appeal on a payment under the agri-environment options scheme will

issue for a person (details supplied) in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45118/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): A request to have a determination made by officials in this case reviewed within my Department was received from the person named on 20 November. This review has now been completed and the results of the review were issued in writing to the person named on 10 December. The file will now be processed in line with the decision made in that review.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Payments

234. **Deputy John Perry** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a payment due to a person (details supplied) in County Sligo, including when it will be granted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45142/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraints Schemes was received from the person named on 11 May 2015. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases Remote Sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a Remote Sensing eligibility inspection. This inspection has now been completed and the results have been finalised. Payments due under the Basic Payment Scheme have issued to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Processing of the Areas of Natural Constraints application has recently been finalised and payment will issue shortly, directly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

235. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive farm payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45185/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Private Contract Clause application to my Department. This application has been processed and payment under the Basic Payment Scheme will issue in the coming days.

Fishery Harbour Centres

236. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of parking on his Department's property in Howth in County Dublin; if he has abandoned proposals to introduce paid parking in the vicinity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45198/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, owns and directly manages six Fishery Harbour Centres located at Howth, Dunmore East, Castletownbere, Ros an Mhíl, Killybegs and An

Daingean.

Howth Fishery Harbour Centre is a working fishery harbour, however it is also a very important tourist and leisure destination with many restaurants and businesses operating on the Harbour.

The question of the introduction of paid car parking on Howth Harbour, as part of an overall review of traffic management arrangements, remains under consideration.

The Comptroller and Auditor General in his Special Report (No 82 of July 2014) and the related Report of the Public Accounts Committee of 24 June 2015 have asked the Department to review the position re pay parking in Howth, in conjunction with other Fishery Harbour Centres with a view to increasing income generation possibilities.

Most importantly, the safe operation of the Harbour is of paramount concern; in this context, traffic management and parking is recognised as an issue, particularly, though not exclusively, during the busy holiday periods.

Traffic and parking management within the Fishery Harbour Centre itself has been an issue for some time, particularly in the light of concerns raised about safety and emergency access by the Coastguard, the Lifeboat service, and An Garda Síochána. In this regard, upgrading works to the car park, including lining of parking spaces, have taken place as part of the harbour's new traffic management scheme. In 2015 I have allocated €115,000 for the continuation of these improvements.

Basic Payment Scheme Applications

237. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue under the areas of natural constraint scheme and the basic payment scheme for 2015 to a person (details supplied) in County Galway, the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45258/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme was received from the person named on 15 May 2015. Processing of the application is currently in progress. On completion of this process, payment will issue directly to the nominated bank account of the person named at the earliest possible date.

EU Regulations governing the Basic Payment Scheme provide that a person must be eligible to receive a direct payment under the Single Payment Scheme in 2013 in order to qualify for an automatic allocation right to receive entitlements under the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme. The person named purchased entitlements during the 2014 scheme year but as he did not submit a Single Payment Scheme application in 2013 he did not establish an automatic right to receive new entitlements under the Basic Payment Scheme in 2015.

My Department will contact the person named to obtain further information to establish what options are available to him to activate his entitlements under the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Applications

238. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine

when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal will receive a payment under the disadvantaged areas scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45261/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme application on 25 May 2015. Processing of the application identified that the holding of the person named had not met the stocking requirements as per the Terms and Conditions of the Scheme. An official from my Department has been in direct contact with the person named and is currently awaiting the submission of her flock register. On receipt of the outstanding documentation, the ANC application will be further processed with a view to payment at the earliest possible date.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

239. **Deputy Áine Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) will receive payment under the young farmers scheme. [45313/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted an application under the 'old young farmer' category of the 2015 National Reserve. His application has been fully processed and payment is due to issue in the coming days.

Basic Payment Scheme Applications

240. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if payment under the basic payment scheme to a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will be expedited due to financial hardship; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45320/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme application on 7 April 2015. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases Remote Sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a Remote Sensing eligibility inspection. This inspection is currently being finalised with the intention of issuing any payments due under the Direct Payments Schemes as soon as possible. In the event that any queries arise officials in my Department will be in contact with the person named.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Applications

241. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if payment under the disadvantaged areas scheme to a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will be expedited due to financial hardship; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45321/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme was received from the person named on 7 April, 2015. Processing of the application is currently in progress. On completion of this process, payment will issue directly to the nominated bank account of the person named at the earliest possible date.

Basic Payment Scheme Applications

242. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Sligo will receive farm payments; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45329/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The closing date for receipt of applications under the 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme was 29 May 2015. No application was lodged by the person named by that date. My Department is currently examining further documentation subsequently furnished under force majeure grounds. An official from my Department has already been in direct contact with the person named regarding this matter.

Basic Payment Scheme Applications

243. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment under the basic payment scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Galway; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45337/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Basic Payment Scheme was received in my Department from the person named on 8 May 2015.

EU Regulations governing the Basic Payment Scheme provide that a person must be eligible to receive a direct payment greater than €100 under the Single Payment Scheme in 2013 in order to qualify for an automatic allocation right to receive entitlements under the Basic Payment Scheme. The person named did not hold entitlements greater than €100 under the 2013 Scheme. She purchased additional entitlements in 2014 however this does not provide her with an allocation right for the new Basic Payment Scheme. My Department will make direct contact with the person named to discuss her case and establish if there are any options available to her to establish an allocation right.

Basic Payment Scheme Appeals

244. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an application for a farm payment to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45350/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 26 May 2015. During processing of this application a dual claim error arose which resulted in a greater than 20% penalty and no payment under the Basic Payment. However, following the submission of an appeal the penalty has been overturned and payments due under the Basic Payment Scheme will issue in the coming days.

Angling Season

245. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his

views on the implications of a measure (details supplied) in relation to Irish fish bass stocks; if he will oppose the measure in favour of a more common-sense approach; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45380/15]

246. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the implications of a measure (details supplied) in relation to tourist businesses in County Kerry; if he will oppose the measure in favour of a more common-sense approach; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45381/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 245 and 246 together.

The most recent scientific advice for seabass suggests that the stock is in rapid decline and that fishing mortality levels for this stock are four times higher than the level that would ensure Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY).

In January 2015, the EU Commission introduced emergency measures to reduce the fishing mortality in commercial fisheries (pelagic trawling) of this stock. The EU also adopted a new Regulation that introduced a comprehensive prohibition on commercial fishing for seabass by all EU Member States fishing vessels in the Irish and Celtic Seas for 2015. This underpins the conservation actions already taken by Ireland for over 20 years with regard to this vulnerable stock. The EU has also increased the minimum landing size for seabass for 2015 and again Ireland supported this measure.

In terms of the TAC and quota proposal for 2016, the Commission has proposed, and I generally welcome, further conservation measures for this stock including a continuation of the comprehensive prohibition on commercial fishing for seabass by all EU Member States fishing vessels in the Irish and Celtic Seas for 2016. However, we have a concern that the proposal as it stands, while aimed at protecting the stock, may inadvertently harm the highly regulated recreational angling sector in Ireland. The current proposal would ban all angling activity for seabass for the first six months of the year and a one fish per day rule for the rest of the year. Currently Ireland operates a 2 fish per day rule and the rest of the EU applied a 3 fish per day rule in 2016. I fully support the one fish per day limit suggested, however as I agree with the Deputy on the potential harm to our tourism sector, I do not support a complete ban on angling for the first six months of the year. Irish anglers are not the reason that seabass is continuing to decline and Ireland has been at the forefront of conservation measures for this stock for decades. It would in my view be unfair to take such a severe approach to the recreational sector in Ireland given their ongoing efforts to protect the stock. Consequently, I will endeavour, at December Council, to persuade the Commission that a catch and release recreational fishery be permitted to continue during the first six months of the year.

Harbours and Piers Development

247. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will examine a project (details supplied) for possible future development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45382/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Responsibility for development, and subsequent repair and maintenance of a pier at Cromane rests with Kerry County Council. The parent Department for that Local Authority is the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government.

My Department has in previous years, under the annual Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infra-

structure Development Programme, provided funding to Local Authorities for the development and repair of local authority owned piers and slipways, subject to available Exchequer funding and overall national priorities.

Any application submitted under the Programme by Kerry County Council in respect of Cromane Pier, in future years, will be considered in the context of the criteria set out, available funding and overall priorities.

Basic Payment Scheme Applications

248. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will ensure that a payment under the single payment scheme is immediately made to a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath who is in a partnership, as all issues relating to this application have been addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45396/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Basic Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 8 May 2015 with a further application received under a Partnership number on 25 May 2015. Processing of both applications is currently ongoing, and payment will issue to the nominated bank account of the person named when processing is complete. Officials from my department have been in contact with the person named to outline the position with the case.

Museum Projects

249. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the supports and funding he will make available to the Howth maritime museum in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45422/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am aware of a proposal to locate a Maritime Museum in Howth and my Department has met with the Committee in relation to this issue. My Department administers the Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme. In addition to funding for Department owned harbours and marine infrastructures, and subject to available funding, the programme also provides funding for Local Authorities for the purposes of the repair and development of piers and harbours under their ownership and for some marine leisure projects submitted by the Local Authorities. The programme does not provide funding for private initiatives.

Properties located at the six Fishery Harbour Centres including Howth are, when appropriate, offered for tenancy under lease agreement by means of an open competitive tendering process in accordance with good practice and public procurement guidelines.

Farm Inspections

250. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will suspend all farm inspections in counties Longford and Westmeath due to the serious flooding problems caused by the River Shannon bursting its banks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45433/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department, in the context of delivering the Basic Payment Scheme, Areas of Natural Constraints

Scheme, and other area based schemes, is required to carry out annual inspections covering both the eligibility of the land declared to draw down payments and also cross compliance aspects, to ensure compliance with EU regulatory requirements, in the areas of the environment, climate change and good agricultural condition of land; public, animal and plant health and animal welfare. These inspections are mandatory and there are certain minimum numbers and types of inspections that must take place annually.

I can confirm my commitment that farmers will not be subject to any penalties arising from issues generated by flooding of their farms. As inspections are a necessary requirement to facilitate the issuing of payments, it is not possible to stop all inspections but where significant flooding is evident on the farm, inspections are deferred. Undertaking inspections, while deferring force majeure cases, has allowed the payment of considerable sums of money to farmers in the run up to Christmas. In carrying out these inspections, which must be carried out to a standard which meets EU audit requirements in order to protect the draw-down of the significant funding involved, every effort is also made to take account of the realities of farming including weather conditions such as the damage caused by recent flooding.

Each case will be examined on its individual merits and in instances of non-compliance Departmental officials do have leeway to apply “force majeure” or exceptional circumstances where events have occurred that are beyond the farmer’s control.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

251. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if farm entitlements and payments were miscalculated for a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45435/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme was received from the person named on 16 April 2015. Processing of the application is completed. Payment issued on the applied area of 5.3 hectares at the correct rate for Less Severe Area Payable land directly to the nominated bank account of the person named on 23 September 2015.

The person named does not hold entitlements under the Single Payment Scheme and did not apply for entitlements under the Basic Payment Scheme in 2015.

Agriculture Scheme Applications

252. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has made a decision on an appeal of an application under the targeted agricultural modernisation scheme by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45439/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named made an application under the first tranche of the Young Farmers Capital Investment Scheme, which closed on the 25 September 2015. However, at the time of application he was unable to provide the full and final planning permission for the investment items proposed, as required under the Terms and Conditions of the Scheme. Along with a number of other applicants in a similar position, the person-named availed of an extension provided by my Department and was able to submit the required planning permission within the extended timeframe. I am pleased to say that he has now passed the first stage of approval.

Fodder Crisis

253. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide emergency fodder relief for farmers affected by the flooding in the Athlone area in County Westmeath. [45440/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am acutely aware of the difficulties farmers in flooded areas are experiencing in recent weeks. My Department has put special arrangements in place to deal with animal welfare issues that might arise as a result of flooding and to deal with the flooding of slurry tanks that has occurred in a limited number of circumstances.

Where there is a potential animal welfare issue on farms, farmers are urged to contact the Department Animal Welfare Helpline. This helpline is aimed at providing assistance to farmers, including emergency feed in some cases, and is dealing with farmers on a one-to-one basis where there is a risk of animal welfare. Farmers who are experiencing particular difficulty arising from the flooding should contact the helpline at Call Save 0761 064408 or Phone 01 6072379.

Alongside my Department's Animal Welfare Helpline, I have asked Teagasc to provide dedicated on-farm practical advice and assistance to farmers in flooded areas and ensure farming operations are supported. Contact should be made using the helpline number 0761 113555. I have also prioritised payments to farmers at this time. At this point, the vast majority of farmers have been paid over €1.2 billion in EU payments under the Basic Payment Scheme and the Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme (formerly Disadvantaged Areas Scheme) this year. Given that a completely new payment regime has been introduced, this is a significant achievement and I am committed to issuing remaining payments as individual issues are resolved around applications. Payments under other schemes such as REPS/AEOS have been made along with GLAS payments, which are being prioritised.

Departmental Funding

254. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the funding available from his Department to assist in the expansion of a business (details supplied). [45441/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): There are over 80 different Government supports for Irish start-ups and small businesses. *www.supportingsmes.ie* is an online guide to help start-ups and small businesses navigate these supports and is part of the Government's 'Supporting SMEs' campaign. This is the best place for someone to start and will include details of the Local Enterprise Office, which provides advice, information and support in starting up or growing a business.

With regard to agri-food specifically, 'Bord Bia Vantage' is an online resource for small food businesses. A summary of the supports and services for individuals and entrepreneurs looking to start a food business, looking for finance, developing a new product, looking for a distributor or exporting for the first time is at *www.bordbiavantage.ie*.

With regard to access to finance generally for the agriculture sector, the main banks have specialised agri-food funds, with significant take-up. As part of the regular contact that I maintain with them, I recently met with the CEOs of the three main banks to discuss issues relating to the agri-food sector. All three banks consider the sector to be a priority and will continue to

have specialised products.

As well as the offerings from the main banks, the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) was established by the Government to deliver lower cost, long-term, innovative and accessible funding to Irish SMEs, by offering tailored flexible products, through its 'on-lending partners' (currently AIB & Bank of Ireland). Their 'Agriculture Investment Loans' are available for investment by agricultural SMEs (including farmers) involved in primary agricultural production, the processing of agricultural products or the marketing of agricultural products. Of the almost €45 million of SBCI loans approved and drawn down between March and July, one third was accessed by the agricultural sector.

Agriculture Scheme Applications

255. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will forward basic payments to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry and the transfer of entitlement payment, as due to price volatility and harsh winter conditions the farm income has dropped dramatically; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45443/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The first person named submitted a 2015 Transfer of Entitlements Allocation Right and Reference Value application to my Department. This application sought to transfer the entitlement allocation right and reference value by gift to the second person named. This application is being processed and payment will issue as soon as possible.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

256. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 277 of 17 November 2015, if payment has issued to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45445/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted an application for the 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Schemes on 13 May 2015. On examination and processing of this application, a dual claim on a land parcel with another herd owner was discovered. Both herd owners were written to for proof of their entitlement to claim this particular land parcel. On receipt of a reply from both parties, the files will be re-examined with a view to finalising the processing of the applications. Any payment due will issue to the nominated bank account of the person named.

The persons named submitted a 2015 Private Contract Clause Application to my Department. As the herd number is now held jointly by both persons named it was necessary to have the application signed by both persons on the herd number. The amended application has been received by my Department and is now being processed. Payment under the Basic Payment Scheme will issue as soon as possible.

The persons named submitted applications under the National Reserve and Young Farmers Scheme. As soon as the Private Contract Clause application has been fully processed these National Reserve and Young Farmer Scheme applications will be finalised and the applicants will be notified accordingly.

Commonage Division

257. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine with reference to the assignment of an adviser to a commonage (details supplied) in County Galway for the preparation of green low-carbon agri-environment scheme plans, if a planner has been assigned; how this assignment was made; if other planners expressed interest; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45454/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department issued a circular to all commonage advisors detailing the process for assigning commonage advisors to individual commonages. For each of the townlands Doon, Maw and Cushatrough, more than one advisor applied and appointments were made in accordance with the advised criteria. When appointments were made the successful advisor was notified in writing and where more than one advisor had applied unsuccessful candidates were also notified and given a right of review if dissatisfied.

No commonage advisor expressed an interest in the commonage in the townland of Glin and a further circular issued on 5 August again inviting expressions of interest by 20 August in this and other commonages in a similar situation. The circular also advised that for commonages where no application was received by that date my Department would proceed to assign advisors.

Following this second call, Glin commonage was still without an advisor and, in accordance with the procedure notified, my Department then proceeded to appoint an advisor to this commonage.

Flood Relief Schemes Eligibility

258. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Defence if he will ensure emergency funds are put in place following the flooding in Athlone, County Westmeath, to support those who have had damages caused to their businesses. [44744/15]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Government has allocated a sum of €5 million to be distributed as emergency humanitarian support to small businesses that have been unable to secure flood insurance and have been flooded arising from the impact of Storm Desmond. The criteria for qualification under payment of the scheme are:

- (i) Only those small businesses that could not secure flood insurance are eligible.
- (ii) For the purpose of this scheme a small business will be defined as one with up to 20 employees.
- (iii) The business must have been flooded during the period 4 December 2015 and 17 December 2015 and this fact verified by the relevant Local Authority.
- (iv) Any location within the State that was flooded during the period in question is encompassed by the scheme.
- (v) At the time of the flood - the business must have been trading and in a rateable premises.

The Irish Red Cross Society have agreed to administer the scheme on behalf of the Government. Application forms for the scheme are available to download from www.redcross.ie.

Flood Relief Schemes Eligibility

259. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Defence if in the context of the severe flooding that has caused huge damage to business accommodation in the Athlone area of County Westmeath, and especially in the Parnell Square, Deerpark, the Strand and Clonbonny areas, the level of assistance that can be provided to these persons who have suffered significant losses and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45403/15]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Government has allocated a sum of €5 million to be distributed as emergency humanitarian support to small businesses that have been unable to secure flood insurance and have been flooded arising from the impact of Storm Desmond. The criteria for qualification under payment of the scheme are:

- (i) Only those small businesses that could not secure flood insurance are eligible.
- (ii) For the purpose of this scheme a small business will be defined as one with up to 20 employees.
- (iii) The business must have been flooded during the period 4 December 2015 and 17 December 2015 and this fact verified by the relevant Local Authority.
- (iv) Any location within the State that was flooded during the period in question is encompassed by the scheme.
- (v) At the time of the flood - the business must have been trading and in a rateable premises.

The Irish Red Cross Society have agreed to administer the scheme on behalf of the Government. Application forms for the scheme are available to download from www.redcross.ie.

Departmental Properties

260. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Defence the ground rents he or agencies under the remit of his Department pay, by named property, by name of landlord and by amount payable, in 2015 and in 2016 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45052/15]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Simon Coveney): The following are details regarding Ground Rents and Head Rents paid by my Department in 2015 and due for payment in 2016.

Property	Landlord	Amount paid 2015	Amount payable in 2016
Ground Rent Renmore Barracks to year ending 31/10/2015	The Governors of the Schools Founded by Erasmus Smith Esq.	€88.88	€88.88
Head rent on Prior School Lifford Co Donegal to year ending 01/11/2015	Earl of Erne Estate	£5.90stg	Nil

Ground Rent Stephen's Barracks to year ending 25/03/2016	Emmet O Connell	€157.17	€157.17
Head rent at Collins Barracks Cork to year ending 18/05/2016	Patrick James Dodds	£55.74stg	£55.74stg
Ground rent Collins Barracks Cork to year ending 29/09/2018	Robert Lacey	Nil	€64.50

Defence Forces Records

261. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Defence when the next intake for Naval Service recruits will occur; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45119/15]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Government is committed to maintaining the establishment of at least 9,500 in the Permanent Defence Force, comprising of 7,520 Army, 886 Air Corps and 1,094 Naval Service as stated in the 2015 White Paper on Defence.

The manpower requirement of the Defence Forces is monitored on an ongoing basis in accordance with the operational requirements of each of the three services. As there is significant turnover of personnel in the Permanent Defence Force, targeted recruitment has been and is currently taking place so as to maintain the agreed strength levels.

A recruitment competition for General Service Recruits for the Naval Service was launched on 6 March 2015. The selection process for this competition is progressing and 40 personnel have been recruited from this panel this year. It is planned that a further 40 will be recruited from the same panel on 21 December 2015.

The intake of Cadets into the Permanent Defence Force is normally carried out on an annual basis taking into consideration the operational requirements of the Defence Forces and the resource envelope allocated to Defence. 9 Naval Service Cadets were inducted on 22 September 2015 from the 2015 Cadetship competitions. Direct Entry Competitions are held as required from which specialist appointments are filled. In 2015, 5 Engine Room Artificers have been inducted into the Naval Service.

With the support of the Chief of Staff and within the resources available, it is intended to retain the capacity of the Defence Forces to operate effectively across all roles and to undertake the tasks laid down by Government both at home and overseas.

Legislative Measures

262. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason for the delay in enacting all sections of the Child and Family Relationships Act 2015; if she will outline when all sections of the Bill will be enacted; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45211/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Section 1 of the Chil-

dren and Family Relationships Act 2015 provides for the commencement of different Parts of the Act by different Ministers, because the Act addresses policy responsibilities of several different Ministers. As the Deputy may recall, Minister Varadkar and I jointly committed that the provisions of Parts 2 and 3 of the Bill would not commence for a minimum of one year from its enactment, to ensure that the treatment of persons currently undertaking fertility treatment would not be affected.

Preparations for commencement of the Parts of the Children and Family Relationships Bill which are within my policy responsibility are at an advanced stage, and I expect to be in a position to commence significant portions of it shortly. This will include in particular the changes to the legal regime governing guardianship and custody of and access to children, best interests of the child, and the maintenance code.

Citizenship Applications

263. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of an application for citizenship by a person (details supplied) in Dublin 24; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44754/15]

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 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 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.

Legislative Programme

264. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if she will introduce legislation to tackle sex trafficking, if it will be enacted before the Christmas 2015 recess; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44756/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): There are already a number of offences under Irish law which address the trafficking of persons for the purpose of exploitation (including sexual exploitation) and which can attract significant penalties. Under

the Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008, any person found guilty of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation shall be liable to imprisonment for a period up to life. It is also an offence for a person to solicit or importune a trafficked person for the purposes of prostitution with a potential penalty of imprisonment for up to 5 years.

On 23 September, I published the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill 2015, as approved by Government. The Bill provides for two new offences of purchasing sexual services, in the context of prostitution. The purpose of these offences is to target the demand for prostitution. The first is a general offence of paying to engage in sexual activity with a prostitute which carries a penalty of a fine of up to €500 for a first offence and fines of up to €1000 for a second or subsequent offence. The second is the more serious offence of paying for sexual activity with a trafficked person, in the context of prostitution, and carries a potential penalty of up to 5 years imprisonment and/or a fine. In both cases, the person selling the sexual service will not commit an offence.

These proposals have been developed following extensive consultation, initiated by my Department, dating back to 2012. The new offences also implement the recommendation of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Equality and Defence which called for the introduction of an offence criminalising the purchase of sexual services. Both the Council of Europe and the European Parliament have recognised the effectiveness of the criminalisation of the purchase of sexual services as a tool in the fight against human trafficking.

The Bill was most recently considered in the Seanad on 11 December and the enactment of this Bill is a priority.

Road Traffic Offences

265. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of fixed charge penalty notices issued to learner drivers for driving without being accompanied by a fully qualified driver and for non-display of L plates in 2014 and in 2015 to date; how many persons paid these notices within the 56-day period; how many of those who did not pay within this period were issued with summonses, by District Court, were listed to appear in court, were convicted and had penalty points applied; the number of persons who had their licence numbers recorded, by court, for each of the offences; how many received four points and a conviction, by court; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44763/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I have sought a report from the Garda authorities on the matters referred to and I will contact the Deputy directly as soon as it is to hand.

Road Traffic Offences

266. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the Courts Service project to electronically record whether a licence has been presented in court; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44766/15]

275. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the requirement for the Courts Service to record the licences of drivers who have been disqualified from driving; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44776/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Ques-

tions Nos. 266 and 275 together.

As the Deputy is aware the primary purpose of section 63 of the Road Traffic Act 2010 is to ensure that the driving licence number of individual offenders is recorded to enable the application of appropriate penalty points to the licence on conviction by the court.

The Courts Service has confirmed that where an accused is convicted before a court and disqualified from driving, the driving licence number is collected by two methods. The first is where the details are provided by An Garda Síochána prior to submission of an application for a summons in respect of the offence. Where the driving licence number is so collected, the driving licence number is sent electronically to the Courts Service with the summons application and the licence number is updated to the Courts Service computer system. Under the second method, the details are collected by the Court Registrar where a licence is produced to the court at the hearing of the offence. As outlined above, if the licence is produced, the Court Registrar records the licence number and the number is updated to the Courts Service computer system.

Where a driving licence is produced to the court during the course of court proceedings relating to penalty point offences, the Court Registrar records the driving licence number. Following the completion of the proceedings the driving licence number is updated to the Courts Service computer system if the accused is convicted of the offence before the court. Subsequently the details of the conviction and the associated driving licence number are sent electronically to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport for the application of penalty points.

I am informed that where an accused is summonsed to appear before a court and subsequently convicted of the offence, if a driving licence is not produced to the court, the Court Registrar records in the Court Minute Book or on the summons that no driving licence was produced. The non-production of the driving licence is recorded whether or not the accused appears before the court.

The Courts Service has advised that there is no project underway to electronically record the non-production of a licence in court. However, I want to assure you that my Department is in contact with the relevant agencies with a view to ensuring that the most efficient and effective processing and recording of data in respect of non-production of licences applies.

Road Traffic Offences

267. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to the reply, dated 3 November 2015, to Parliamentary Question No. 545 of 3 November 2015, wherein she stated that the statistics were being collated, if she now has these figures available; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44767/15]

268. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to reply, dated 3 November 2015, to Parliamentary Question No. 548 of 3 November 2015, wherein she stated that the statistics were being collated, if she now has these figures available; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44768/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 267 and 268 together.

I can advise the Deputy that responses in relation to his queries are being finalised at present and will issue in the very near future.

Road Traffic Offences

269. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to reply, dated 3 November 2015, to Parliamentary Question No. 594 which was a follow-up to Parliamentary Question No. 470 of 14 July 2015, wherein she stated that the statistics were being collated, if she now has these figures available; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44769/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I refer the Deputy to my letter dated 10 December 2015 which set out information sought by him.

Road Traffic Offences

270. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to reply, dated 3 November 2015, to Parliamentary Question No. 593 of 3 November 2015, wherein she stated that the statistics were being collated, if she now has these figures available; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44770/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am informed by the Garda authorities that the following table provides the number of Fixed Charge Notices issued to drivers for the offences requested by the Deputy for the period 31 July to 30 September 2015.

Number of Fixed Charge Notices issued for the offences listed for the period 30 July 2015 to 30 September 2015	
Parking in a cycle track during its period of operation (Contravention of requirement to remove vehicle parked on cycle track (RRM022 or 023) after commencement of period indicated on information plate contrary to Section 35(5) of the Road Traffic Act, 1994)	112
Invading an Advance Stop Line by failing to bring vehicle to a stop behind a primary stop-line (Failure to stop in advance of traffic sign number RRM 017(Stop Line), contrary to Section 35(5) of the Road Traffic Act, 1994)	16
Failure to stop in advance of Traffic Sign (Failure to stop in advance of traffic sign for number RRM 017 (stop line) where traffic sign number RUS 027(stop sign) was also provided contrary to Section 35(5) of the Road Traffic Act, 1994)	60
Dangerous Overtaking (Overtaking another vehicle in a manner which would endanger or cause inconvenience to any other person contrary to Section 35(5) of the Road Traffic Act, 1994). Please note that it is not possible to provide a breakdown between overtaking pedal cyclists and mechanically propelled vehicles, therefore the figure provided relates to all manners of dangerous overtaking.	20

These figures are provisional, operational and subject to change.

Road Traffic Offences

271. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further

to Parliamentary Question No. 470 of 14 July 2015, which was a follow-up to Parliamentary Question No. 398 of 21 April 2015, where the parliamentary questions requested a breakdown of the numbers of disqualifications, by District Court, from January 2013 to March 2015, if she now has these figures available; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44771/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Deputy will be aware that under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service and I have no role in the matter. Section 4(3) of the 1998 Act provides that the Courts Service is independent in the performance of its functions, which includes the provision of information on the courts system.

In my response to Parliamentary Question No. 470 of 14 July 2015, I provided the Deputy with information on the overall number of drivers disqualified for road traffic offences in 2013, 2014 & January to March 2015, as requested. However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and a breakdown of this information by District Court Area is provided in the table.

Court Area	No of Defendants Disqualified Jan - Dec 2013	No of Defendants Disqualified Jan - Dec 2014	No of Defendants Disqualified Jan - Mar 2015
ABBEYFEALE	14	2	1
ACAILL	5	1	0
AN CLOCHAN LIATH	16	8	1
AN DAINGEAN	10	8	1
AN FAL CARRACH	11	14	1
AN SPIDEAL	2	0	0
ARDEE	25	14	8
ARKLOW	49	44	6
ATHLONE	77	65	15
ATHY	34	37	6
BALLAGHADER-REEN	22	15	3
BALLINA	25	45	14
BALLINASLOE	55	67	15
BALLYCONNELL & SWANLINBAR	12	2	1
BALLYHAUNIS	5	2	0
BALLYSHANNON	25	41	8
BALTINGLASS	16	0	1
BANDON	58	70	17
BANTRY	28	23	8
BEAL AN MHUIRTHEAD	17	15	3
BIRR	17	1	0
BORRISOKANE	0	1	0
BRAY	113	121	25
BUNCRANA	23	22	8
CAHIRCIVEEN	4	2	2

Court Area	No of Defendants Disqualified Jan - Dec 2013	No of Defendants Disqualified Jan - Dec 2014	No of Defendants Disqualified Jan - Mar 2015
CARLOW	122	98	43
CARNDONAGH	13	19	4
CARRICK ON SHANNON	39	44	17
CARRICK ON SUIR	17	16	4
CARRICK-MACROSS	69	68	11
CASHEL	35	66	13
CASTLEBAR	74	62	15
CASTLECOMER	3	0	0
CASTLEREA	10	11	4
CAVAN	95	82	28
CILL RONAN	0	1	0
CLIFDEN	14	19	11
CLONAKILTY	45	27	3
CLONES	14	0	0
CLONMEL	55	62	16
CORK CITY	723	574	163
DOIRE AN FHEICH	16	30	8
DONEGAL	22	28	4
DROGHEDA	110	107	20
DUBLIN METRO-POLITAN DISTRICT	2,096	1,881	604
DUNDALK	162	107	22
DUNGARVAN	29	25	9
EDENDERRY	29	0	0
ENNIS	188	193	55
ENNISTYMON	1	0	0
FERMOY	59	77	21
GALWAY	235	220	80
GOREY	147	143	39
GORT	22	21	10
KELLS	52	4	0
KENMARE	6	5	1
KILCOCK	40	45	8
KILKENNY	120	84	46
KILLALOE	21	26	9
KILLARNEY	42	43	4
KILLORGLIN	7	9	1
KILMALLOCK	1	0	1
KILRUSH	18	24	5

Questions - Written Answers

Court Area	No of Defendants Disqualified Jan - Dec 2013	No of Defendants Disqualified Jan - Dec 2014	No of Defendants Disqualified Jan - Mar 2015
KINSALE	20	0	0
LETTERKENNY	120	137	36
LIMERICK	362	269	85
LISMORE	10	6	0
LISTOWEL	28	23	9
LONGFORD	89	124	29
LOUGHREA	47	50	11
MACROOM	49	37	15
MALLOW	82	118	39
MANORHAMILTON	8	6	2
MIDLETON	104	94	36
MONAGHAN	53	52	22
MULLINGAR	106	108	32
NA GLEANNTA	6	10	1
NAAS	168	193	57
NAVAN	126	144	48
NENAGH	75	82	30
NEWCASTLE WEST	55	61	31
PORTARLINGTON	1	0	0
PORTLAOISE	144	152	49
ROSCOMMON	49	44	12
ROSCREA	3	1	0
SKIBBEREEN	19	21	9
SLIGO	81	72	24
STROKESTOWN	7	10	4
SWINFORD	7	0	0
TEMPLEMORE	2	0	0
THURLES	69	71	18
TIPPERARY	34	41	11
TRALEE	79	72	24
TRIM	44	29	12
TUAM	77	71	14
TUBBERCURRY	11	13	2
TULLAMORE	99	122	35
VIRGINIA	77	81	18
WATERFORD CITY	195	126	32
WESTPORT	21	14	7
WEXFORD	163	140	48
WICKLOW	68	40	6
YOUGHAL	20	19	5

Court Area	No of Defendants Disqualified Jan - Dec 2013	No of Defendants Disqualified Jan - Dec 2014	No of Defendants Disqualified Jan - Mar 2015
Total	8,192	7,494	2,236

Note: If a person was before the court more than once in the Court Area for that year they are only included once on the report. A person may have appeared before the court in more than one Court Area.

Courts Service Data

272. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to the reply, dated 4 November 2015, to Parliamentary Question No. 109 of 4 November 2015, which was a follow-up to Parliamentary Question No. 511 of 14 July 2015 wherein she stated that the statistics were being collated, if she now has these figures available; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44772/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Deputy will be aware that under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service and I have no role in the matter. Section 4(3) of the 1998 Act provides that the Courts Service is independent in the performance of its functions, which includes the provision of information on the courts system. However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have made enquiries and the Courts Service has advised that the information is currently being compiled and verified. I shall arrange for the information requested to be forwarded to him shortly.

Courts Service Data

273. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to the reply to Parliamentary Question No. 109 of 4 November 2015, which, in turn, was a follow-up to Parliamentary Question No. 511 of 14 July 2015, wherein she stated that the information was being compiled and verified, if she now has this information available; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44773/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Deputy will be aware that under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service and I have no role in the matter. Section 4(3) of the 1998 Act provides that the Courts Service is independent in the performance of its functions, which includes the provision of information on the courts system. However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have made enquiries and the Courts Service has advised that the information is currently being compiled and verified. I shall arrange for the information requested to be forwarded to him shortly.

Road Traffic Offences

274. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to reply, dated 4 November 2015, to Parliamentary Question No. 117 of 4 November 2015, which was a follow-up to earlier parliamentary questions wherein she stated that the information was being compiled and verified, if she now has this information available; and if she will make a

statement on the matter. [44774/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I can advise the Deputy that a response in relation to his query is being finalised at present and will issue in the very near future.

Question No. 275 answered with Question No. 266.

Garda Deployment

276. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to set out the number of gardaí stationed in Garda Síochána stations in Crumlin village, Sundrive Road and Ballyfermot in Dublin on 1 December in each of the years 2010 to 2015; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44853/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Garda Commissioner is responsible for the distribution of personnel among the Garda Regions, Divisions, and Districts. Garda management keep this distribution under continuing review taking into account crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the best possible use is made of these resources. I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that the number of Gardaí currently stationed in the Garda Stations referred to by the Deputy as at 30 November on each of the years 2010 to 2014 and on the 31 October 2015, the latest date for which figures are readily available, is as set out in the following table.

This Government is committed to the ongoing recruitment of trainee Gardaí, and to this end the first intake since 2009 of new recruits commenced training at the Garda College, Templemore, in September of last year. To date there have been six intakes of Garda Trainees to the Garda College, giving a total intake of 550. So far 295 of the new Garda Trainees have attested as members of An Garda Síochána. On attestation, new probationer Gardaí are assigned to stations throughout the country by the Garda Commissioner, where they are assigned to mainstream uniform policing duties. I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that 4 of the new probationer Gardaí have been assigned to Crumlin Garda Station, and 5 each to Sundrive Road and Ballyfermot Garda Stations.

The Deputy will be aware that I announced the opening of a recruitment campaign for new members of An Garda Síochána on 27 November last. This new campaign is necessary to fulfil the Government's commitment to recruit 600 Gardaí in 2016. The 600 new Gardaí to be recruited next year will bring to 1,150 the total number of new recruits since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This ramped-up recruitment underscores the determination of this Government to deliver an effective, responsive police service to protect our communities and respond to emerging crime trends. The Public Appointments Service (PAS) is organising the recruitment competition on behalf of the Garda Commissioner and applications may be made through the PAS website at www.publicjobs.ie. The closing date for applications is Tuesday 5 January 2016.

Station	Nov '10	Nov '11	Nov '12	Nov '13	Nov '14	Oct '15
Crumlin	107	103	98	97	94	93
Sundrive Road	77	72	69	66	63	64
Ballyfermot	100	96	93	88	84	86

Departmental Correspondence

277. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality why a letter was not accepted by a representative from her Department from a group that visited her Department on 22 September 2015 in respect of an apology the group was seeking from the Government for what occurred in the mother and baby homes in the past; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44897/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I can advise the Deputy that it is the Department's standard practice for safety and security reasons to ensure that the front doors of the building remain closed during protests. Where a letter is intended for the Minister, the Garda on duty outside accepts delivery and passes it, via the service staff, to the Minister's Office. That is what happened on 22nd of September when a protest was held by a group seeking an apology from the Government for what occurred in the Mother and Baby Homes in the past.

I can also advise the Deputy that my Department issued a comprehensive response to the group on the issues raised in the letter.

Garda Stations

278. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to outline the discussions she has had with the Commissioner of An Garda Síochána on the provision of a second Garda Síochána station in Tallaght in Dublin 24; if she is aware of the local campaign and that possible sites are available; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44945/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The opening of Garda stations is in the first instance a matter for the Garda Commissioner in the context of preparing her annual policing plan under section 22 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005, which requires any proposals relating to the opening or closing of Garda Stations to be included in the plan. The Policing Plan 2015 does not contain any plans in relation to the opening of Garda stations.

Prison Staff

279. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to outline her views on the fact that staff at governor level in the Prison Service can avail of free on-site accommodation in a number of the prisons, yet prison staff often find it difficult to secure transfers to a prison near where they live and are unable to afford accommodation costs near where they work; if she will address this inequity; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44966/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I wish to advise the Deputy that the only prison with on-site accommodation for staff is Loughan House Open Centre in Cavan. In this case, there are 8 rooms available to staff of all grades in the Prison, including the Governor.

There is an agreed transfer protocol for prison officers who wish to seek a transfer to another prison. Vacancies are filled in each location as they arise in line with this transfer protocol on the basis of seniority in the grade and all staff are aware of this process.

Garda Equipment

280. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the recent additional Garda mountain bikes purchased have been allocated to Garda stations, if not, when they will be delivered; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45015/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I have asked the Garda authorities for the information requested and I will revert to the Deputy as soon as the information is to hand.

Appointments to State Boards

281. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if she operates a policy in respect of board appointments whereby persons are compelled to resign on reaching 70 years of age, notwithstanding their wish and ability to continue to serve; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45045/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I can inform the Deputy that my Department does not operate a policy of the kind referred to in his question. Appointments to Boards are made according to the terms of reference contained in the relevant Act of the Oireachtas establishing the Board in question. Boards established on a non-statutory basis operate in accordance with the terms of reference drawn up for those Boards.

I can advise the Deputy that section 4(4) of Schedule 2 of the Private Security Services Act 2004, which sets out the terms of membership of the Private Security Appeals Board, provides that a member of that Board shall vacate office on attaining the age of 70 years.

Departmental Properties

282. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to detail, in tabular form, the ground rents she or agencies under the remit of her Department pay by named property, name of landlord and amount payable, in 2015 and 2016, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45059/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I can inform the Deputy that there are a number of properties attached to the Courts Service that are liable for Ground Rents. The information sought is currently being compiled and will be forwarded as soon as possible.

There are no other properties under my remit that incur Ground Rents.

Prisoner Data

283. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to set out the number of prisoners in custody and the number under protection in each institution on 23 November 2015. [45094/15]

284. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to set out the number of prisoners from 18 to 20 years of age in custody and the number under protection in each institution on 23 November 2015. [45095/15]

285. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to set out the number

of prisoners from 21 to 25 years of age in custody and the number under protection in each institution on 23 November 2015. [45096/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 283 to 285, inclusive, together.

I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that a breakdown of the information on the date requested by the Deputy is not available.

However, the Irish Prison Service provide a Quarterly Census Report which includes information regarding the number of prisoners under protection. This Census is published on the Irish Prison Service website, (www.irishprisons.ie). In relation to the numbers in custody, these figures are published daily on the Irish Prison Service website.

I am further advised that the reports mentioned above do not breakdown each institution by age category as this would require a manual examination of each record. Such an examination would require a disproportionate and inordinate amount of staff time and effort that could not be justified where there are other significant demands on resources.

Prisoner Data

286. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to set out the number of prisoners in each institution who are locked up in a normal day for 23 plus, 22 plus, 20 plus, 18 plus, 16 plus, 14 plus and less than 14 hours as of 23 November 2015; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45097/15]

287. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to set out the number of prisoners from 18 to 20 years of age in each institution who are locked up in a normal day for 23 plus, 22 plus, 20 plus, 18 plus, 16 plus, 14 plus and less than 14 hours as of 23 November 2015; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45098/15]

288. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to set out the number of prisoners from 21 to 25 years of age in each institution who are locked up in a normal day for 23 plus, 22 plus, 20 plus, 18 plus, 16 plus, 14 plus and less than 14 hours as of 23 November 2015; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45099/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 286 to 288, inclusive, together.

I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that a breakdown of the information on the date requested by the Deputy is not available.

However, the Irish Prison Service provide a Quarterly Census Report which includes information regarding the number of prisoners on a restricted regime. This census is published on the Irish Prison Service website, (www.irishprisons.ie).

I am further advised that the report mentioned above does not breakdown each institution by age category as this would require a manual examination of each record. Such an examination would require a disproportionate and inordinate amount of staff time and effort that could not be justified where there are other significant demands on resources.

Prisoner Data

289. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to set out by institution the number of persons in prison and the number not held in single cells or rooms on 23 November 2015. [45100/15]

290. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to set out by institution the number of persons from 18 to 20 years of age in prison not held in single cells or rooms on 23 November 2015. [45101/15]

291. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to set out the number of persons from 18 to 20 years of age in Wheatfield Place of Detention under sentence on remand under the legislation as well as the number not held in single cells or rooms by institution on 23 November 2015. [45102/15]

292. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to set out by institution the number of persons from 21 to 25 years of age in prison not held in single cells or rooms on 23 November 2015. [45103/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 289 to 292, inclusive, together.

I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that a breakdown of the information on the date requested by the Deputy is not available. However, the Irish Prison Service provide a Quarterly Census Report which includes information regarding the number of cells accommodating one, two, three and four or more prisoners. This census is published on the Irish Prison Service website, (www.irishprisons.ie).

In relation to the numbers in custody, these figures are published daily on the Irish Prison Service website.

I am further advised that the reports mentioned above do not breakdown each institution by age category as this would require a manual examination of each record. Such an examination would require a disproportionate and inordinate amount of staff time and effort that could not be justified where there are other significant demands on resources.

Prisoner Data

293. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to set out by institution the numbers of prisoners from 18 to 20 years of age and the annual cost of this age group by person as of 23 November 2015. [45104/15]

294. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to set out by institution the numbers of prisoners from 21 to 25 years of age and the annual cost of this age group by person as of 23 November 2015. [45105/15]

295. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to set out by institution the number of sentenced prisoners from 18 to 20 years of age as well as the annual cost of this age group by person as at 23 November 2015; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45106/15]

296. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to set out by institution the number of sentenced prisoners from 21 to 25 years of age as well as the annual cost of this age group by person as of 23 November 2015; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45107/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 293 to 296, inclusive, together.

I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that it conducts an analysis of the snapshot of the prison population on the last day of each month. Accordingly, an analysis of the snapshot of the prison population was conducted on 30th November, 2015 and this analysis has been used to provide the information requested by the Deputy.

The information is set out in the following table.

Establishment Name	Number in custody 18 to 20 years old	Sentenced 18 to 20 years old	Number in custody 21 to 25 years old	Sentenced 21 to 25 years old
Arbour Hill Prison	0		10	10
Castlerea Prison	25	18	63	47
Cloverhill Remand Prison	37	4	78	16
Cork Prison	17	15	45	34
Limerick Prison (Female)	2	1	5	4
Limerick Prison (Male)	16	9	65	41
Loughan House	0	0	17	17
Midlands Prison	39	34	127	122
Mountjoy Prison (Female)	2	1	14	9
Mountjoy Prison (Male)	14	14	116	116
Portlaoise Prison	4	4	49	48
Shelton Abbey	0	0	15	15
Training Unit	0	0	13	13
Wheatfield Place of Detention	60	60	80	80
Total	216	160	697	572

The Irish Prison Service calculates the average annual cost of an available staffed prison space for inclusion in the Annual Report of the Irish Prison Service. For 2014, the latest year for which a figure is available, the cost was €68,959.

Prisoner Data

297. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners on remand in custody, on remand, by prison and place of detention, on 23 November 2015, in tabular form. [45108/15]

298. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners from 18 to 20 years of age on remand in custody, on remand, by prison and place on detention, on 23 November 2015, in tabular form. [45109/15]

299. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners from 21 to 25 years of age on remand in custody, on remand, by prison and place of deten-

tion, on 23 November 2015, in tabular form. [45110/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 297 to 299, inclusive, together.

I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that it conducts an analysis of the snapshot of the prison population on the last day of each month. Accordingly, an analysis of the snapshot of the prison population was conducted on the 30 November, 2015 and this analysis has been used to provide the information requested by the Deputy. The information is set out in the table.

Establishment Name	Total Number on remand	18 to 20 year olds on remand	21 to 25 year olds on remand
Castlerea Prison	65	7	16
Cloverhill Remand Prison	305	33	59
Cork Prison	33	2	11
Limerick Prison (F)	10	1	1
Limerick Prison (M)	82	7	24
Midlands Prison	54	5	5
Mountjoy Prison (F)	23	1	5
Mountjoy Prison (M)	7	0	0
Portlaoise Prison	13	0	1
St. Patrick's Institution	1	0	0
Wheatfield Place of Detention	1	0	0
Total	594	56	122

Prisoner Data

300. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the county of origin prior to detention and the prison in which persons are kept for each person from 18 to 20 years of age, including those in Wheatfield Place of Detention, on 23 November 2015; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45111/15]

301. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the county of origin prior to their detention and the prison in which they are kept for each person from 21 to 25 years of age, including those in Wheatfield Place of Detention, on 23 November 2015; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45112/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 300 and 301 together.

I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that it conducts an analysis of the snapshot of the prison population on the last day of each month. Accordingly, an analysis of the snapshot of the prison population was conducted on the 30 November, 2015 and this analysis has been used to provide the information requested by the Deputy. The information is set out in the tables.

Table 1: 18 to 20 years old

COUNTY	Cast	C'hill	Cork	Lim(F)	Lim(M)	Mid	Mjoy (F)	Mjoy (M)	PL	W'fld
Carlow						1				
Cavan	1									
Clare				1	4	1			1	
Cork			14			4				2
Derry	1									
Donegal	1							1		
Dublin	2	21				8	1	10	1	34
Galway	13				1	2				
Kerry			2			3			1	
Kildare		1				4		1		
Laois		1				2				1
Limerick				1	8	4				1
Louth		2						1		4
Mayo	2									
Meath	2	3				3	1			1
Monaghan										1
NFA*	1	3				1				3
Not Stated	1									
Offaly										2
Tipperary		1			3	2			1	1
Waterford			1			1				2
Westmeath	1					2				4
Wexford		3								2
Wicklow		2				1		1		2
Total	25	37	17	2	16	39	2	14	4	60

NFA* no fixed abode

Table 2: 21 to 25 years old

COUNTY	Ahill	Cast	C'hill	Ck	Lim(F)	Lim(M)	Lou	Mid	Mjoy (F)	Mjoy (M)	Port	Shel	TU	Wfld	
Carlow			1					3							
Cavan	1	1	1				1	2		1	1				
Clare		2		2	2	6		3	1		1			1	
Cork	3	1	4	30	2	1	1	11			7	2		5	
Donegal		8						2			1				
Dublin	3	7	39					2	24	4	93	13	8	9	52
Galway		20						2			1				1
Kerry				5		1	1	2		1	1				
Kildare			4			1	1	10	1	1	4	3			3
Kilkenny			1					3	1						
Laois								2			2	1			1
Leitrim		1													
Limerick		1	2		1	40	1	14	1	1	3				
Longford		5							1						
Louth			5							5	1		1		5
Mayo		4				1	2	1		1					1
Meath		1	5				1	7			2		2		1
Monaghan			1					2	1						1
NFA*			1	1		2		4	1	1	1				3
Not Stated			3							1					

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COUNTY	Ahill	Cast	C'hill	Ck	Lim(F)	Lim(M)	Lou	Mid	Mjoy (F)	Mjoy (M)	Port	Shel	TU	Wfld
Offaly			3					7		1				
Abroad		2	1	1		1				1				
Roscommon		2					1	1		2				
Sligo		5						1	1					
Tipperary	1	1	1	2		11	2	6			6			
Waterford	1			4		1		3			2			
Westmeath								5	1	1	2			1
Wexford	1	1	2					6			2	1		
Wicklow		1	4					10	1	5			1	5
Total	10	63	78	45	5	65	17	127	14	116	49	15	13	80

NFA* no fixed abode

Prisoner Data

302. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the offences for which they are being detained of those from 18 to 20 years of age in prison and in Wheatfield Place of Detention as of 23 November 2015; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45113/15]

303. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the offences for which they are being detained of those from 21 to 25 years of age in prison on 23 November 2015; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45114/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 302 and 303 together.

I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that it conducts an analysis of the snapshot of the prison population on the last day of each month. Accordingly, an analysis of the snapshot of the prison population was conducted on the 30 November, 2015 and this analysis has been used to provide the information requested by the Deputy. The information in relation to persons under sentence is set out in the tables.

Offence Group Description	18 to < 21 years old	21 to < 26 years old	Total
Homicide Offences	2	33	35
Sexual Offences	2	31	33
Attempts/Threat to Murder, Assaults, Harassments and Related Offences	36	132	168
Dangerous or Negligent Acts	9	29	38
Kidnapping and Related Offences	2	8	10
Robbery, Extortion and Hijacking Offences	9	18	27
Burglary and Related Offences	22	68	90
Theft and Related Offences	47	136	183
Fraud, Deception and Related Offences	3	10	13
Controlled Drug Offences	5	25	30

Offence Group Description	18 to < 21 years old	21 to & lt; 26 years old	Total
Weapons and Explosives Offences	2	23	25
Damage to Property and the Environment	11	30	41
Public Order and Social Code Offences	5	9	14
Road and Traffic Offences	1	7	8
Offences against Government, Justice Procedures and Organisation of Crime	1	8	9
Offences Not Elsewhere Classified	3	5	8
Total	160	572	732

Garda Retirements

304. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí who have left An Garda Síochána in the districts of Dundalk, Ardee and Drogheda in County Louth since 2010; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45121/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the distribution of personnel, among the Garda Regions, Divisions, and Districts. Garda management keep this distribution under continuing review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the best possible use is made of these resources.

I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that in the period from 2010 to 14 December 2015, the latest date for which figures are readily available, the total number of Gardaí who have departed from the An Garda Síochána in the Garda districts of Ardee, Drogheda and Dundalk, owing to voluntary retirement, compulsory retirement, cost neutral early retirement, medical discharge, resignation, dismissal or death is as set out in the following table.

Garda District	Number of Garda left 2010 – 2015*
Ardee	9
Drogheda	17
Dundalk	21
Total	47

* up to 14 December 2015

Proposed Legislation

305. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality in respect of the Intoxicating Liquor (General) Act 1924, her plans to repeal the provision banning the sale of alcohol on Good Friday; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45156/15]

353. **Deputy Eric Byrne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality her views on a matter (details supplied) in relation to licensing laws; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

[45358/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 305 and 353 together.

I had intended that the statutory provisions restricting the sale of alcohol on Good Friday, which have historical origins, would be examined in the context of the forthcoming Sale of Alcohol Bill which will update the law relating to the sale, supply and consumption of alcohol in licensed premises by repealing the Licensing Acts 1833 to 2011, and the Registration of Clubs Acts 1904 to 2008, and replacing them with streamlined and updated provisions. However drafting of that complex Bill has been delayed and I am, therefore, at present considering whether it may be possible to proceed with a number of pressing reforms to the Licensing Acts in a separate Bill in the New Year. Provisions relating to alcohol sales on Good Friday would fall to be considered in that context.

Legal Aid Service Data

306. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons who have been granted free legal aid in County Galway, by category of offence; the number of times these persons have availed of free legal aid previously; the number of previous convictions; the cost for each of the past five years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45220/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) Act, 1962, which is the primary legislation covering the operation of the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme, provides that free legal aid may be granted, in certain circumstances, for the defence of persons of insufficient means in criminal proceedings.

Under the Act, the courts, through the judiciary, are responsible for the granting of legal aid. Under the Constitution, the State is obliged to provide an accused person with the means to obtain appropriate legal representation. Moreover, the European Convention on Human Rights provides that every person charged with a criminal offence is entitled to defend themselves in person or through legal assistance of their own choosing, or if they have insufficient means to pay for legal assistance, to be given it free when the interests of justice so require. The Deputy will appreciate that the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme must operate with due regard to these rights and that any unreasonable block on legal aid could give a convicted defendant an avenue for appeal or prohibition of the prosecution. The overriding concern is to ensure that no risk arises in relation to the prosecution of persons charged with criminal offences before the courts.

The assignment of lawyers or the granting of aid are matters for the Court and, as such are handled by the judiciary on the applicant's appearance in court. Criminal prosecutions originate in the District Court and if so satisfied, the Judge will grant a criminal legal aid certificate. Figures are not kept in such a way as to be able to provide a breakdown of the number of certificates granted for criminal legal aid in County Galway, broken down by category of offence and the cost of same. There is no limit to the number of times that a person can be granted legal aid under the Scheme. Whether or not an applicant has received legal aid previously is not a consideration in determining eligibility for legal aid and such information is not recorded by the Courts Service. An applicant's previous convictions are also not a criterion for the granting of criminal legal aid under the Act.

Garda Transport Data

307. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality how many Garda Síochána vehicles, by type, were in operation at the end of each year since 2010 to date; how many are to be decommissioned in 2015 and how many new vehicles will be provided in 2016 in the Galway west division; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45221/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy will appreciate decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda vehicles are a matter for the Garda Commissioner in the light of her identified operational demands and the availability of resources. The information requested by the Deputy in relation to vehicles in the Division concerned is as shown in the tables.

The Government is committed to ensuring that An Garda Síochána has the resources to deliver highly-mobile and responsive Garda patrols in both rural and urban communities. Since 2012, almost €34 million has been invested in renewing the Garda fleet to support front line Garda responses. Over 640 new vehicles are coming on stream since the start of 2015 including new specialised vehicles. This investment will provide the Gardaí with additional high powered vehicles, marked and unmarked patrol cars, cars for surveillance and covert operations, motor cycles for high visibility road policing and vehicles for public order policing. This investment in a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose Garda fleet will continue under the Government's Capital Plan 2016-2021 which provides an additional €46 million for new Garda vehicles over the lifetime of the Plan. The increased budget allocation for 2016 will also facilitate additional funding for Garda surveillance, special operations and targeted, intelligence-led policing. Following delivery and fit out, these vehicles will be allocated on a regional basis as determined by the Commissioner of An Garda Síochána consistent with operational requirements.

Galway Division Vehicles 2010 - 2015 (as at 11 December 2015)

Year	Cars	Vans	Motor-cycles	4x4	Other	Total
2010	77	10	11	2	3	103
2011	72	7	9	4	3	95
2012	51	11	9	4	3	78
2013	50	15	7	3	3	78
2014	56	13	7	2	2	80
11/12/2015	59	13	6	2	1	81

Galway Division 2015 - Scrapped Vehicles

Cars	Vans	Motorcycles	4x4	Other	Total
15	0	0	1	1	17

Prisoner Data

308. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons from County Galway who were convicted and sentenced to imprisonment and the number who were processed at the prison where they were sent and released on the same day or the following day, by prison; by category of crime, by length of sentence given, in 2014 and in 2015 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45222/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that the number of persons sentenced during 2014, who gave Galway as their county of residence was 592.

A breakdown of the figures requested by prison and by category of offence/release reason is included in the tables. It should be noted that 437 or 99.1% of those released were serving a Fines sentence. Each committal on a fine is considered for temporary release by the Irish Prison Service on a case by case basis. In the majority of cases temporary release is granted within a number of hours however, for serial offenders or for certain offences, ie Income tax, those prisoners may remain in custody to serve all or a portion of the sentence.

The Fines (Payment and Recovery) Act 2014 provides that the Court in imposing a fine shall take into account a person's financial circumstances. It further provides, *inter alia*, that where a person fails to pay a fine by the due date, the Court may make an attachment order to earnings as a means of recovering the unpaid fine. As a result of this legislation, it is expected that we will see a reduction in the number of committals to prisons on short sentences.

Alternatives to custody continue to be pursued and legislation has already been passed. This includes the Criminal Justice (Community Service) (Amendment) Act 2011 which requires the sentencing judge to consider the imposition of community service where a custodial sentence of 12 months or less is being considered.

The following tables show the number of persons released. Figures for 2015 are currently unavailable.

Table 1

Prison	Total
Castlerea	328
Cork	5
Limerick Female	3
Limerick Male	12
Midlands	5
Mountjoy Female	82
Mountjoy Male	4
Wheatfield	2
Total	441

Table 2

Sentence/release reason	Number of persons
Fine	437
Time previously served	1
Released from Court	1
No licence	1
No Insurance	1
Total	441

Garda Equipment

309. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if she will investigate the potential for drones to be used for An Garda Síochána surveillance in combating crime, particularly rural crime where many persons are located long distances from local Garda Síochána stations and using drones as a vital equipment resource would make a huge contribution to the policing of crime; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45224/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Under the Garda Síochána Act 2005 the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the distribution of available Garda resources. This includes personnel, Garda vehicles and the various technologies utilised to support front-line Gardaí and intelligence-led operations against organised crime. This process takes account of annual policing priorities determined by me as Minister for Justice in consultation with the Garda Commissioner as provided for under section 20 of the Garda Síochána Act, 2005.

I can assure the Deputy that the Garda authorities are continually looking to ensure that the latest information, communications and forensic technologies are sourced and deployed to achieve their strategic objectives as set out in the context of their annual policing plans, as provided for in section 22 of the 2005 Act. This policy is designed to ensure that the Garda Síochána will be properly resourced to meet the evolving needs of a modern effective police force and take advantage of proven up to date technological developments in crime detection and prevention as they occur.

Any proposals in relation to the use of drone technology loaded with recording equipment would need to consider potential legal issues including in relation to privacy, data protection and the permitted use of surveillance equipment and also their potential effectiveness having regard to their limitations as to distance and battery life. This Government is committed to delivering a visible and responsive policing service through highly-mobile and responsive Garda patrols in urban and rural areas. The 2016 Budget allocation of €1.5 billion for An Garda Síochána includes over €67 million in additional funding which will allow the recruitment of 600 new Gardaí next year on top of the 550 Gardaí recruited since this Government reopened the Garda College in September 2014. It will also provide additional funding for Garda surveillance, special operations and targeted, intelligence-led policing. This additional recruitment and budget allocation builds on the current high level of investment in Garda vehicles. We have invested over €34 million in new Garda vehicles since 2012 with over 640 new vehicles coming on stream in 2015, ranging from more Garda patrol cars to high-powered vehicles for armed units. The Government's Capital Plan 2016-2021 also provides for a further €46 million of investment in vehicles, as well as investment in airborne surveillance. Taken together, this step-change in investment in policing will ensure that the Gardaí can be mobile, visible and responsive on the roads and in the community.

The Government's continued investment in resources will ensure that An Garda Síochána has the capacity to provide effective policing services in our communities to respond to the evolving challenges of modern day criminal activity.

Garda Operations

310. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality given concerns expressed regarding the proper roll-out of Operation Thor in the Sligo-Leitrim Garda division; the plans in place in the division to enable it to draw down the extra Garda Síochána resources that were made available under the new operation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45229/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Operation Thor is a multi-stranded national operation which builds on previous and current Garda operations to tackle crime, particularly burglaries the number of which, as we know, increase with the advent of the long winter nights, in both urban and rural communities nationwide. In excess of €5 million is being committed to support Operation Thor. This allocation, which includes funding for Garda overtime will support a combination of additional patrols, checkpoints, rapid armed

response and public awareness measures.

This intensive, targeted operation has to be seen in the context of the major investment that this Government is making in An Garda Síochána. The 2016 Budget allocation of €1.5 billion for An Garda Síochána includes over €67 million in additional funding which will allow the recruitment of 600 new Gardaí next year on top of the 550 Gardaí recruited since this Government reopened the Garda College in September 2014. It will also provide additional funding for Garda surveillance, special operations and targeted, intelligence-led policing. This additional recruitment and budget allocation builds on the current high level of investment in Garda vehicles. We have invested over €34 million in new Garda vehicles since 2012 with over 640 new vehicles coming on stream in 2015, ranging from more Garda patrol cars to high-powered vehicles for armed units. The Government's Capital Plan 2016-2021 provides for a further €46 million of investment in vehicles as well as an additional €200 million for Information and Communications Technology which will allow An Garda Síochána to deploy the latest cutting edge technologies in the fight against crime. We are also investing in airborne surveillance. Taken together, this step-change in investment in policing will ensure that the Gardaí can be mobile, visible and responsive on the roads and in the community.

Operation Thor entails a broad range of activities to tackle burglars, organised crime gangs and prolific offenders as well as working with communities to prevent crime. These activities include: additional high-visibility patrols in identified burglary hot-spots; increased use of checkpoints to tackle the criminal gangs using the national road network; the use of new high powered vehicles by the armed Regional Response Units; efforts to disrupt the stolen goods market; programmes to help reduce re-offending by prolific offenders; a high-profile national crime prevention awareness campaign, and targeted crime prevention advice for local communities and enhanced supports for victims.

The Commissioner, in consultation with her senior management team, is responsible for the detailed allocation of resources, including the additional allocation of the €5 million to support Operation Thor. The Commissioner has assured me that she will aim to maximise the use of these additional resources. A large proportion of domestic burglaries are committed by serial offenders. Figures from the Garda Síochána Analysis Service indicate that 75% of burglaries are committed by 25% of burglars. Targeting these prolific offenders is a priority, consequently the allocation of resources under Operation Thor will be intelligence led and based on analysis of crime patterns by An Garda Síochána. The aim is to deploy resources in advance of where An Garda Síochána anticipates crime might take place in order to prevent the crime occurring.

In this context the Deputy will appreciate that it is not possible to detail the additional resources that will be made available to any one County under Operation Thor. However the Commissioner will continually review the allocation of resources under the Operation, taking into account crime trends and policing priorities across the Garda Regions so as to ensure that the best possible use is made of these resources. I am confident that this comprehensive operation by An Garda Síochána, supported by Government investment, will help disrupt the activities of burglars, organised crime gangs and prolific offenders and will improve the safety of all our communities across the country.

Refugee Numbers

311. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons of Syrian origin or claiming to be of Syrian origin refused leave to land at various points of entry and the reason in each case, by age, by gender, by country to which they were returned, in 2015 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45235/15]

312. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons of Eritrean origin or claiming to be of Eritrean origin refused leave to land at various points of entry and the reason in each case, by age, by gender of the persons refused, by country to which they were returned, in 2015 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45236/15]

313. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons of Afghan origin or claiming to be of Afghan origin refused leave to land at various points of entry and the reasons in each case, by age, by gender of the persons refused, by the country to which they were returned, in 2015 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45237/15]

314. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons of Iranian origin or claiming to be of Iranian origin refused leave to land at various points of entry and the reason in each case, by age, by gender of the persons refused, by country to which they were returned; in 2015 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45238/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 311 to 314, inclusive, together.

I can inform the Deputy that in the period concerned the number of persons refused leave to land at approved ports of entry to the State from the nationalities referred to by the Deputy was as follows: Afghan 139, Eritrean 11, Iranian 44 and Syrian 59. Information on numbers refused permission to enter the State may be subject to revision over time where individual cases are examined further and the status of some cases may change.

The further breakdown of data requested by the Deputy is not readily available and would require the search and retrieval of individual records that could only be obtained by the disproportionate expenditure of time and resources relative to the information sought.

In general a person may be refused leave to land on one, or more, of the eleven grounds set out in Section 4(3) of the Immigration Act, 2004.

Every person refused leave to land in the State is served with a notice in which the reason, or reasons, for refusing an application for permission to enter the State is set out.

I would advise the Deputy that persons refused leave to land and who are subsequently removed from the State are returned to their point of embarkation, which in most cases is within the EU. I would point out in relation to the countries concerned that no commercial direct flights to Ireland are available from these countries.

Immigration Status

315. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current and expected residency status of a person (details supplied) in County Louth who has recently sent in the requested information; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45255/15]

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 has been granted Leave to Remain in the State for the period to 4th December, 2018. This decision was conveyed in writing to the person concerned by letter dated 4 December, 2015.

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

Stardust Fire

316. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of her investigations into the Stardust tragedy in 1981; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45269/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy is aware, following my meeting with the Stardust Victims Committee last year I appointed an official in my Department to liaise with them in relation to matters about which they have expressed concern.

A researcher associated with the Stardust Victims' Committee submitted material relating to these events to my Department and a meeting was held with them and another researcher associated with the Committee, on 23 April this year. The official in my Department who liaises with the Committee undertook to examine these material and, following such an examination, a draft preliminary analysis was prepared in my Department and this draft was issued to the Committee in July of this year. The Committee were invited to examine this draft analysis and provide any commentary they wished to make on it. The Committee's response to this draft analysis was provided by way of a presentation made by researchers associated with the Committee; this presentation was made on 30 September 2015. The views and materials presented at that meeting have now been examined in my Department and on 30 November further documentation was issued by my Department to the Committee in this connection

It is understood that there may be further material that the Committee wishes to be considered by my Department in this connection and further communication from the Committee is currently awaited in that regard.

Prisoner Data

317. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons serving a sentence of less than three months on 23 November 2015. [45270/15]

318. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons from 18 to 20 years of age serving a sentence of less than three months on 23 November 2015. [45271/15]

319. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons from 21 to 25 years of age serving a sentence of less than three months on 23 November 2015. [45272/15]

320. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons serving a sentence of less than six months on 23 November 2015. [45273/15]

321. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons from 18 to 20 years of age serving a sentence of less than six months on 23 November 2015.

[45274/15]

322. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons from 21 to 25 years of age serving a sentence of less than six months on 23 November 2015. [45275/15]

323. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons serving a sentence of less than 12 months on 23 November 2015. [45276/15]

324. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons from 18 to 20 years of age serving a sentence of less than 12 months on 23 November 2015. [45277/15]

325. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons from 21 to 25 years of age serving a sentence of less than 12 months on 23 November 2015. [45278/15]

326. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons serving a sentence of less than 24 months on 23 November 2015. [45279/15]

327. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons from 18 to 20 years of age serving a sentence of less than 24 months on 23 November 2015. [45280/15]

328. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons from 21 to 25 years of age serving a sentence of less than 24 months on 23 November 2015. [45281/15]

329. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons serving a sentence of less than three years on 23 November 2015. [45282/15]

330. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons from 18 to 20 years of age serving a sentence of less than three years on 23 November 2015. [45283/15]

331. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons from 21 to 25 years of age serving a sentence of less than three years on 23 November 2015. [45284/15]

332. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons serving a sentence of less than five years on 23 November 2015. [45285/15]

333. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons from 18 to 20 years of age serving a sentence of less than five years on 23 November 2015. [45286/15]

334. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons from 21 to 25 years of age serving a sentence of less than five years on 23 November 2015. [45287/15]

335. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons serving a sentence of less than ten years on 23 November 2015. [45288/15]

336. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons from 18 to 20 years of age serving a sentence of less than ten years on 23 November 2015. [45289/15]

337. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons from 21 to 25 years of age serving a sentence of less than ten years on 23 November 2015. [45290/15]

338. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons serving a sentence of more than ten years on 23 November 2015. [45291/15]

339. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons from 18 to 20 years of age serving a sentence of more than ten years on 23 November 2015. [45292/15]

340. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons from 21 to 25 years of age serving a sentence of more than ten years on 23 November 2015. [45293/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 317 to 340, inclusive, together.

I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that it conducts an analysis of the snapshot of the prison population on the last day of each month. Accordingly, an analysis of the snapshot of the prison population was conducted on the 30 November, 2015 and this analysis has been used to provide the information requested by the Deputy.

The information is set out in the following table.

Number of persons serving a sentence by age and sentence length

Length Group	17 Year Olds	18 to < 21	21 to <26	26 to <30	30 to <40	40 to <50	50 years+	Total
< 3 Months	0	0	2	3	5	4	1	15
3 to <6 Months	4	17	16	27	27	11	7	109
6 to <12 Months	4	31	72	47	76	29	4	263
1 to <2 Years	1	42	107	64	130	58	26	428
2 to <3 Years	1	34	89	64	157	46	38	429
3 to <5 Years	2	23	154	114	201	75	58	627
5 to <10 Years	1	12	104	110	233	135	86	681
10+ Years	0	0	14	21	85	66	68	254
Lifers	0	1	14	28	129	101	71	344
Total	13	160	572	478	1,043	525	359	3,150

Educational Services for Prisoners

341. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of workshop and work-training posts that are vacant in each prison; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45294/15]

342. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners from 18 to 20 years of age taking part in workshops and work-training posts in each prison. [45295/15]

343. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners from 21 to 25 years of age taking part in workshops and work-training posts in each prison. [45296/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 341 to 343, inclusive, together.

I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that the existing vacancies for workshop and work training posts in each prison are as set out in the following table.

Prison	Total number of posts	Vacancies
Arbour Hill	12	0.5
Castlerea	26	0
Cloverhill	27	2
Cork	23	0
Dóchas	12	1
Limerick	24	0
Loughan House	11	0
Midlands	68	1
Mountjoy	48	5
Portlaoise	27	2
Shelton Abbey	9	0
St Patrick's Institution	25	0
Training Unit	7	0
Wheatfield	58	1

Vacancies in the work training area are filled by the Irish Prison Service by internal competition as the need arises.

The manner in which records are collated does not allow the Irish Prison Service to differentiate between the ages of offenders who participate in work training activities without an examination of individual files. Such an examination would require a disproportionate and inordinate amount of staff time and effort that could not be justified where there are other significant demands on resources.

Library Services

344. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of hours the library in each prison is scheduled to open each week; the percentage of scheduled opening times the libraries were actually open during 2014; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45297/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised by the Irish

Prison Service that the information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table. The libraries for Arbour Hill, Dóchas, Mountjoy, Wheatfield East Wing and the Training Unit are open as the demand requires.

Library	Scheduled Opening Hours (per week)	% hours open January - December 2014
Arbour Hill	On demand	As required
Castlerea	28.75	100
Cloverhill	35.5	34
Cork	31.5	64
Dóchas	On demand	As required
Limerick	21.25	85
Loughan House	6	95
Midlands	21	96
Mountjoy	On demand	As required
Portlaoise C Block	49	93
Portlaoise E Block	49	93
Shelton Abbey	11	99
St Patrick's Institution/ Mountjoy West	Library reopened in August 2014 and is scheduled to open for 14 hrs per week	100
Training Unit	On demand	As required
Wheatfield East Wing	On demand	As required
Wheatfield	16	68

Libraries in prisons are regarded by prison management as key elements in the process of normalisation and rehabilitation for prisoners. Library services in prisons are mainly provided by Local Authority library personnel deployed to prisons. In some cases, libraries are managed by prison officers or prisoners, with professional librarian oversight. While it is the case that a shortfall in staffing numbers on a particular day can impact negatively on service provision, the Irish Prison Service is actively pursuing the option of having all libraries in prisons managed by long-term, suitably trained prisoners, with professional oversight in order to maximise the service. Prisoners have been trained up and are active in supporting library services in Arbour Hill, the Midlands Prison, Training Unit, Castlerea Prison, Limerick, Portlaoise, Mountjoy, Wheatfield and the Dochas Centre. In Cork, Shelton Abbey and Loughan House prisoners assist in the running of the libraries.

Prison Education Service

345. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners actively following courses with the Open University at present, by institution; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45298/15]

346. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners from 18 to 20 years of age actively following courses with the Open University at present, by institution; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45299/15]

347. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners from 21 to 25 years of age actively following courses with the Open University at present, by institution; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45300/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 345 to 347, inclusive, together.

I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that the Education Unit in each of the prisons offers a broad and flexible programme of education to prisoners, ranging from basic literacy classes to Open University courses.

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

With regard to Open University, there is a uniform application procedure with associated guidelines and prisoners must demonstrate the proven academic ability required to complete a third level course of study, prior to funding being approved.

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

Prison	Number of students	Age 18 - 20	Age 21 - 25
Arbour Hill	6	0	0
Castlerea	3	0	0
Cork	2	0	0
Dóchas	3	0	0
Limerick	3	0	0
Loughan House	3	0	1
Midlands	2	0	0
Mountjoy	2	0	0
Mountjoy West	2	0	0
Portlaoise	7	0	0
Training Unit	1	0	0
Wheatfield	9	0	0
Total	43	0	1

Prisoner Data

348. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners from 18 to 20 years of age who participated in the integrated sentence management scheme from 24 November 2013 to 23 November 2015, by prison, by year, in tabular form. [45301/15]

349. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners from 21 to 25 years of age who participated in the integrated sentence management scheme from 24 November 2013 to 23 November 2015, by prison, by year, in tabular form. [45302/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 348 and 349 together.

I can advise the Deputy that the Irish Prison Service does not record data in relation to participation in Integrated Sentence Management in the format requested. However, I can inform the Deputy that as of 14 December 2015, 3,045 prisoners were engaged in Integrated Sentence Management. The number of prisoners for whom an Integrated Sentence Management case has been created is broken down by prison in the following table.

Prison	Number of ISM Cases Created
Arbour Hill	143
Castlerea	171
Cloverhill	143
Cork	209
Dóchas	99
Limerick	181
Loughan	142
Midlands	585
Mountjoy Male	512
Portlaoise	203
Shelton Abbey	116
Training Unit	118
Wheatfield	423
Total	3,045

A total of 24 dedicated Integrated Sentence Management Coordinators are operational in all prisons and open centres since March 2015. The allocation of dedicated staff in each establishment greatly enhances the effectiveness of the sentence management system and facilitates the growing numbers of prisoners participating in the process.

Newly committed prisoners with a sentence of greater than one year are eligible to take part in Integrated Sentence Management. This involves a specific orientation in the delivery of services to prisoners and an emphasis on prisoners taking greater personal responsibility for their own development through active engagement with both specialist and non-specialist services in the prisons.

Following committal the Integrated Sentence Management Coordinator conducts a First Contact Assessment. This First Contact Assessment identifies the needs of the prisoner in several areas such as accommodation, education and offending behaviour. Referrals are made on foot of this assessment to services within the prison such as Education, Work/Training and outside agencies providing an in-reach service. The various actions recommended by these services are compiled into a Personal Integration Plan. This is a plan of actions for the prisoner to complete during his/her time in prison. The Personal Integration Plan will be reviewed regularly depending on the length of the sentence. Approximately 9 months prior to the release of the prisoner, a Community Integration Plan will be developed. This sets out a plan for the prisoner to prepare for his/her release.

The end result is a prisoner centred, multi-disciplinary approach to working with prisoners with provision for initial assessment, goal setting and periodic review to measure progress. Important issues such as accommodation, income support, training or employment are addressed to help the prisoner resettle into the community on release and reduce the risk of re-offending.

Integrated Sentence Management Coordinators are also active participants in sentence planning for certain categories of prisoners serving less than one year, for example, female prisoners, prisoners who have declared their risk of homelessness on release, or prisoners participating in the Community Support Scheme. The Integrated Sentence Management process has played a key role in the success of the Community Return Scheme.

I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that It is intended to review the overall Integrated Sentence Management Policy in the coming year to include a review of the Integrated Sentence Management database.

Prisoner Data

350. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons who were serving a sentence for the first time who are diagnosed with a mental health problem, dependent on drugs, on remand, by prison and institution; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45303/15]

351. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons from 18 to 20 years of age in Wheatfield place of detention being held under sentence or remand under existing legislation, the number serving a sentence for the first time who are diagnosed with a mental health problem, dependent on drugs or on remand among this age cohort, by prison; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45304/15]

352. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons from 21 to 25 years who are serving a sentence for the first time who were diagnosed with a mental health problem, dependant on drug misuse, on remand or by institution; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45305/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 350 to 352, inclusive, together.

I can advise the Deputy that the Irish Prison Service do not record data in the format requested in the question however, I can inform the Deputy that all persons in custody have access to primary healthcare services, including mental health and addiction services, which are equivalent to those available to citizens in the general community who are entitled to GMS services.

Any person who is diagnosed with a mental health problem and/or an addiction issue is, subject to their agreement to engage with the prison healthcare services, provided with the relevant mental health and addiction services, and the appropriate care and treatment while in custody.

Question No. 353 answered with Question No. 305.

Domestic Violence Policy

354. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs his views that in 2014 there were 16,464 incidents of domestic violence against women disclosed to Women's Aid direct services, involving 10,653 incidents of emotional abuse, 2,470 incidents of physical abuse and 1,746 instances of financial abuse disclosed, as well as 595 incidents of sexual abuse and 176 rapes; the action he will take to publicise this information and raise awareness regarding the need for action to be taken by adequately supporting Women's Aid, which continues to rely on private funding as a key source of keeping its services open; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45399/15]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, is the statutory body with responsibility for the provision of domestic, sexual violence and gender-based violence services. The Agency's key priority is to ensure that the needs of victims are met in the best way possible. Accordingly, in 2015, a dedicated national budget of €19.5m has been directed towards protecting front-line services for survivors.

Women's Aid receives a significant level of State funding. In 2015, Tusla has allocated funding of €645,000 to Women's Aid to maintain current frontline service provision, including the development of the Women's Aid national domestic violence helpline. Women's Aid has

also received funding from other government sources for services. This includes €158,000 over a two year period from the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government; in 2015, the Department of Justice and Equality provided €55,000 via the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (Cosc) and €78,000 via the Victims of Crime Office. Each year, Women's Aid publishes an annual report which is publicly available on its website.

As the Deputy will be aware, I announced a significant increase in the overall funding allocation to Tusla for 2016. Tusla will have available to it some €676 million in funding, representing an increase of €38 million over 2015. The 2016 allocation includes funding of €200,000 to implement the Istanbul Convention on violence against women and domestic violence.

The increase in funding will significantly strengthen Tusla's base funding level and also gives the Agency greater capacity to respond to current risk and anticipated demand in 2016.

The precise level of funding to be provided to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services is being considered by Tusla in developing its Business Plan for 2016, which will be sent to me shortly, for consideration.

Tusla recognises the valuable work of Women's Aid, and other organisations providing services in the area of domestic and sexual violence and is committed to the development of these services in line with its statutory remit. In planning for the future provision and development of services, Tusla is committed to continuing to work in partnership with Women's Aid and the wider domestic violence services sector into the future to address identified gaps in service provision, eliminate duplication where it exists and to ensure the provision of equitable services.

Detention Centres Data

355. Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if safety at the national children's detention facility in Oberstown is deteriorating for staff and residents; the number of notifiable incidents recorded in the past 12 months; the number of assault and injury days used in the same period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44872/15]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): The children detention schools aim to provide safe and secure custody for children to the greatest extent possible, thanks to the ongoing efforts of management and staff working together. I have previously underlined that any and all incidents resulting in assault and injury to staff or young people are to be condemned and there is no "acceptable" level of assault or injury in a children detention school. Unfortunately, the risk of injury cannot be excluded completely, given the nature of a children detention school. The trend of incidents in this area, the level of supports available and the lessons learned from each incident are kept under ongoing review by campus management. This is done as part of the normal operational management on the campus on a weekly basis. It is also linked to the issue of ongoing training and development and ensuring that appropriate staffing levels are in place.

A notifiable incident policy is in place on the Oberstown campus and this can be viewed on the website of the Irish Youth Justice Service at www.iyjs.ie. I am arranging for a copy of the policy to be forwarded to the Deputy.

The policy sets out 3 categories of notifiable incident, as follows:

- Grade 1 - this is the most serious situation requiring emergency action and immediate

reporting to the Director, my Department and any other emergency contacts at any time of the day or night.

- Grade 2 - this is a critical incident which requires immediate reporting to the Director and immediate reporting to my Department between the hours of 8 a.m. and midnight. The Director will make the decision if additional emergency contacts need to be informed.

- Grade 3 - these incidents are the lowest grade of situations dealt with under this grading scale. Whilst still being significant, such incidents should not involve the emergency services; should not involve any serious injuries and should not involve any serious property damage.

I am advised that over the 12 month period from 1 December 2014 to 30 November 2015, there were a total of 102 incidents reported under the notifiable incident policy. Of these, there was 1 incident reported under grade 1, 46 incidents reported under grade 2 and 55 incidents reported under grade 3.

Over the same period, there were a total of 3005 employee days used across 65 individual employees under the assault and injury policy which is currently in place.

Departmental Properties

356. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the ground rents he or agencies under the remit of his Department has paid and will pay, by named property, by name of landlord and by amount payable, in 2015 and in 2016 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45050/15]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): There are no ground rents payable by my Department. In relation to the three agencies under the aegis of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (Tusla, the Adoption Authority of Ireland and the Office of the Ombudsman for Children) I have referred your query to each for direct reply.

Adoption Legislation

357. **Deputy Anne Ferris** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 341 of 8 December 2015, if he will ensure that the adoption information and tracing bill is brought before Dáil Éireann before the end of this Government, as he did not reply to that aspect of the parliamentary question; his views on the unacceptable nature of the delay that this legislation has encountered within his Department; if he will initiate an inquiry into the matter to rule out the possibility of any administrative bias against adopted persons within the process, given the extraordinarily slow rate of progress since this Bill was first proposed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45087/15]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): The Government approved the publication of the Heads and General Scheme of the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2015 last July. The Bill is intended to facilitate access to adoption information and operates on the basis of a presumption in favour of disclosing information in so far as is legally and constitutionally possible. The Bill will, for the first time, provide a statutory basis for the provision of information related to both past and future adoptions. It will provide clarity around the information that can be provided and the circumstances in which it can be provided.

I referred the Bill to the Joint Oireachtas Committee for Health and Children for pre legislative scrutiny and the Committee published their Report recently. My Department examined the

recommendations of the Committee, and I met with officials to discuss the Report last week. I have agreed revised proposals on which legal advice will be sought. I hope, subject to this advice, to submit revised proposals to Government in January and to seek Government approval to draft a Bill as a matter of urgency.

I am currently progressing significant improvements in the Irish adoption legislation which stem from the Adoption (Amendment) Bill 2012 incorporating amendments required to the Adoption Act 2010 arising from the Children's Referendum. The Bill is being amended to provide for step parent adoption and other amendments required on foot of the Child and Family Relations Bill.

Youth Services

358. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if and when, required counselling through Kildare youth services will be facilitated for a person (details supplied) in County Kildare who requires the support due to ongoing health concerns; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45131/15]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): My Department administers a range of funding schemes and programmes to support the provision of youth services to young people throughout the country including those from disadvantaged communities. The funding schemes support national and local youth work provision to some 380,000 young people and involve approximately 1,400 youth work staff in 477 projects and 40,000 volunteers working in youth work services and communities throughout the country. In 2016, funding of €51m has been provided to my Department for these schemes.

An amount of €488,200 was allocated, in 2015, for the projects and services under Kildare Youth Services, which operates under Youth Work Ireland. My Department provides funding to Kildare Youth Services for programmes under the Special Projects for Youth Scheme in respect of six local youth projects in Athy, Naas, Leixlip, Newbridge, the Curragh and Kildare town and a Youth Information Centre in Naas.

I am aware that Kildare Youth Services provides a range of additional services to meet young people's needs. These include specific supports for children and young people, which are funded by a number of statutory agencies. I am making further enquiries about the matter which the Deputy has raised and I will revert to the Deputy when this information is to hand.

Early Childhood Care and Education

359. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question Number 368 of 1 December 2015, his views on correspondence (details supplied) in relation to the early childhood care and education scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45357/15]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme was introduced in January 2010 to provide for one free pre-school year for children before they commenced primary school. Children aged between 3 year and 2 months and 4 years and 7 months in the relevant year qualified for the free provision. Those children qualifying for free pre-school in the 2015/2016 programme year were born between 2 February 2011 and 30 June 2012. Children born after 30 June 2012 will qualify for free pre-school in the 2016/17 programme year (i.e. from September 2016). This eligibility criteria

remains in place until the introduction of the expanded programme at the commencement of the 2016/2017 programme year.

The expanded ECCE programme set new parameters to the eligibility age range for children availing of the programme from September 2016, with children born between 1 January 2012 and 31 August 2013 qualifying at that date. From September 2016, children will be eligible to avail of the programme from the first enrolment opportunity after they reach 3 years of age. These children can remain in the programme until they make the transition to primary school (once the child is not older than 5½ years at the end of the relevant programme year i.e. end June).

The cohort of approximately 36,000 children born in the second half of 2012 referred to by the Deputy could only have availed of increased free pre-school provision if it was possible to introduce the expanded programme from January 2016. While it is recognised that there may be some pre-school services in a position to meet the increased demand and accommodate individual enrolments from this cohort from this date, there is clear evidence to suggest that there would not be sufficient capacity in the early years sector to accommodate all 36,000 children in this cohort.

Mental Health Services Provision

360. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Health the mental health services available for children and young persons, particularly those with special education needs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45163/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service issue this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. If you have not received a reply within the next 15 working days, please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Psychological Services

361. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he is satisfied with the level of child psychology services available in west Cork, if a second child psychologist is required, when will one be appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45254/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service issue this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. If you have not received a reply within the next 15 working days, please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Appointments Status

362. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Offaly will receive an appointment for the Midland Regional Hospital in Tullamore, County Offaly. [44681/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the

Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Speech and Language Therapy Provision

363. **Deputy Colm Keaveney** asked the Minister for Health the number of speech and language therapists and occupational therapists employed in the Health Service Executive disability sector from 2010 to date in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44683/15]

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 HSE for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Speech and Language Therapy Provision

364. **Deputy Colm Keaveney** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons awaiting assessment for speech and language therapy and occupational therapy, by length of time waiting, and the number of persons who having been assessed are awaiting treatment, by length of time waiting, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44687/15]

365. **Deputy Colm Keaveney** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons awaiting assessment for speech and language therapy and for occupational therapy, by county, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44691/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 364 and 365 together.

As these are service matters, they have been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Nursing Home Services

366. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons from this State currently resident in nursing homes in the North of Ireland; the cost of this since 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44693/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Nursing Homes Support Scheme does not provide financial support persons in nursing homes in Northern Ireland.

Anyone from the State who enters a nursing home in Northern Ireland would be doing so under a private contract between themselves and the relevant nursing home. Therefore the State has no record of the numbers doing so.

Ambulance Service Provision

367. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will reinstate the provision of ambulance services for respite care residents at Cluain Árann community nursing unit in County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44694/15]

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

Hospital Appointment Status

368. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Offaly will receive an appointment in University Hospital Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44695/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Dental Services

369. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding dental services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44696/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Cross-Border Health Initiatives

370. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the progress in delivering a cross-Border radiotherapy unit for the north west to be based at Altnagelvin area hospital in partnership with the Western Health and Social Care Trust; the timeframe for it to be opera-

tional; if he is committed to this; if he recognises the huge benefit it will yield for the people of the north west; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44706/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I have been advised by the HSE that the development of the Radiotherapy Unit at Altnagelvin is progressing well. Extensive enabling works to clear the site for the unit are complete. Construction work which began in July 2014 is now at an advanced stage. From commencement of construction, the build programme is planned to take approximately two years to complete. It is expected that the building will be fully handed over in the summer of 2016, with commissioning and commencement of services in the autumn of 2016. I have been assured that work is currently progressing according to the planned programme.

A number of medical, physics, radiography and administrative staff have been recruited in advance in order to ensure that key clinical staff are involved in the design of the new unit so that it meets the needs of patients and the service. This advance recruitment will also help to ensure that sufficient staff and appropriate clinical skills are developed in each area in preparation for the Radiotherapy Unit to become operational by the planned start date. Further advertisement of posts and interviews are ongoing. Work is continuing in relation to service design, patient pathways and associated technical communication linkages to plan in detail for the provision of high quality radiotherapy services for all patients in 2016.

The development of this Radiotherapy Unit at Altnagelvin will greatly improve access to radiation oncology services for patients in the North West region with much reduced travel time to the new unit and I continue to support this valuable cross-border initiative.

Hospital Admissions

371. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the overall annual average length of stay for Irish hospitals over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44717/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Average length of stay (ALOS) refers to the average number of days that patients spend in hospital and is often used as an indicator of efficiency.

According to the OECD *Health at a Glance (2015)*, in 2013 the average length of stay in hospitals for all causes across OECD countries was 8.1 days. The 2013 OECD data show that the average length of stay in Irish hospitals was 6 days, less than the OECD average. In addition, the OECD data indicate improvements in efficiency in Irish hospitals between 2010 and 2013, with the average length of stay in Irish hospitals decreasing from 7.4 days in 2010 to 6 days in 2013.

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

Primary Care Centre Provision

372. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of primary care teams in operation from 2011 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44718/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is

a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with the Executive.

Health Services Funding

373. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the spending on health as a percentage of gross domestic product for each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44719/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): According to the preliminary results of the System of Health Accounts issued by the Central Statistics Office, current total health care expenditure as a percentage of GDP in Ireland from 2009 to 2013 (the latest year available) is as follows:

Year	Current total health care expenditure as a % of GDP
2009	10.5%
2010	10.6%
2011	9.9%
2012	10.1%
2013 b	10.2%

b break in series

Medical Workforce Data

374. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of nurses per 1,000 population for each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44720/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The OECD has compiled data that shows Ireland having twelve practising nurses per 1,000 population compared to an OECD average of 9. These OECD figures are based on data provided by the Central Statistics' Office Quarterly National Household Survey. They are based on the concept of "professionally active" nurses, which means nurses who are actually working in the health system. Notwithstanding the OECD data, it is recognised that filling vacant nursing posts is a challenge at present, in particular filling posts in certain specialist areas.

With a recovering economy, the Health Service Executive is now in a position to offer a wide range of career opportunities for nurses and midwives. There are many initiatives currently underway to improve nursing staff levels throughout the country. These include the retention of 2015 degree programme graduates, offering full time permanent contracts, and a national and international recruitment campaign. In addition the conversion of agency usage to permanent staffing in line with agreed processes is being pursued.

The figures requested by the Deputy are set out in the following table.

Year		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Variable	Unit					

Year		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Professionally active nurses	Density per 1,000 population	12.5	12.83	12.15	12.64*	12.35

Source of data:

From 2012: CSO Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) data (labour force survey).

Pre 2012: FÁS/Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) analysis of CSO Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) data (labour force survey).

Notes:

1) Data include those working in both the public and private sectors.

2) *In 2012, the survey sample weights were revised in line with the 2011 Census of Population; the weights were adjusted upwards meaning that employment estimates were higher than those previously used. As a result the figures from 2012 are not directly comparable with previous years' estimates.

Medical Workforce Data

375. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of physicians per 1,000 population for each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44721/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The figures requested by the Deputy are set out with the following table.

Year		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Variable	Unit						
Professionally active physicians	Density per 1,000 population	3.01	3.08	3.24	3.16	3.06	3.04*

Source of data: Medical Council of Ireland.

Notes:

1) In an attempt to estimate for professionally active physicians, figures refer to all persons with addresses in the Republic of Ireland (i.e. excludes physicians working abroad), aged under 70 years old, who have entered and maintained their name as fully registered doctors in the Register of Medical Practitioners, regardless of the area in which they are engaged or whether or not they are practising medicine. Registration is a pre-requisite for practice in Ireland.

2)*Break in time series in 2014: From 2014, data refer to doctors registered with the Medical Council of Ireland who, in the last 12 months, have declared themselves active and who have worked in Ireland either full or part-time.

Professionally active physicians include practising physicians and other physicians for whom their medical education is a prerequisite for the execution of the job.

Hospital Beds Data

376. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of psychiatric beds per 1,000 population for each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44722/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service issue this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. If you have not received a reply within the next 15 working days, please contact me Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Beds Data

377. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of acute care beds per 1,000 population for each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44723/15]

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

Death Certificates

378. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health to provide the number of live births, stillbirths, early neonatal deaths, perinatal deaths and adjusted perinatal deaths in the past three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44724/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Health Services Expenditure

379. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the expenditure on agency staff in the Health Service Executive for the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44725/15]

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

Medical Card Application Numbers

380. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting for a medical card; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44726/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible. The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has

established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information has issued to Oireachtas members. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

Health Services

381. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of serious reportable events within the Health Service Executive over the last five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44727/15]

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

Medical Card Applications

382. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite an application for a medical card by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry as the person has submitted all relevant information; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44737/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible. The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information has issued to Oireachtas members. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

Mental Health Services

383. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if he recognises the obstacles persons with mental health difficulties encounter in making a complaint about mental health services; if he will introduce an independent complaints route for such individuals, as recommended by Mental Health Reform; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44739/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): There are a number of options open to individuals or their families to make a complaint about health services including mental health services. Firstly, it is generally best that complaints are dealt with locally when they occur and all efforts made to resolve them with the patient or person who has the complaint. The Health Act 2004 (Part 9) states that a person has the right to complain about any action of the Health Service Executive (HSE) or a service provider that they believe was not fair or had an adverse effect on them. The HSE has appointed designated Complaints Officers to ensure the effective management of complaints throughout their relevant areas of responsibility and a person can make a complaint in writing, in person or over the telephone. The HSE actively encourages and promotes consumer feedback and links with customers on a

regular basis to ensure that the complaint handling processes are effective, are being communicated and are achieving outcomes that are satisfactory to the consumers. The HSE continues to seek improvements in its complaint handling ability and capacity in order to respond to the needs of patients.

If an individual is unhappy with the way in which his/her complaint was dealt with at the point of care the National Advocacy Unit of the HSE will appoint an independent officer to review the complaint. The Executive also has a National Safety Incident Management Policy which sets out the steps to be taken in an investigation; when independence from the HSE is required, the HSE policy provides for national and international experts to be part of reviews. If an individual is still unhappy with the outcome of this process he/she can request an independent review of the complaint from the Office of the Ombudsman.

In addition if an individual is unhappy with the level of care provided by a regulated health service professional such as a doctor, nurse or other healthcare professional, he/she may make a complaint to that employee's professional regulatory body.

Healthcomplaints.ie is an on-line information service which was developed by the Office of the Ombudsman in cooperation with a number of organisations including my Department and the HSE. This service provides information on how to make a complaint or give feedback about health and social care services in Ireland. This website has been developed for people who use health and social care services in Ireland, as well as for their families, care-givers and advocates.

Work on a new independent national model for patient advocacy has commenced. This advocacy service will be external to the Department and the HSE and will be in line with international best practice. The exact functions of the advocacy services have not been decided at this time. It will, however, be established primarily to support patients and will provide guidance on how to make complaints and navigate through the health service. Naturally, the Department will be seeking the views of those individuals and groups currently involved in the provision of advocacy services such as Mental Health Reform and looks forward to receiving their proposals on advocacy services. It is also planned to simplify the process of making complaints for patients and will look to extend the powers of the Ombudsman in relation to complaints in this regard.

I should also point out that earlier this year, an Expert Group which I appointed to review the Mental Health Act 2001 published its report. One of the issues looked at by the Group was the complaints procedures that currently exist within the service and the suggestion of providing for a separate Mental Health Ombudsman. It was felt by the Group that complaints about mental health services already have access to a number of options including the existing Office of the Ombudsman and the fact that a separate complaints system for mental health patients could be seen as discriminatory, it would be premature to recommend a separate Mental Health Ombudsman at this juncture. The Group did however recommend that this issue should be re-examined as part of the suggested five to ten year review of any new Act.

Work on a General Scheme of a Bill to amend the Mental Health Act 2001 based on the recommendations of the Expert Group review has commenced. During the course of this work, there will be further engagement and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and relevant groups, including Mental Health Reform and their observations and comments on all aspects of the revised legislation will be taken into consideration.

Health and Social Care Professionals Registration Boards

384. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the status of his proposals to regulate psychotherapists and counsellors. [44755/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Psychotherapists and counsellors are not currently regulated under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005. However, the Act provides that the Minister for Health may, by regulation, designate a health and social care profession not already designated if he or she considers that it is appropriate and in the public interest to do so and if specified criteria have been met.

In accordance with the Act, the Health and Social Care Professionals Council has been consulted on the question of regulating counsellors and psychotherapists. Its detailed report on the matter is being examined carefully in my Department with a view to deciding the next steps in the coming months. These steps will, I envisage, include a wider round of consultation involving the various professional bodies and other interested parties.

Accident and Emergency Department Waiting Times

385. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the protocols relating to waiting times that are in place for paediatric patients presenting for triage in accident and emergency departments. [44759/15]

386. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the protocols relating to waiting times that are in place for paediatric patients admitted for treatment in accident and emergency departments. [44760/15]

387. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the maximum advised waiting time for paediatric patients before being triaged upon referral and presentation to accident and emergency departments. [44761/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 385 to 387, inclusive, together.

The HSE Service Plan includes two performance measures for Emergency Care and Patient Experience Time in the Emergency Department (ED) for all patients as follows: % of all attendees at ED who are discharged or admitted within 6 hours of registration (Target 95%). % of all attendees at ED who are discharged or admitted within 9 hours of registration (Target 100%). Total Emergency Department Time is measured from arrival to ED departure time. These targets are the same for all hospital emergency departments, and for adult and paediatric patients. Performance is monitored and reported on in the published HSE monthly Performance Reports on a Hospital Group and individual hospital level.

In relation to the specific query raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Autism Support Services

388. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health his views on the cuts to vital services for children diagnosed with autism in counties Galway and Roscommon where 2.5 staff currently serve two counties and therefore children cannot access vital services such as speech and language therapy and occupational therapy, his proposals regarding same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44786/15]

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 HSE for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Autism Support Services

389. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if early intervention teams are discharging children as young as three years of age to the autism spectrum disorder team, even though early intervention is meant to be up until the child is six years of age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44787/15]

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 HSE for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Appointments Status

390. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite a consultant appointment for a person (details supplied). [44789/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Staff

391. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health his views that current rates of payment and premiums for student nurses for intellectual disability, as per the Haddington Road agreement, are a contributing factor to the difficulties faced by the health services in retaining and recruiting graduates; his plans to revise these rates; the efforts made to accommodate the schedules of students who hold positions in part-time employment outside the parameters of their studies and placements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44838/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Pursuant to a "Chairman's Note" to the Lansdowne Road Agreement, the Department of Health and the HSE are to consider the issues of pay for student nurses during the fourth year 36 week placement with the nursing unions. This matter is the subject of direct engagement between my Department, the HSE and the nurs-

ing unions at present.

Student nurses participate in the 4th year rostered clinical placement as part of their degree programme and are paid in accordance with the trainee rates specified in the National Minimum Wage Acts for the duration of the placement. At present they are paid €6.49 per hour for the first 12 weeks of the placement, €6.92 for the second 12 weeks and €7.79 for the third 12 weeks. This equates to approximately 53% of the 1st point of the staff nurse scale. Mental health student nurses are paid 2.3% more, reflecting existing relativities between general and psychiatric staff nurse pay scales. When undertaking the placement, the students are not qualified nurses and require supervision. This is reflected in the 2:1 replacement ratio for student nurses replacing staff nurses.

The current rates of pay will be increased from the 1 January 2016, pro rata to the increase in the minimum wage for trainees announced in Budget 2016 and provided for in the National Minimum Wage Order 2015 (S.I. No. 442 of 2015).

Health Services Provision

392. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his views on correspondence regarding essential equipment for a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44839/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

Mental Health Services Provision

393. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his views on correspondence regarding the case of a person (details supplied) with the later stages of dementia and Alzheimer's; the current procedures that are in operation for this person and others with a similar condition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44842/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service issue this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. If you have not received a reply within the next 15 working days, please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Disability Services Provision

394. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his views on correspondence regarding the available services for adults with an intellectual disability; why a person (details supplied) who will become an adult in 2016 will no longer be entitled to the current disability services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44843/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Disability Manager for this area is Ms Gillian Farrelly who can be contacted at the HSE offices, Fujitsu House, Unit 100, 4th Floor, Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin, tele-

phone 01-8953727.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

Nursing Home Services

395. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Health to justify the exorbitant costs paid to private nursing homes and the measures that are put in place to prevent private nursing homes from adding extra costs that are driving the families of those in care into poverty (details supplied). [44846/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The legislation underpinning the Nursing Homes Support Scheme requires each private nursing home to negotiate and agree a price for long-term residential care services with the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) should they wish to be an approved nursing home for the purposes of the Scheme. The NTPF is independent in the performance of this function and, in carrying it out, must ensure value for money for both the individual and the State. It negotiates with each nursing home individually and may examine the records and accounts of nursing homes as part of the process. This is to ensure that the State obtains the best value for each individual in a nursing home and to comply with competition law.

In negotiating with nursing homes, the NTPF has regard to:

- costs reasonably and prudently incurred by the nursing home and evidence of value for money;
- price(s) previously charged;
- local market price; and
- budgetary constraints and the obligation on the State to use available resources in the most beneficial, effective and efficient manner to improve, promote and protect the health and welfare of the public.

The Scheme covers the cost of the standard components of residential care, which are:

- nursing and personal care appropriate to the level of care needs of the person;
- bed and board;
- basic aids and appliances necessary to assist a person with the activities of daily living; and
- laundry service.

It is not permissible for any facility to levy additional charges in respect of the above. Part 8 of the Health Act 2007 (Care and Welfare of Residents in Designated Centres for Older People) Regulations 2009 stipulates that the registered provider of the nursing home must agree a contract with each resident within one month of their admission. This contract must include details of the services to be provided to that resident and the fees to be charged. Residents should not be charged fees which are not set out in the contract. The HSE is not a party to such contracts which are concluded between each resident and their nursing home.

A person's eligibility for other schemes, such as the Medical Card Scheme or the Drugs Payment Scheme, is unaffected by participation in the Nursing Homes Support Scheme or residence in a nursing home. Incontinence wear, where required, is provided free of charge by the HSE to all Nursing Homes Support Scheme residents that possess a Medical Card.

General Practitioner Services Provision

396. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of general practitioners in receipt of the rural practice allowance and the cost of this, by county, for each of the years 2010 to date in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44851/15]

397. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of general practitioners who have had their rural practice allowance withdrawn, by county, for each of the years 2010 to date, in tabular form; why a decision was made to withdraw this payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44852/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 396 and 397 together.

As these are service matters, they have been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Youth Services Funding

398. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 138 of 7 October 2015, why the Health Service Executive has decided to wind down the oasis project at Mounttown Community Facility; why this long-standing community project was not deemed appropriate to deal with drug and alcohol addiction for local young persons; how extensive was the consultation in making this decision, if oasis project workers or service users were involved in this process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44854/15]

399. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 138 of 7 October 2015, if community facility board members were involved in making the decision to wind down the oasis project at Mounttown Community Facility; the specific differences between the new project and the oasis project; the model of service provision the new project is based upon; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44855/15]

400. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 138 of 7 October 2015, who the new provider agency is for the new project replacing the oasis project; if, during the tendering process to find a provider agency, there was advertising in local, national and European journals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44856/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 398 to 400, inclusive, 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 con-

tact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Open Disclosures Policy

401. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to improve the disclosure of hospital and HSE reporting on tragic incidents in the maternity services, to make them fully open to public scrutiny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44870/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As I have previously indicated the safety of service users is of paramount importance and steps need to be taken to anticipate and avoid things going wrong and to reduce the impact if they do. All employees including medical staff are required to disclose and report incidents in line with the HSE's Safety Incident Management Policy. Creating a culture of open disclosure and learning from the things that go wrong is the bedrock of making systems safer. Open Disclosure is defined as 'an open consistent approach to communicating with patients and their families when things go wrong in healthcare. This includes expressing regret for what has happened, keeping the patient informed, providing feedback on investigations and the steps taken to prevent a recurrence of the adverse event'.

I recently announced that the Government has given its approval to the drafting of provisions to support open disclosure of patient safety incidents. This will be included in the Department of Justice and Equality's draft Bill on Periodic Payment Orders which is well advanced. The legislation is part of a broader package of reforms aimed at improving the experience of those who are affected by adverse events.

This legislation builds on the joint development by the HSE and State Claims Agency of the National Policy on Open Disclosure (2013). The HSE is progressing the implementation of the Policy across all health and social care services. We all know that when error or harm is experienced by a patient, the trust and confidence of that patient and their family are compromised. That is why honest, open disclosure and communication, which demonstrate empathy and sensitivity, are so essential. The intent of this legislation is to provide certain legal protections for healthcare staff for open disclosure, which is undertaken in good faith and in compliance with national standards. This will give further support to those staff in their communications with patients and family members if an adverse event occurs. The Ethical Code of Practice set out by the Medical Council also makes clear the responsibilities of doctors in relation to open disclosure.

Open disclosure is now HSE policy and therefore any unjustified breach of the policy (as with any HSE policy) will be managed in line with the HSE disciplinary procedures. Where potential deviations have been identified the Healthcare records must be reviewed to ascertain any documentation in relation to communication with the patient about the adverse event and to establish if any rationale for non-disclosure has been documented. Where there is no evidence that open disclosure has occurred the incident must be reviewed with the staff involved in the event. The patient must be informed of the event and the impact of the event explained and acknowledged. The patient should also be informed of the initial failure to disclose and an appropriate acknowledgement, explanation and apology provided.

From a patient safety perspective the key focus of open disclosure is on learning so that systems and processes can be improved in order to reduce potential future harms to patients. If a person is not satisfied that a health professional or administrator has fulfilled their obligations regarding open disclosure then that person has recourse to the HSE's complaints procedures. It is also open to a person to raise a complaint with the appropriate professional regulatory body or with the Ombudsman.

Health Services Staff

402. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if a nurse will be appointed to a school (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44871/15]

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 HSE for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Disability Services Provision

403. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his views on correspondence (details supplied) concerning the available services for adults with an intellectual disability, why a current service provider who will become an adult in 2016 will no longer be entitled to these services in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44908/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

General Practitioner Contracts

404. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Roscommon will be permanently placed on a general practitioner list why this has not been done to date; if it is acceptable that this patient is passed from general practitioner to general practitioner on a frequent basis how this provides for continuity of care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44911/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service issue, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with the Executive.

Domiciliary Care Allowance

405. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding the parents of children in receipt of the domiciliary care allowance; his plans to address the concerns raised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44916/15]

486. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health if he will introduce medical cards for all children in receipt of a domiciliary care allowance (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45452/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to

take Questions Nos. 405 and 486 together.

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 Appointments Delays

406. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the lengthy delay in a person (details supplied) in Dublin 22 receiving an appointment at Our Lady's Children's Hospital in Crumlin for emergency surgery; and when a date for the surgery will be provided. [44918/15]

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 be-

half, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the Health Service Executive, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Disability Services Funding

407. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if clients of St. Patrick's on the Kells Road in County Kilkenny whose financial affairs are being managed by the company will be allowed to change this arrangement by having the financial accounts managed by the client and family members concerned only; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44924/15]

409. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive will continue all of the services at St. Patrick's on the Kells Road in County Kilkenny; if the executive and St. Patrick's have met those concerned to explain what is happening relative to St. Patrick's; if a grant system will be put in place for parents who require respite hours to allow the parents to access the services privately; if Suicide or Survive, SOS, or the executive will provide a long-term plan for respite; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44926/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 407 and 409 together.

As the Deputy's questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for the questions to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

Irish Medical Organisation

408. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health the process available through his Department or the Health Service Executive for individuals who are dissatisfied with the outcome of a hearing conducted by the Irish Medical Organisation; if there is an independent review of appeals process available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44925/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Irish Medical Organisation (IMO) is a registered trade union. Hearings conducted by the IMO are not within the remit of the Minister for Health.

Question No. 409 answered with Question No. 407.

Home Help Service

410. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health the changes being made to home help hours in the Callan area of County Kilkenny; if this pilot project has been agreed with all those concerned including those who work for the Health Services Executive and the union; if the change in the work practice will result in more hours being available to those in need; and if an assessment will be undertaken with the staff to determine if the pilot project is acceptable. [44927/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Appointments Status

411. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if an early appointment for assessment will be arranged at Saint James's Hospital in Dublin for a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny, given that this case is deemed urgent, and the reason for the delay. [44928/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

School Transport Provision

412. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if funding for transport will be provided in 2016 for students attending Our Lady of Good Counsel special needs school in Ballincollig in County Cork (details supplied) who will be moving on to the next stage of their education; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44938/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

Health Insurance Payments

413. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health with regard to the €100 million payment to the Health Service Executive from Voluntary Health Insurance announced on 8 December 2015, if there is any write-off of claims if the executive fails to provide full claims information within a determined timeframe and if not, the way in which health insurance makes rigorous claims assessments on whether claims are valid or not as recommended by the McLoughlin report on claims cost. [44940/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The revised payment arrangement between the HSE and VHI relates to the statutory charge for patients who receive private services in a public hospital. It also reflects recommendations made in the 2013/2014 McLoughlin review of measures to reduce costs in the private health insurance market. As part of that review Mr. McLoughlin facilitated the establishment of a working group on claims processing comprising HSE and the Insurance Ireland Health Insurance Council, representing all health insurers. The agreement announced last week will facilitate timely claim processing for the benefit of HSE and insurers alike.

The following information was provided under Standing Order 40A

The Heads of Terms Agreement recently signed by the HSE and VHI commits both parties to work towards finalising, in January, terms under a memorandum of understanding on claiming and payment of private inpatient charges levied under section 55 of the Health Act 1970.

The Heads of Terms do not require the HSE to write off historic claims and the associated payments to the HSE and voluntary hospitals. The question of write-offs is subject to public financial procedures, relevant health legislation and agreed arrangements with private health insurers. As it stands, such write-offs do on occasion take place where errors arise, information is incomplete or there is little prospect of receiving payment, either directly from a former patient or from an insurer. It is envisaged that agreement between the parties, if concluded early next year, will bring much greater certainty and timeliness to the claims/payment process but with agreed periods for hospitals to lodge claims. These agreed periods will be reduced but still reasonable in providing hospitals with the opportunity to gather information and submit it to the VHI.

While the terms are obviously not final until agreed between the parties, the arrangement contemplated would see the insurer make an initial payment on account shortly after notification of the patient's discharge, followed by a final balancing payment upon receipt, within a defined period, of the fully collated claim documentation. The period within which the HSE can receive payment for services will be shorter than that provided under the Statute of Limitations generally, and there is also a new deadline for submission of preliminary claims data after which the ability of the HSE to collect is restricted.

As requested by my Department, prior to entering into the memorandum of understanding, the HSE will be satisfying itself as to the detailed terms of the agreement having regard to the commercial value of the HSE and HSE's statutory obligations.

Since the negotiations are not complete it is not possible to be definitive with regards to all of these matters at this stage, but I trust that the above information is of assistance.

Hospital Appointments Administration

414. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure that a person (details supplied) who is unable to travel to Cork from Tralee in County Kerry to have cataracts removed will be treated in County Kerry. [44941/15]

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

Drug Treatment Programmes Funding

415. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health why the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Drug and Alcohol Task Force removed its funding from the Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Outreach Project service and allocated its funding to the Community Addiction Team, why one service was seen as more appropriate than the other for the tender, the process regarding how this decision was made, the persons who were consulted, if he envisages possible damage to the Dún Laoghaire area addiction service for service users as a consequence of this decision and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44942/15]

416. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health the obligations the successful tender applicants must meet in respect of funding from the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Drug and Alcohol Task Force for the provision of drug and alcohol addiction services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44943/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 415 and 416 together.

As these are service matters, they have been referred to the Health Service Executive, the funding agency of the project, 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.

Hospital Appointments Status

417. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) in County Donegal is on the waiting list in Letterkenny General Hospital, the date the procedure will be carried out; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44963/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the Health Service Executive, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Treatment Abroad Scheme

418. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health if efforts are being made to use facilities at hospitals in Northern Ireland in an effort to reduce the continuously rising waiting lists in many hospitals in the Republic and the number of persons from the Republic who have been transferred to hospitals in Northern Ireland and who have had operations carried out there since the beginning of 2015. [44964/15]

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

Hospital Waiting Lists

419. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the occupational therapy first-time assessment waiting list who are waiting up to four, four plus to 12 and 12 plus months; and the number in each category who are up to four, four plus to 17, 17 plus to 64 and 64 plus years of age, by local health area, in tabular form. [44975/15]

420. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the occupational therapy treatment waiting list who are waiting up to four months, four plus to 12 and 12 plus months; and the number in each category who are up to four, four plus to 17, 17 plus to 64 and 64 plus years of age, by local health area, in tabular form. [44976/15]

421. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the physiotherapy waiting list who are waiting up to one week, one plus to four, four plus to eight, eight plus to 12, 12 plus to 26, 26 plus to 52 and 52 plus weeks, by local health area, in tabular form. [44977/15]

424. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the speech and language therapy assessment waiting list who are waiting up to four, four plus to 12 and 12 plus months, by local health area, in tabular form. [45020/15]

425. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the speech and language therapy treatment waiting list who are waiting up to four, four plus to 12 and 12 plus months, by local health area, in tabular form. [45021/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 419 to 421, inclusive, 424 and 425 together.

As these are service matters, they have been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Health Services

422. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Health if he will arrange for the Health Service Executive to respond to a query submitted to his Department on 13 August 2015 (details supplied). [44984/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as

possible.

The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information has issued to Oireachtas members.

If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

Drugs Payment Scheme

423. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons who reach the annual limit €1,728 of the drugs payment scheme, the number of persons who met the previous limits of €1,584 in 2012, and €1,440 in 2011; the average annual spend per household on the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45007/15]

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 you.

If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Questions Nos. 424 and 425 answered with Question No. 419.

Departmental Properties

426. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the ground rents he or agencies under the remit of his Department pay by named property, by name of landlord and by amount payable, in 2015 and in 2016 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45057/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): No ground rent is paid by the Department of Health. The Department is housed in Hawkins House which forms part of the estate portfolio for the Office of Public Works. Details of such expenditure for bodies under the aegis of the Department are operational matters for the bodies concerned and the Deputy should contact the relevant Director/CEO/Registrar directly.

I have requested the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy in this matter. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Rare Diseases

427. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the status of the all-Ireland network of rare disease registry, and if Bannayan Riley Ruvalcaba syndrome is included in this registry. [45069/15]

429. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the shared services in operation on an all-Ireland basis for the diagnosis, management and care of children, and persons with a diagnosis of Bannayan Riley Ruvalcaba syndrome. [45071/15]

431. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if any collaboration or discussion has been undertaken regarding the diagnosis and management of rare diseases, including Bannayan Riley Ruvalcaba syndrome, with services and experts in the North of Ireland, Britain or within any other European Union member states; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45073/15]

438. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the progress on the recommendations contained within the national plan for rare diseases. [45080/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 427, 429, 431 and 438 together.

Bannayan Riley Ruvalcaba Syndrome (BRRS) is a rare genetic condition that can affect many parts of the body in childhood. As there are approximately 8,000 rare diseases, the National Plan for Rare Diseases was launched in 2014 by the then Minister for Health and this sets out the general approach. The National Rare Disease Plan recommended that an Oversight Implementation Group of relevant stakeholders led by the HSE and including patients' groups, be established to oversee and monitor implementation of the plan's recommendations. This group was established by my Department earlier this year and it has met on a number of occasions. One of the principal recommendations in the Plan was the establishment of a National Clinical Programme for Rare Diseases. This programme will be responsible for, among others: mapping, developing and implementing care pathways for rare diseases; facilitating timely access to centres of expertise - nationally and internationally; developing treatment guidelines for many rare disorders; and developing care pathways with European Reference Centres for those ultra-rare disorders where there may not be sufficient expertise in Ireland.

In line with this recommendation, a National Clinical Programme for Rare Diseases was established last year under the National Clinical Strategy and Programmes Division of the HSE. The programme is a joint initiative between the HSE and the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland. This clinical programme will ultimately be a channel for advancing and implementing other recommendations in the plan, such as those on National Centres of Expertise for rare diseases; and in this vein, the programme has designed a framework for the designation of Irish Centres of Expertise in line with the recommendations stipulated in the national plan. This framework will touch on a number of recommendations in the national plan, including those that refer to fortifying research functions for rare diseases.

The programme and my Department will be encouraging designated centres of expertise to participate in European Reference Networks (ERNs) for Rare Diseases in line with our national plan. ERNs are European networks connecting health care providers and centres of expertise so that international expertise on specific rare diseases - such as Bannayan Riley Ruvalcaba Syndrome - may be pooled together for the benefit of patients. Any centres applying for membership of an ERN must have strategies in place to ensure that care is patient-centred; that patients' rights and preferences are respected; and must show a research component to their work. Hence, the recommendations in our national plan that relate to empowering and protecting patients and carers, and research on rare diseases will be fulfilled in part through this process. In 2014, I announced €850,000 for investment into rare disease research. Five charities will provide matching funding bringing the total investment to €1.9 million. They will share €850,000 in State funding to take part in international research into rare medical conditions.

The establishment of a National Rare Disease Office (NRDO) featured prominently in the

recommendations of the National Rare Disease plan. The national office has now been funded and established by the HSE and its work will be led by a Consultant Geneticist who will be supported by a Genetics Counsellor and an Administrative Officer. It will, among other functions, provide up-to-date information regarding new treatment and management options, including clinical trials. In addition, the post of Information Scientist for the office is being funded jointly by the HSE and the EU Commission with a number of recommendations in mind. These refer to rare disease registries and the utility of data currently captured in health information systems. The NRDO has already performed a preliminary situation analysis of the existing rare disease registries and is in the process of assigning these known registries on our national Orphanet site, which is the international rare disease reference and information portal funded by the EU. The EU Commission has started the development of a European Platform on Rare Diseases Registration. Its principal goal is to enable sharing and use of rare diseases' patient data across Europe, among the multitude of existing patient registries, within and across rare diseases. Thus the registration of all registries in Ireland - including any proposed registry on Bannayan Riley Ruvalcaba Syndrome - will be encompassed by the work of the EU Commission with the participation of EU member states, including Ireland.

The national plan for rare diseases recommended that the Health Identifiers Bill and the Health & Patient Safety Bill be published. The former was published in 2013 and enacted in 2014. It is now being implemented by the HSE. A revised and much expanded General Scheme of a Health Information and Patient Safety Bill was approved by the government in November of this year and published on the Department's website. Two recommendations in the national plan refer to training in rare diseases for healthcare professionals. My Department is contacting formally the various healthcare representative and professional bodies about implementing these recommendations. Finally, rare diseases have already been tabled on the agenda for North-South meetings. Therefore, future work to deepen cooperation between both jurisdictions on rare diseases is anticipated.

Rare Diseases

428. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the expertise that is currently available within the Health Services Executive regarding diagnosis and subsequent management and care of children and persons with a diagnosis of Bannayan Riley Ruvalcaba syndrome. [45070/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Question No. 429 answered with Question No. 427.

Rare Diseases

430. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the service deficits that have been identified for persons with rare diseases including Bannayan Riley Ruvalcaba syndrome and whether these services can be accessed under the treatment abroad scheme within the North of Ireland, in Britain or within the European Union. [45072/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for di-

rect reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Question No. 431 answered with Question No. 427.

Rare Diseases

432. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of children who have a diagnosis of Bannayan Riley Ruvalcaba syndrome, the supports and services available to them and their families; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45074/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Rare Diseases

433. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the screening programmes and schedules in place for children with a diagnosis of Bannayan Riley Ruvalcaba syndrome, given that these children may, in some cases, have an increased risk of developing certain types of cancer. [45075/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Medical Card Eligibility

434. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if a parent or guardians of a child with a diagnosis of Bannayan Riley Ruvalcaba syndrome may apply for a discretionary medical card solely in respect of the child they are caring for, as opposed to a household application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45076/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy will be aware, in accordance with the provisions of the Health Act 1970 (as amended), medical cards are provided to persons who are, in the opinion of the HSE, unable without undue hardship to arrange GP services for themselves and their dependants. The legislation obliges the HSE, when making a decision on a person's eligibility, to take account of the person's financial situation. In the case of a child, the parents' income and reasonable expenditure is assessed.

Medical card applications are considered on the basis of an assessment of the applicant's means by reference to the HSE national assessment guidelines and national income guidelines. Where the applicant's income is within the income guidelines, a medical card or GP visit card will be awarded.

Where an applicant's means are above the qualifying financial thresholds, the HSE routinely examines for indications of medical or social circumstances which might result in undue financial hardship in arranging medical services and, exercising discretion, may grant eligibility for

a medical card on this basis.

It is important to note that discretion is not a stand-alone exercise. Exercising discretion is an integral part of the assessment process for a medical card and there is no distinct application form.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Coverage

435. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if he will include Bannayan Riley Ruvalcaba syndrome under the long-term illness scheme, given that as it is a rare condition with multiple symptoms and its management can require many medications at a significant cost. [45077/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The LTI Scheme was established under Section 59(3) of the Health Act, 1970 (as amended). Regulations were made in 1971, 1973 and 1975 specifying the conditions covered by the LTI Scheme. The conditions covered by the LTI Scheme are as follows: Acute Leukaemia; Mental handicap; Cerebral Palsy; Mental Illness (in a person under 16); Cystic Fibrosis; Multiple Sclerosis; Diabetes Insipidus; Muscular Dystrophies; Diabetes Mellitus; Parkinsonism; Epilepsy; Phenylketonuria; Haemophilia; Spina Bifida; Hydrocephalus; and conditions arising from the use of Thalidomide. There are no plans to extend the list of conditions covered by the LTI Scheme.

Rare Diseases

436. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health how information on different genetic rare disorders is made available to affected persons and their families; the supports in place for these persons and their families following a diagnosis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45078/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Rare Diseases Strategy Publication

437. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the functions of the National Office for Rare Diseases, its staffing levels, if it can be accessed by the public, if he intends to implement a strategy or campaign of public awareness regarding these services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45079/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Question No. 438 answered with Question No. 427.

HSE Investigations

439. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health the status of the investigation into the care and death of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45134/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Health Services Provision

440. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Health if the Health Service Executive plans to develop a methadone dispensing centre at a location (details supplied) in County Kildare, the support services which will be put in place for proposed users of the centre, the consultation there has been with the local community or with social care providers in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45135/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin): As this is a service matter, it has 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.

Disability Support Services Provision

441. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health when a replacement scheme for the mobility allowance scheme and the motorised transport grant scheme will be finalised, why these schemes have yet to be replaced, given that both were discontinued over two years ago, on the premise of a new scheme being announced shortly thereafter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45141/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Government decided that the detailed preparatory work required for a new Transport Support Scheme and associated statutory provisions should be progressed by the Minister for Health. The Department is seeking a solution which would best meet the aim of supporting people with severe disabilities who require additional income to contribute towards the cost of their mobility needs, while remaining within the available budget and satisfying all legal and equality concerns.

Work is ongoing on the policy proposals to be brought to Government for the drafting of primary legislation for a new scheme. The proposals seek to ensure that:

- There is a firm statutory basis to the Scheme's operation;
- There is transparency and equity in the eligibility criteria attaching to the Scheme;
- Resources are targeted at those with the greatest needs; and
- The Scheme is capable of being costed and it is affordable on its introduction and on an ongoing basis.

Heads of Bill have now been developed in draft form and are currently subject to detailed le-

gal examination. The approval of a General Scheme and Heads of Bill by the Government will be followed by publication and pre-legislative scrutiny by the Oireachtas Health and Children Committee. The Health (Transport Support) Bill is included in the Government Legislation Programme.

Respite Care Services

442. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will secure urgent respite care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45143/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Medical Card Applications

443. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if he will review an application for a medical card by a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45147/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information has issued to Oireachtas members.

If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Services

444. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health when full rheumatology services will be put in place at Mayo General Hospital as was promised in December 2011 through the quality and continuing care directorate. [45149/15]

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

Medicinal Products Availability

445. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health if funding will be provided to enable the cystic fibrosis drug Orkambi to be provided under the medical card scheme and the

drugs payment scheme, given its life-changing impact on sufferers; if he will enter discussions with the manufacturer, so that this drug is available early in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45151/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicinal products under the community drug schemes in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. Prior to reimbursing any medicine, the HSE considers a range of statutory criteria, including clinical need, cost-effectiveness and the resources available to the HSE.

The decisions on which medicines are reimbursed by the taxpayer are made on objective, scientific and economic grounds by the HSE on the advice of the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE). They are not political or ministerial decisions. The NCPE conducts the health technology assessment of pharmaceutical products for the HSE, and can make recommendations on reimbursement to assist the HSE in its decision-making process.

Vertex Pharmaceuticals, the manufacturer of Orkambi™, submitted a Rapid Review application for the drug to the NCPE on 26 November 2015. The company is expected to submit a full pricing and reimbursement application to the HSE/Primary Care Reimbursement Service in the immediate future.

Once this application is received, it will be considered by the HSE in line with criteria set out in the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013 and using the processes outlined in national pricing framework agreements.

Treatment Abroad Scheme

446. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Health why the flight cost for only one parent and not for two is covered under the treatment abroad scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45157/15]

447. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Health why transportation fees other than airfare, for example, trains and taxis required to get to and from King's College Hospital in London in England are not included in the reimbursement policy under the treatment abroad scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45158/15]

448. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Health if the lengthy process of reimbursement for flights by the treatment abroad scheme will be substituted with a policy that would allow the Health Service Executive to make the initial payment for qualified flights; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45159/15]

449. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Health why the referring consultant here cannot provide proof of attendance at King's College Hospital in London in England for an expedited reimbursement system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45160/15]

450. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure that reimbursement for families under the treatment abroad scheme will be completed in a timely manner, that is, not up to nine months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45161/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 446 to 450, inclusive, together.

The HSE operates the Treatment Abroad Scheme (TAS) for persons entitled to treatment in another EU/EEA member state or Switzerland under Regulation (EC) No. 883/2004, as per the procedures set out in Regulation (EC) No. 987/2009, and in accordance with Department of Health Guidelines. Patients have the ability to apply to the HSE TAS seeking access to public healthcare outside the state through model form E112. The application requires the patient's Irish based public referring hospital consultant, following clinical assessment, to certify, among other things, that the treatment is medically necessary and will meet the patient's needs. The treatment must not be available within the State or not available within a time normally necessary for obtaining it. It is not considered appropriate that a referring consultant here be required to provide proof that a patient attended an appointment in a hospital abroad under this Scheme.

The Scheme as provided for in the EU Regulations and Department of Health Guidelines, does not include a provision for travel and subsistence expenses for patients or their relatives travelling abroad to avail of approved treatments as the primary function of the TAS is to fund treatments for public patients. In keeping with the functions of any state healthcare agency, the Regulation only requires the state agency to fund the treatment. However the HSE, subject to available funding, may provide assistance towards reasonable economic air or sea travel fares for patients, and in the case of a child or where medically necessary one accompanying adult is also funded. This is in recognition of the additional cost that a patient availing of a treatment which is not available in a tertiary service in Ireland may experience in using the Scheme.

The TAS Travel Policy was implemented in November 2009 to standardise and provide equity to the provision of entitlements relating to travel expenses. Expenses other than air/sea fares are not admissible. However, patients who experience difficulty funding any additional costs may apply to the Department of Social Protection for assistance as an exceptional needs payment. It should be noted that, in general, patients do not incur subsistence costs when undergoing treatment abroad as such costs are included in the cost of the care that the patient is receiving.

The HSE fully accepts there have been delays in processing the reimbursement claims for patients during certain periods over the past 2 years, owing to staffing issues in the TAS office including a long-term staff absence due to illness. The TAS office has offered apologies to patients affected by such delays. During those periods, priority has been given to processing applications over travel claims so as to facilitate approved applicants to receive their treatment under the Scheme. The TAS office genuinely regrets this situation and acknowledges the difficulties this can cause for individual patients and/or their families. Arrangement made by the TAS office have permitted the backlog of claims up to 24 November to be cleared and the aim is to ensure that all claims are processed before Christmas.

Medical Card Data

451. **Deputy Regina Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons 80 years of age and over who are in receipt of a full medical card; the economic cost of a medical card (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45167/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Officials in my Department have sought clarification from the Deputy's office concerning the question and the details supplied as they do not appear to relate, but have not had a response.

Should the Deputy wish to resubmit a question at a later date, I will be happy to provide a response.

Hospice Services

452. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Health the status of St. Brigid's Hospice, also known as the Drogheda Memorial Hospital, on the Curragh in County Kildare including the extent of the works being undertaken, the timescale for completion of the works and the reopening of the hospice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45177/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Appointments Administration

453. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare can obtain an early appointment at the Mater Hospital in Dublin 7, given that the person is currently listed for an appointment at Mullingar Regional Hospital in County Westmeath on 1 April 2016 and the person's parents are concerned for the person's health; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45179/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Ambulance Service Response Times

454. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health why an emergency call for an ambulance made from a location (details supplied) in County Wicklow took 65 minutes to reach the location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45180/15]

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

Ambulance Service Data

455. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health the details of the ambulance service for County Wicklow and County Carlow, by number, by shift, by location; if the service has been reduced since 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45181/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): In relation to the specific queries raised by

the Deputy, as these are service matters, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Services

456. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the status of the endoscopy unit at Naas General Hospital in County Kildare; if the preparation of tender documents has been concluded; when the project will go to tender; when the tendering process will be concluded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45187/15]

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

Hospital Services

457. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when a medical procedure will be facilitated for a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45196/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures*, January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the Health Service Executive, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Staff Recruitment

458. **Deputy Regina Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the cost of hiring an advanced nurse practitioner, a consultant, a physiotherapist, an occupational therapist, a staff nurse and an additional dentist, each at entry level; if he will improve the rheumatology service within public hospitals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45209/15]

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

Questions - Written Answers
Autism Support Services

459. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health when will suitable and appropriate post school placements for persons with autism be provided for the 23 school leavers from Dublin's northside who graduated and left school in June 2015, if the school leavers and their families will have appropriate choice and input into the location and quality of the services, if he will take immediate action to ensure post school places are provided as a matter of urgency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45212/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, she can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

*1 o'clock***Health Services Funding**

460. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health if funding will be made available for in vitro fertilisation treatments (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45225/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): While in vitro fertilisation (IVF) treatment is not provided by the Irish public health service, there is some support available in that patients who access IVF treatment privately may claim tax relief on the costs involved under the tax relief for medical expenses scheme. In addition, a defined list of fertility medicines needed for fertility treatment is covered under the High Tech Scheme administered by the Health Service Executive (HSE). Medicines covered by the High Tech Scheme must be prescribed by a consultant/specialist and approved by the HSE 'High Tech Liaison Officers'. The cost of the medicines is then covered, as appropriate, under the Medical Card or Drugs Payment Scheme.

Health Screening Programmes

461. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health his plans to reintroduce Scoliosis screening into secondary schools. [45230/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): In 2011, the UK National Screening Committee commissioned a systematic assessment of the evidence base for scoliosis screening based on international evidence. The review concluded that screening for scoliosis was not beneficial.

There have been no significant additions to the evidence base since that assessment. The Irish epidemiology of scoliosis is not known to differ from that in other countries therefore this finding is also relevant for the Irish population.

In conclusion, there is no evidence to support the reintroduction of scoliosis screening in secondary schools in Ireland.

Respite Care Services Availability

462. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health if there is no age discrimination within the respite care services provided by the Health Service Executive for services for

stroke victims who are medically stable and who are aged over 65 years in County Louth; if he and the executive will reassure stroke victims that no age discrimination applies in Sruthan House Respite Centre in Dundalk in County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45239/15]

463. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health if there is no age discrimination within the respite care services provided by the Health Service Executive for services for stroke victims who are medically stable, who are not in a nursing home, who do not need nursing home type care and who are aged over 65 years, in County Louth; if he and the executive will reassure stroke victims that no such age discrimination applies in Sruthan House Respite Centre in Dundalk in County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45240/15]

465. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure that access to rehabilitation for stroke survivors who are medically stable will be provided on medical assessment and will not be refused on age grounds if survivors otherwise qualify; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45250/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 462, 463 and 465 together.

As the Deputy's questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for the questions to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

Hospital Waiting Lists

464. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Health if he will examine the case of a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary who has been waiting for over a year for treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45241/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

Question No. 465 answered with Question No. 462.

Health Services Provision

466. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health his views on a matter regarding Alzheimer's disease (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45262/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The provision of additional services for people with dementia is a service matter and has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

With regard to the automatic issuing of medical cards, it is clear that there are people with medical needs and it is important that they should be able to access necessary assistance in a

straight forward manner. Greater discretion is being exercised by the HSE because the number of discretionary medical cards in circulation has increased from about 52,000 in mid-2014 to nearly 96,000 at the beginning of November this year. This followed the measures announced by Minister Varadkar and I last year, when the “Keane” Report of the Expert Panel on Medical Need for Medical Card Eligibility was published. The Deputy may be aware that a key recommendation of that report was that a person’s means should remain the main qualifier for a medical card. It also recommended that it is neither feasible nor desirable to list conditions in priority order for medical card eligibility.

On foot of the Keane Report, the HSE established a Clinical Advisory Group to develop clinical oversight and guidance for the operation of a more compassionate and trusted medical card system. The Group is continuing its work on the development of guidance on assessing medical card applications involving significant medical conditions.

Having regard to the approach of the “Keane” Report and in advance of the Clinical Advisory Group completing its work, I do not propose to issue automatic medical cards to one particular group.

Hospital Waiting Lists

467. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will be given an appointment for surgery. [45265/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the Health Service Executive, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

HSE Expenditure

468. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health the annual amount he and the Health Service Executive spend on the drug Ritalin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45315/15]

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 you.

If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my

Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Health Services Provision

469. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health given the reports of the cost of the new cystic fibrosis drug, if he will provide comparatives of costs for other drugs used across his Department and the Health Service Executive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45316/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The HSE has estimated the cost of reimbursing the new cystic fibrosis (CF) drug Orkambi™ at approximately €90m per year. Over the last three years, the executive has reimbursed more than €20m per year on another CF treatment, Kalydeco®, and there are now approximately 140 patients receiving this drug.

The majority of high-tech drugs reimbursed by the HSE are subject to commercially confidential rebates and discounts. Therefore, it is not possible to provide accurate comparisons between the cost of Orkambi™ and other high-tech drugs.

Long-Term Illness Scheme

470. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Health if he will backdate the period of reimbursement for the medication Fampyra on the long-term illness scheme to cover the period that began when users finished the trial when it was issued to them at no cost and ending on 1 October 2015, in order that patients who paid for the medication personally will be reimbursed the considerable cost of it; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45318/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As you are aware, Fampridine (brand name Fampyra®) has been reimbursed under the Long Term Illness Scheme on a conditional, responder-only basis since 1 October 2015.

It is not possible to reimburse patients retrospectively for any medicine purchased before that medicine is added to the HSE's List of Reimbursable Items.

Long-Term Illness Scheme

471. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Health why the Health Service Executive is not covering the cost of Fampyra under the long-term illness scheme for a person (details supplied) in County Sligo despite it being prescribed by that person's clinician; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45319/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the particular issue raised relates to an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the HSE for direct reply to you. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Appointments Administration

472. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his views on correspondence

from a person (details supplied) in Dublin 13 regarding the care received during recent hospital appointments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45326/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Staff

473. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the action he will take to ensure that nurses who live here and who seek to undertake a return to nursing course are not tied to the hospital in which they undertake the course or forced to pay €1,200 to extricate themselves from this condition, or to sign a waiver regarding the payment incentive to undertake the course. [45327/15]

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

Care of the Elderly Provision

474. **Deputy Derek Nolan** asked the Minister for Health if he, an agency under the remit of his Department or the Health Service Executive provide funding for a minibus to provide elderly citizens in a community in Galway city with greater resources to assist them in attending medical appointments and in increasing their general well-being; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45334/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): My Department administers a National Lottery Discretionary Fund from which once-off grants are paid to community and voluntary organisations providing a range of health related services. If an organisation wishes to make an application for National Lottery Funding they should send in a formal application. Detailed procedures along with the application form for 2016 will soon be available on the Department's website at www.health.gov.ie.

Hospital Waiting Lists

475. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Health if he is aware of the waiting time for a public patient (details supplied) in County Kerry to receive an appointment in the South Infirmary/Victoria University Hospital in Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45338/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the

Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the Health Service Executive, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Dental Services Provision

476. **Deputy Colm Keaveney** asked the Minister for Health why a person's dental treatment (details supplied) in County Galway has ceased, given that due to a medical condition the person has been able to avail of the necessary treatment under the general medical services scheme for a number of years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45348/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Appointment Status

477. **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. [45353/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Services for People with Disabilities

478. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will support a family (details supplied) in Dublin 13 with a temporary residential care unit for a person with a mobility impairment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45354/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

Hospital Appointment Status

479. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Clare will be facilitated with required surgery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45395/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the Health Service Executive, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Appointment Status

480. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Health the steps he will take to have a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath immediately admitted for a consultation, given that the person has been placed on the list but there is a waiting list period of over 80-weeks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45405/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the Health Service Executive, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days

please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Services for People with Disabilities

481. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Health if further assistance will be allocated to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45409/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

Hospice Services

482. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Health the status of the finalisation of the plans for the proposed new specialist inpatient hospice unit with a full range of services in counties Longford and Westmeath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45434/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Appointment Status

483. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite an urgent appointment for a procedure at Cappagh hospital in Dublin 11 for a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45437/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the Health Service Executive, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Medical Card Applications

484. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite an application for a medical card by a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45448/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible. The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information has issued to Oireachtas members. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

Health Care Professionals

485. **Deputy Helen McEntee** asked the Minister for Health his plans to protect public health safety by distinguishing the difference between physiotherapists and physical therapists and to protect both titles under one register for use by members of the physiotherapy profession; and when he will make a ruling on this in order to protect the public and rule out any more confusion (details supplied). [45450/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Physiotherapists Registration Board will soon make the necessary bye-laws under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 to allow it to establish its register early next year. The title of physiotherapist will, as a consequence, be protected for the exclusive use of the board's registrants when the register's 2 year transitional period ends in 2018.

I am currently examining the issue of also protecting the title of physical therapist under the Act. In the rest of the English speaking world the titles of physical therapist and physiotherapist are interchangeable and their users are qualified physiotherapists. In Ireland, however, the title is used by a number of practitioners who are not physiotherapists but who are competing with physiotherapists in the private sector in the provision of musculoskeletal therapies.

Earlier this year, having consulted with the Health and Social Care Professionals Council, I wrote to a number of relevant organisations regarding my proposal to protect the title of physical therapist as a variant of the title of physiotherapist and invited them to submit their views. The submissions are now being examined and I expect that I will make a decision on the matter before the end of the year that ensures public protection and appropriately addresses the legitimate concerns of all parties.

Question No. 486 answered with Question No. 405.

Services for People with Disabilities

487. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure that a child (details supplied) in Dublin 13 receives an assessment of need; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45457/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the particular issue raised by the Deputy relates to an individual case, this is a service matter for the

Health Service Executive. Accordingly, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Death Penalty

488. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he or his officials have raised objections to the existence of the death penalty in the Republic of Kenya; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44919/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Ireland has a long-standing policy of strong and unequivocal opposition to the death penalty at all times and in all circumstances, and we are actively engaged in EU and international efforts to secure its universal abolition.

Along with our EU partners, Ireland actively supports UN resolutions on the death penalty at the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly. We also support EU efforts to secure universal abolition in line with the EU Guidelines on the Death Penalty, which provide the framework for EU action on this issue.

We have also used our current term of membership of the UN Human Rights Council to raise our concerns in relation to developments regarding the use of the death penalty, including through national and EU statements to the Council. We have consistently called for a halt to executions during our interventions at the working sessions of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), a peer review mechanism on the human rights records of UN Member States.

The death penalty remains on the statute books in Kenya and continues to be handed down as a sentence, although it has not been carried out in Kenya since 1987.

Ireland has raised its concerns with the Kenyan authorities in relation to the use of the death penalty. In 2010, during Kenya's first UPR, Kenya accepted a recommendation from Ireland to abolish the death penalty. At Kenya's most recent UPR in January of this year, while welcoming the positive efforts undertaken by Kenya since its first UPR, including the adoption of a new Constitution in 2010, Ireland noted that Kenya had made little progress in abolishing the death penalty. Ireland again recommended that Kenya take concrete steps to abolish the death penalty.

The EU Delegation in Nairobi also regularly raises the issue of the death penalty, on behalf of all EU Member States, in its engagement with the Kenyan authorities.

Consular Services Staff

489. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he is concerned for the safety of Irish civil servants working in Brussels and in other missions, if extra safety measures have been implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42293/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The security and safety of staff working in Ireland's missions abroad is a key priority for my Department.

In 2014, a dedicated Security Unit was established within my Department to identify and regularly assess the security challenges facing our Missions overseas. This Unit draws on a

network of security contacts, both nationally and internationally, and works closely with An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces. It liaises directly with our missions on specific security incidents and advises on appropriate follow up. It arranges specialised security support and, when necessary, has arranged the deployment of security experts to advise in relation to particular acute threats at missions.

My Department regards the security of its staff as fundamental to its duty of care and security threats are kept under ongoing review, including within the risk management process. In our missions abroad, each Head of Mission prioritises the maintenance of a safe and secure environment for staff, as well as safe living conditions for posted staff and their families. Missions are encouraged to proactively identify threats and to maintain regular communication with the Department's Security Unit, as well as liaising closely with local security contacts at post in relation to ongoing security related issues.

As part of their pre-posting training, all officers are given training on security issues and personal safety. Officers assigned to more security sensitive locations receive advanced security training.

Foreign Conflicts

490. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if attacks on the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria were discussed with the British Prime Minister, Mr. David Cameron; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42292/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I discussed the threat posed by terrorist groups operating in Syria to the peoples and States of the Middle East region and the European Union and the need for coordinated international action with Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond in London on 23 November.

Ireland fully supports the removal of the threat to international peace and security posed by the Daesh group, consistent with international law. The recent attacks in Paris, Tunisia, Lebanon and elsewhere, including those in which Irish citizens have been murdered and wounded, show that Daesh's terrorist crimes are an international and indiscriminate phenomenon which does not respect borders or nationality.

The threat posed by international terrorism requires a coordinated response from the international community. An effective response also requires a comprehensive approach which addresses root causes and contributory factors, promotes a counter-narrative, prevents radicalisation, deters and disrupts terrorist travel, addresses terrorist financing and brings perpetrators to justice.

Ireland, in common with all other UN Member States has a duty to implement relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and we have taken steps to do so. These Resolutions include UNSCR 2161 on freezing the funds and other assets of terrorist groupings and UNSCR 2178 on measures to suppress the recruiting, organising, transporting or equipping of individuals who travel to another State in order to perpetrate, plan or participate in terrorist acts or training.

Ireland is not and will not be participating in any international military action to combat Daesh.

It is for individual States to determine in what way they might best contribute to the concerted international effort underway to tackle the threat posed by DA'ESH and other UN-designated terrorist groups. Security Council resolution 2249 calls upon UN Member States to "take all

necessary measures, in compliance with international law, in particular with the United Nations Charter, as well as international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law, on the territory under the control of ISIL also known as Daesh, in Syria and Iraq, to redouble and coordinate their efforts to prevent and suppress terrorist acts committed specifically by ISIL also known as Daesh, as well as ANF, and all other individuals, groups, undertakings, and entities associated with Al Qaeda, and other terrorist groups, as designated by the United Nations Security Council, and as may further be agreed by the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) and endorsed by the UN Security Council, pursuant to the Statement of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) of 14 November, and to eradicate the safe haven they have established over significant parts of Iraq and Syria.”

Foreign Conflicts

491. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the comments by the British Prime Minister, Mr. David Cameron, on how safety and security depend on degrading and ultimately destroying the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41154/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Ireland fully supports the removal of the threat to international peace and security posed by the Daesh group, consistent with international law. The recent attacks in Paris, Tunisia, Lebanon and elsewhere, including those in which Irish citizens have been murdered and wounded, show that Daesh’s terrorist crimes are an international and indiscriminate phenomenon which does not respect borders or nationality.

The threat posed by international terrorism requires a coordinated response from the international community. An effective response also requires a comprehensive approach which addresses root causes and contributory factors, promotes a counter-narrative, prevents radicalisation, deters and disrupts terrorist travel, addresses terrorist financing and brings perpetrators to justice.

Ireland, in common with all other UN Member States has a duty to implement relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and we have taken steps to do so. These Resolutions include UNSCR 2161 on freezing the funds and other assets of terrorist groupings and UNSCR 2178 on measures to suppress the recruiting, organising, transporting or equipping of individuals who travel to another State in order to perpetrate, plan or participate in terrorist acts or training. We are coordinating our national efforts to counter Daesh, in particular by responding to the international threat from foreign terrorist fighters and addressing humanitarian needs, with a global coalition of international partners.

It is for individual States to determine in what way they might best contribute to the concerted international effort underway to tackle the threat posed by Daesh, and other UN-designated terrorist groups. Security Council resolution 2249 calls upon UN Member States to “take all necessary measures, in compliance with international law, in particular with the United Nations Charter, as well as international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law, on the territory under the control of ISIL also known as Daesh, in Syria and Iraq, to redouble and coordinate their efforts to prevent and suppress terrorist acts committed specifically by ISIL also known as Daesh, as well as ANF, and all other individuals, groups, undertakings, and entities associated with Al Qaeda, and other terrorist groups, as designated by the United Nations Security Council, and as may further be agreed by the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) and endorsed by the UN Security Council, pursuant to the Statement of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) of 14 November, and to eradicate the safe haven they have established over significant

parts of Iraq and Syria.”

Ireland is not and will not be participating in any international military action to combat Daesh.

Defeating Daesh cannot be separated from resolving the Syrian conflict. Ireland supports the efforts of the UN to renew political negotiations based on the 2012 Geneva Communiqué and the statements of the International Syria Support Group of 30 October and 14 November. We urge all parties to expedite steps to end the conflict, to support the UN’s efforts and to commit themselves to a nationwide ceasefire and a negotiated peace agreement.

Northern Ireland Issues

492. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the position regarding dealing with the legacy of the past element of the agreement on the North; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41157/15]

501. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on whether the outstanding issues for the Justice for the Forgotten group can be finally addressed in view of the constant excuse being given of national security; and his further views on whether there should be an independent panel to decide if there is a matter of national security. [45459/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 492 and 501 together.

The Government very much regrets that the Fresh Start Agreement did not, in the end, include agreement on the implementation of provisions of the Stormont House Agreement dealing with the legacy of the past. We share the deep disappointment of the victims and survivors of the Troubles and their families.

It was not the Irish Government who pressed for an agreement that completely left aside the legacy of the past. However, when it became clear that the choice was between having an agreement which uncoupled the past and having no agreement at all, the Government most reluctantly agreed to have a less comprehensive deal that would at least ensure that the devolved institutions would be protected and placed on a stable and sustainable footing.

I remain convinced that the provisions of the Stormont House Agreement for dealing with the legacy of the past offer the best possible way of bringing whatever healing is possible to those affected by the Troubles, including those affected by collusion. When discussing the past in Northern Ireland and its legacy of loss and hurt, iconic tragedies such as Dublin-Monaghan remain central to our work. I believe these new institutions can help to deliver truth and justice to families who have waited too long. It is therefore vitally important that the new institutions have the trust and confidence of the victims and survivors and their families. Their needs will therefore remain central to the Government’s work in this area.

What is important now is that we find a way forward that banks the good progress already achieved during the talks on legacy issues and secures a solution to outstanding matters, including the key issue of striking the right balance between the onward disclosure needs of families and the national security requirements being sought by the British Government.

To this end, I met with Northern Ireland’s Victims’ Commissioner on 26 November to discuss the concerns of victims and possible ways to take the issue forward in a manner that satis-

fies these concerns. I also met the Northern Minister for Justice, David Ford, on 11 December to discuss possible next steps and I will be meeting the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Theresa Villiers, later this month to explore potential options aimed at resolving the outstanding issues on dealing with the past.

In my discussions with her, I will again raise the All-Party Dáil motions of 2008 and 2011 urging the British Government to allow access by an independent international judicial figure to all original documents in their possession relating to the Dublin-Monaghan bombings. When we last discussed this issue on 8 October, the Secretary of State assured me that she would consider afresh how the British Government could respond to the Dáil motions. I am disappointed that the British Government has not yet positively responded to the requests made in the All-Party Dáil motions and I will ask the Secretary of State again to provide a positive response to the Dáil motions.

Departmental Properties

493. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the ground rents payable by his Department or agencies under its remit, by named property, by name of landlord and by amount payable, in 2015 and in 2016 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45056/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): All commitments in relation to the rental of properties in the State occupied by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, including ground rent where applicable, are discharged by the Office of Public Works.

Foreign Conflicts

494. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his position on the air strikes in Syria; if he has voiced his position at European Union level; and if he will outline Ireland's position on the future of President Assad of Syria in any peace talks on the future of Syria. [45189/15]

503. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on air strikes in Syria; if he has voiced his position at European Union level; and if he will outline Ireland's position on the future of President Assad of Syria in any peace talks on the future of Syria. [45461/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 494 and 503 together.

Ireland fully supports the removal of the threat to international peace and security posed by the Daesh group, consistent with international law. The recent attacks in Paris, Tunisia, Lebanon and elsewhere, including those in which Irish citizens have been murdered and wounded, show that Daesh's terrorist crimes are an international and indiscriminate phenomenon which does not respect borders or nationality.

The threat posed by international terrorism requires a coordinated response from the international community. An effective response also requires a comprehensive approach which addresses root causes and contributory factors, promotes a counter-narrative, prevents radicalisation, deters and disrupts terrorist travel, addresses terrorist financing and brings perpetrators

to justice.

Ireland, in common with all other UN Member States has a duty to implement relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and we have taken steps to do so. These Resolutions include UNSCR 2161 on freezing the funds and other assets of terrorist groupings and UNSCR 2178 on measures to suppress the recruiting, organising, transporting or equipping of individuals who travel to another State in order to perpetrate, plan or participate in terrorist acts or training.

It is for individual States to determine in what way they might best contribute to the concerted international effort underway to tackle the threat posed by DA'ESH and other UN-designated terrorist groups. Security Council resolution 2249 calls upon UN Member States to “take all necessary measures, in compliance with international law, in particular with the United Nations Charter, as well as international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law, on the territory under the control of ISIL also known as Daesh, in Syria and Iraq, to redouble and coordinate their efforts to prevent and suppress terrorist acts committed specifically by ISIL also known as Daesh, as well as ANF, and all other individuals, groups, undertakings, and entities associated with Al Qaeda, and other terrorist groups, as designated by the United Nations Security Council, and as may further be agreed by the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) and endorsed by the UN Security Council, pursuant to the Statement of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) of 14 November, and to eradicate the safe haven they have established over significant parts of Iraq and Syria.”

Ireland is not and will not be participating in any international military action to combat Daesh.

Defeating Daesh, cannot be separated from resolving the Syrian conflict. Ireland supports the efforts of the UN to renew political negotiations based on the 2012 Geneva communiqué and the statements of the International Syria Support Group of 30 October and 14 November and urges all parties to take steps to immediately end the all violence, establish a transitional governing body with executive powers and control over Syrian security forces and the implementation of a constitutional reform process which preserves Syria's pluralistic character. We urge all parties to take steps to end the conflict, support the UN and to commit themselves to a nationwide ceasefire and a negotiated peace agreement.

Ireland, together with its EU partners, made clear in the EU statement of 4 June 2014 that we do not accept the legitimacy of the 3 June Presidential elections held in Syria. These were held under a flawed electoral law which imposed identification requirements that deprived most Syrians living in areas under opposition control of the ability to cast their vote. The law also prevented exiled opposition candidates from standing against President Assad, and blocked access to alternative sources of campaign information. Ireland has co-sponsored a resolution called on the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court and has repeatedly supported the UN Human Rights Council Commission of Inquiry, which has made clear that the Assad regime is responsible for the overwhelming majority of attacks against civilians in Syria.

Foreign Conflicts

495. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he condemns the Israeli raid on the Aida refugee camp outside Bethlehem and the perceived total overreaction of Israeli forces to stone throwing; if he accepts this reaction by Israeli forces will further deter moderate Palestinians from peaceful dialogue; and if he will condemn this action. [45190/15]

496. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he condemns the treatment of the Palestinian poet Mr. Ashraf Fayadh at the hands of the Saudi Arabian Government on the charge of abandoning his Muslim faith, a crime which warrants a death penalty in Saudi Arabia; and if he will make representations to the Saudi Arabian authorities on this issue. [45192/15]

504. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will make representations to the relevant authorities over the raid on Aida refugee camp outside Bethlehem and the plight of a Palestinian poet (details supplied) facing the death penalty in Saudi Arabia. [45462/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 495, 496 and 504 together.

Since the beginning of the current disturbances in the occupied Palestinian territory, I have stressed that any necessary security response by Israeli authorities needed to be both restrained and proportionate. It is essential to reduce tensions, and not to increase the cycle of violence. Other international voices have repeated this call.

Some recent incidents, including the events in Aida camp have contributed to worsening the situation.

We have raised these concerns, in public, at EU discussions and directly with the Israeli authorities, including recent high level diplomatic contacts in both Dublin and Israel. We shall continue to do so.

In relation to Saudi Arabia, I am aware of the case of Ashraf Fayadh. This is a cause for concern both because Mr. Fayadh has been accused of something that is widely regarded as the simple exercise of his right to freedom of expression and freedom of religion, but also because of the death sentence imposed on him.

Ireland strongly condemns the use of the death penalty in all circumstances, and works for its suspension and abolition around the world. We have expressed concern about its increased use of late in a number of countries, including Saudi Arabia. Its abolition is one of Ireland’s priorities at the United Nations, including while a member of the Human Rights Council. For example, Ireland made a statement at the Council on 21 September 2015 voicing deep concern in relation to another Saudi Arabian death penalty case.

These and other human rights issues are raised with the Saudi authorities usually in conjunction with our EU partners. Presenting issues in a unified manner ensures greater impact. High Representative Mogherini stated in July that the EU will continue to closely follow the issue of the death penalty in Saudi Arabia in general, and to voice its concern through appropriate diplomatic channels.

My Department will also continue to monitor both the specific case of Mr. Fayadh and the general issue of death sentences in Saudi Arabia.

Human Rights Issues

497. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he is aware of the human suffering of families of prisoners of conscience in Iran, especially those of the Baha’i faith, where parents are in jail for their beliefs and children are deprived of their parents. [45193/15]

502. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he is aware of the human suffering of families of prisoners of conscience in Iran, especially those of the Baha’i faith, where parents are in jail for their beliefs and children deprived of their parents. [45460/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 497 and 502 together.

The human rights situation in Iran remains a matter of serious concern. This includes freedom of expression and assembly, and conditions in detention. There are concerns in particular about the treatment of some religious and ethnic minorities, political activists, journalists and bloggers, and human rights defenders. Human rights issues therefore continue to constitute an important part of our engagement and dialogue with Iran.

During my address to the UN Human Rights Council on 4 March 2015, I expressed my concern that “Freedom of Religion and Belief is in peril in many places worldwide, with members of minority religious communities, including those of Christian, Muslim and Baha’i faith, disproportionately affected by violence, discrimination, and harassment.”

Ireland continues to call strongly for the release of the seven Bahá’í leaders and the end to the persecution of members of this faith in Iran, including through bilateral contacts, with our EU partners and at the UN. Ireland has been instrumental in consistent activity by the EU in raising the discriminatory treatment of the Bahá’ís in Iran.

In January 2015, during political consultations with Iran, which took place in Dublin, my Department again directly communicated our concerns regarding the treatment of the Baha’i community to the visiting Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Majid Takht Ravanchi.

I reiterated these concerns directly to Mr. Larijani, the Speaker of the Majlis, during his visit to Ireland in June.

During Iran’s Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council in April 2014, Ireland voiced concerns in its intervention regarding the situation of religious minorities, including recommending that Iran review its policies discriminating against students on account of their faith, ensure that the trials of members of religious minorities are conducted in a fair and transparent manner, and accord them the full rights of citizens of Iran.

At the 27th Session of the Human Rights Council in September 2014, under Agenda Item Four, on human rights situations that require the Council’s attention, Ireland raised concerns that some groups, including those of the Baha’i faith and some Christian groups, are subject to significant persecution.

We also raised the issue at the 28th Session of the Human Rights Council in March 2015 during the interactive dialogues with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

My Department maintains regular contact with the Irish Bahá’í community.

Ireland, along with the EU, will continue to encourage progress in relation to religious minorities in Iran and to make clear our concerns to the Iranian authorities at every appropriate opportunity.

Foreign Conflicts

498. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has had any discussions with President Hollande of France regarding French military action in Syria; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44826/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have not discussed this matter with President Hollande.

Ireland fully supports the removal of the threat to international peace and security posed by the Daesh, group, consistent with international law. The recent attacks in Paris, Tunisia, Lebanon and elsewhere, including those in which Irish citizens have been murdered and wounded, show that Daesh's terrorist crimes are an international and indiscriminate phenomenon which does not respect borders or nationality.

The threat posed by international terrorism requires a coordinated response from the international community. An effective response also requires a comprehensive approach which addresses root causes and contributory factors, promotes a counter-narrative, prevents radicalisation, deters and disrupts terrorist travel, addresses terrorist financing and brings perpetrators to justice.

Ireland, in common with all other UN Member States has a duty to implement relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and we have taken steps to do so. These Resolutions include UNSCR 2161 on freezing the funds and other assets of terrorist groupings and UNSCR 2178 on measures to suppress the recruiting, organising, transporting or equipping of individuals who travel to another State in order to perpetrate, plan or participate in terrorist acts or training.

Ireland is not and will not be participating in any international military action to combat Daesh.

It is for individual States to determine in what way they might best contribute to the concerted international effort underway to tackle the threat posed by Daesh, and other UN-designated terrorist groups. Security Council resolution 2249 calls upon UN Member States to "take all necessary measures, in compliance with international law, in particular with the United Nations Charter, as well as international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law, on the territory under the control of ISIL also known as Daesh, in Syria and Iraq, to redouble and coordinate their efforts to prevent and suppress terrorist acts committed specifically by ISIL also known as Daesh, as well as ANF, and all other individuals, groups, undertakings, and entities associated with Al Qaeda, and other terrorist groups, as designated by the United Nations Security Council, and as may further be agreed by the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) and endorsed by the UN Security Council, pursuant to the Statement of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) of 14 November, and to eradicate the safe haven they have established over significant parts of Iraq and Syria."

Biofuel Obligation Scheme

499. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if Irish Aid intends to respond to the public consultation issued by the Minister for Communications Energy and Natural Resources regarding a proposed increase in the biofuels obligation rate; and how he envisages that the principle of policy coherence for development will be given effect in decision making in terms of biofuels. [45455/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Sean Sherlock): The 2009 Renewable Energy Directive sets all EU Member States a binding target that 10% of the energy used in the transport sector must come from renewable sources by 2020. In

all Member States, biofuels will be the largest contributor to meeting this obligation and all biofuels used in meeting the target must comply with a strict set of sustainability criteria.

My colleague, the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, takes the lead on Government policy in relation to bio-energy policy. In order to make progress toward achieving the binding target, the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources is currently considering whether the biofuel obligation should increase from the current rate of 6% per volume. In Ireland, 59% of the biofuels placed on the market in 2014 derived from waste material such as used cooking oil and tallow. Production of biofuels from these materials poses no risk of indirect land-use change.

The Government shares concerns that biofuel production and its use, unless properly regulated, may not deliver required greenhouse gas savings and could impact negatively on food production and on food prices.

During discussions on the European Commission's proposal to address the risk of indirect land-use change, Ireland argued for a restriction on biofuels with a risk of indirect land-use change effects and for incentives to encourage the development of advanced biofuels that do not affect food production. Agreement was reached at European level earlier this year. EU Directive 2015/1513 limits the share of energy from biofuels produced from food crops to no more than 7% of the final consumption of energy in the transport sector in Member States by 2020.

Officials in my Departments are in dialogue with officials in the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources on the question of biofuels and their potential impact on food security in developing countries.

Humanitarian Aid Provision

500. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on concerns with the passing of Economic Partnership Agreements that they can be considered to be undermining policy coherence in terms of humanitarian aid by not fully supporting the self-sufficiency of farmers in the developing world and their ability and potential to feed themselves. [45458/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Economic Partnership Agreements between the EU and its Member States and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States combine both trade and development provisions. The mandate for their negotiation derives from the Cotonou Agreement of 2000, between the EU and the ACP states. Their central objective is the reduction and eventual eradication of poverty, consistent with the objectives of sustainable development, and the gradual integration of the ACP countries into the world economy.

I am pleased that the Government received the approval of Dáil Éireann for two Economic Partnership Agreements, with Caribbean and West African groups of States last month. I am satisfied that this approval is coherent with and enhances our development cooperation policy, including the provision of humanitarian aid. The Economic Partnership Agreements seek to put trade at the service of development. They include provisions to specifically protect farmers in the developing world. While the EU market is fully opened to ACP agricultural imports, ACP partner countries have been able to protect their sensitive agricultural products by excluding them from liberalisation. In the event of difficulties arising on local markets or of food security being threatened, ACP partner countries can avail of specific safeguard provisions included in

the Agreements. In addition, under the three Agreements reached with African countries last year, the EU is committed to stop export subsidies on EU agricultural exports, to those countries.

The Agreements also provide for enhanced policy cooperation and dialogue on agriculture and food security, with a commitment to transparency on domestic support for the farming sector. Furthermore, EU development assistance with trade capacity-building measures will support ACP farming and farmers' capacity to comply with sanitary and phytosanitary and other agricultural standards.

Question No. 501 answered with Question No. 492.

Question No. 502 answered with Question No. 497.

Question No. 503 answered with Question No. 494.

Question No. 504 answered with Question No. 495.

Human Rights Issues

505. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will highlight the case of the Douma⁴, prominent Syrian human rights defenders who were abducted two years ago; and if he will support calls for the United Nations' mandated independent international commission of inquiry to be allowed into Syrian detention facilities. [45463/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am aware of the abduction in the Douma suburb of Damascus by unknown gunmen on 9 December 2013 of several distinguished human rights activists associated with the Syrian Violations Documentation Centre, including its founder and human rights lawyer, Razan Zaitouneh. It remains unclear who was responsible for these abductions. We urge the abductors of these activists, as well as those holding prisoners on all sides of the conflict, to release immediately all political detainees.

The leadership, dedication, physical and moral courage of human rights activists in Syria, facing continual threats from both the Assad regime and opposition extremists, is well known to many in the international community. Officials in my Department, including those based in the region, have met on a number of occasions with Syrian human rights defenders and monitor the many challenges and dangers they face.

Ireland has repeatedly expressed its support for the UN Commission of Inquiry and condemns the refusal of the Assad regime to permit Commission members entry to Syria to fulfil their duties.

Ministerial Meetings

506. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the recent meetings he has had with European counterparts on the worsening refugee crisis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45464/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Migration crisis has dominated the EU agenda for much of 2015. There have been three special European Council meetings to address Migration while Justice and Home Affairs Ministers have had five special meetings to address the crisis. I and my colleagues in the Foreign Affairs Council have

also grappled with the issues at length.

In June, the Foreign Affairs Council launched EUNAVFOR Med, the EU's naval operation to disrupt the dangerous activities of people smugglers in the Mediterranean, which have tragically resulted in the loss of many lives. As the Deputy will know, the crews of the L.E. Niamh, Eithne and Samuel Beckett have done sterling work in saving more than 8,500 lives.

In September, the Government decided accept up to 4,000 asylum seekers and refugees as part of the European Commission's comprehensive plan to address the migration crisis.

As part of its efforts to develop a comprehensive strategy, the EU organised two high level conferences. On 8 October, a conference focusing on migration flows into the EU through the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkans route took place in Luxembourg attended by both JHA and Foreign Ministers. The Conference issued a Declaration endorsing a five-pronged approach to addressing the migration challenge.

On 11\12 November EU Heads of State and Government met their African counterparts at a migration summit in Valletta. They agreed to establish a Trust Fund to address the root causes of migration in Africa. The €1.8 billion Fund is to be augmented by EU member state contributions. Ireland is contributing €3m.

On November 29th an EU-Turkey summit meeting was held at which the EU agreed to provide a financial package worth €3 billion to help Turkey accommodate the more than two million Syrian refugees residing in the country. As part of the agreement, there is to be a concerted effort by Turkey to cease the flow of irregular migrants. It has long been recognised that the cooperation of Third Countries is essential if the EU is to manage the migration flows. The agreement with Turkey represents an important step in this regard.

On 14 December, in the margins of the EU Foreign Affairs Council, I participated in a working lunch with Turkey's foreign minister where the Syrian situation was one of the items discussed.

These initiatives demonstrate the determination of the EU to work as hard as possible to see the refugee crisis resolved.

Ministerial Meetings

507. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on meetings held and topics discussed during his recent visit to the United Arab Emirates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45465/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I visited the United Arab Emirates on the 7th and 8th of December (arriving there late on December 6th).

I held a number of meetings with senior Emirati officials. These were: Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces; Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed AL Nahyan, Minister for Foreign Affairs; Sheikh Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Minister for Finance; Sheikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister for Culture, Youth, and Social Development; and Sultan Saeed Al Mansouri, Minister of Economy.

A number of these officials have visited Ireland in recent years and others have supported efforts to build Ireland's profile in the UAE and to develop the relationship between the two

countries. For example, Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan has visited Ireland twice as Foreign Minister and Sheikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan was Patron of the first Global GAA Games, which was held in Abu Dhabi earlier this year.

I also met the Irish Business Council in Abu Dhabi and the Dubai Irish Business Network.

Ireland's relationship with the UAE has deepened in recent years, including through regular high level visits and the opening of resident embassies in both directions. Our trade now stands at more than €1 billion and there are some 8,000 Irish citizens living in the UAE. Given the strength and breadth of the relations between the two countries, my discussions with local interlocutors covered a very wide range of topics.

While the detail of these discussions is confidential, I can confirm that the issues covered included: the crisis in Syria and its regional implications; the challenge of Islamist extremism in the region and in Europe; the conflict in Yemen; the nuclear deal with Iran and human rights.

Our discussions also covered the economic relationship between Ireland and the UAE and how to further develop that relationship, including in the areas of health and education services, SME development, aviation and financial services.

European Globalisation Fund

508. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the additional specialised programmes she provides as part of the Lufthansa Technik European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, EGF, programme in Rathcoole in County Dublin. [45342/15]

530. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will publish the EGF applications for Lufthansa Technik and PWA International Limited in Rathcoole in County Dublin or make them available to Teachtaí Dála. [45144/15]

531. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills why only 200 persons categorised as not in employment, education or training were detailed in the Lufthansa Technik EGF application, when the European Commission rules allow for a maximum of one such person per redundant worker, if she will allow the Lufthansa Technik EGF programme to increase the number of persons who can participate in the programme to 424. [45145/15]

546. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the projected or estimated expenditure to date for the Lufthansa Technik EGF programme in Rathcoole in County Dublin. [45343/15]

547. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the EGF service stakeholders for the Lufthansa Technik Programme in Rathcoole in County Dublin are required to submit projected or estimated expenditure to the European Globalisation Fund unit, the details of these provided to date. [45344/15]

548. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of expenditure claims submitted by the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund service stakeholders for the Lufthansa Technik programme in Rathcoole in County Dublin; and the value of these claims. [45345/15]

549. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to add an additional EGF stakeholder group in all existing and future funding programmes for the community and voluntary sector, to provide an additional avenue to ensure the maximum level of

participation in current and future programmes, particularly from those classified as not in employment, education or training. [45346/15]

550. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the additional specialised programmes being provided by the Dublin and Dún Laoghaire education and training programme as part of the Lufthansa Technik EGF programme. [45347/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Damien English): I propose to take Questions Nos. 508, 530, 531 and 546 to 550, inclusive, together.

The Lufthansa Technik Airmotive Ireland (LTAI) EGF programme application and related material is available on the dedicated EGF website www.egf.ie. The PWA International application, which is currently awaiting approval by the European Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, will be published following its approval. A decision on this application is expected this month.

The LTAI EGF programme will run until 19 September 2016. The overall programme allocation is some €4.15m including an EU contribution of €2.49m, representing 60% of the total. While the number of redundant workers is 424, based on previous experience the targeted number of redundant workers under the Programme is set at 250 and the number of young persons under the age of 25 not in employment, education or training (NEET persons) is set at 200. In accordance with Article 6(2) of Regulation EU No 1309/2013 on the EGF, the number of NEETs cannot exceed the number of targeted beneficiaries.

While the target number of NEETs could be increased to 250, engagement with the NEET cohort is proving challenging in the time-limited context of EGF programmes. At end August 2015, 76 NEETs, representing 38% of the 200 target, had participated in EGF related programme measures. Two separate listings of verified NEET persons have been supplied to date by the Department of Social Protection to my Department and these persons have been contacted by the SOLAS EGF Co-ordination units on a number of occasions.

My Department has recently processed an interim advance payment on LTAI EGF programme enterprise supports to Enterprise Ireland for €68,306 in respect of supports being provided by local enterprise offices in South Dublin and Kildare. Individual service providers did not submit expenditure estimates to my Department for inclusion in this EGF programme application. Rather beneficiary surveys, cited training needs, estimated participation rates and averaged measure delivery costs informed estimated total programme expenditure. It must be stressed that final programme expenditure is, as with any EGF programme, dependant ultimately on the take-up of measures, and the particular measure type, by many hundreds of individuals on a personalised choice basis. As the programme will run until next September and public beneficiary bodies are funding the cost of EGF measures from national budgets and will subsequently submit expenditure declarations at programme end, it is difficult to accurately forecast the final expenditure. However, I understand that take-up of EGF support measures offered to date is less than anticipated. As mentioned earlier take-up among the NEETs was 38% at end August while the former worker take-up was at 77% of the targeted beneficiaries at that time. The improved economic climate resulting in a re-employment rate of some 60% at end August may be a factor which mitigates against a higher programme participation rate. Lower than estimated take-up rates will result in lower final total expenditure.

EGF beneficiaries may avail of the full suite of courses, whether standard or specialised, offered by various service providers from within the public and private education and training sectors. In particular, the EGF Training Grant scheme administered by SOLAS enables a wide range of flexible personalised guidance, training and education supports to be taken up. In terms of specialised programmes to date, while the Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education

and Training Board works closely with the EGF Co-Ordination Unit in Solas and while it has not to date provided any specialised programmes for LTAI workers, it has provided individual supports and has facilitated the on-site provision of the tailored NFQ level 8 Higher Diploma in Coaching/Coaching Psychology which was initiated by the Co-Ordination Unit and is being provided through University College Cork. This is a progressive course following on from the earlier ‘Dealing with Change, Challenge and Opportunity Mindfully’ guidance programme delivered in Tallaght. Other specialised courses include modules of the Bosch Diagnostic Technician Programme leading to automotive technical accreditation and the provision of individual career development supports through the EGF training grant scheme. Discussions are ongoing as to whether there is scope for additional tailored course provision, in terms of delivery timescale and content and sufficient beneficiary interest.

My Department is continuing to liaise with the EGF Coordination Unit and other partners to maximise engagement with the programme. The potential involvement of community and voluntary organisations as suggested by the Deputy is being considered for this and future programmes.

Teachers’ Remuneration

509. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills her plans to restore the yard duty payment for teachers; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44697/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): Under the Haddington Road Agreement (HRA), the supervision and substitution (S&S) allowance was discontinued with effect from the commencement of the 2013/14 school year. Since that date, participation in the S&S scheme is compulsory and all teachers are required to provide 43 hours of S&S duties per annum. A limited opt out facility was made available to post-primary teachers in return for a pay reduction which is applied to the teacher’s salary until retirement.

An extension to the HRA known as the Lansdowne Road Agreement has been accepted by the Public Services Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. A gross additional payment equal to the S&S allowance (€1,592) is due to be included in the incremental scale in two moieties for teachers covered by that Agreement - half in the school year 2016/17 and the second half in the school year 2017/18.

Quality and Qualifications Ireland Accreditation

510. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills her views on correspondence received from a person (details supplied) regarding Further Education and Training Awards Council and Quality and Qualifications Ireland certification; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44701/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The correspondence to which the Deputy refers relates to a Freedom of Information request which is currently being processed by my Department.

A response to this request will be issued within the timeframe as set out under the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

511. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills her views that a person (details supplied) in Dublin 22 is receiving an allocation of special needs assistant hours appropriate to the diagnosed special needs. [44702/15]

520. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of special needs assistant hours allocated to a person (details supplied) in County Dublin. [44794/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 511 and 520 together.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for allocating Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) to schools to support children with special educational needs. The NCSE operates within my Department’s criteria in allocating such support, which is set out in my Department’s Circular 0030/2014.

All schools were asked to apply for SNA support for the 2015/16 school year by 18th March 2015. The NCSE has also continued to accept applications after this date in recognition that enrolments may not have been completed or where assessments were not completed. The NCSE has now published details of SNA allocations for schools for September 2015 on its website at www.ncse.ie.

Once allocated, the deployment of SNAs within schools is a matter for the individual Principal/Board of Management. SNAs should be deployed by the school in a manner which best meets the care support requirements of the children enrolled in the school for whom SNA support has been allocated. It is a matter for schools to allocate support as required, and on the basis of individual need, which allows schools flexibility in how the SNA support is utilised.

Details of the manner in which a school or parent may appeal the level of SNA or resource teaching allocation which has been made to support a child in school, to the NCSE, is set out on the NCSE website.

All schools have the contact details of their local SENO, while Parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child’s special educational needs, using the contact details available the NCSE website.

As the questions relate to SNA support for an individual child, I will arrange to have the matter referred to the NCSE for their attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Educational Disadvantage

512. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will reconsider her decision not to award delivering equality of opportunity in schools status to a school (details supplied) in County Mayo; if not, the reason why, given that nine feeder schools have this status; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44703/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The school in question was established on 1st September 2011 following the amalgamation of a DEIS post-primary school and non-DEIS post-primary school. In accordance with the approach adopted in relation to all such amalgamations, additional non-teaching resources are provided by my Department

in respect of eligible pupils from the former DEIS school by way of continued support for the targeted cohort of pupils as a transitional measure. In the case of a post primary school, these supports continue to be supplied for 6 years following the amalgamation.

The Deputy may also be aware that a process for the review of the DEIS Programme is currently underway in my Department. This process is being undertaken over the course of the current school year and will consider all issues pertaining to educational disadvantage in order to inform future policy direction in this important area. While this process is underway, I do not intend to make any changes to the current programme.

Teaching Council of Ireland

513. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills her views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding Montessori teachers; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44707/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): Under the Teaching Council Act, the Teaching Council is the body with statutory authority for the registration of teachers. Teachers are registered under The Teaching Council [Registration] Regulations 2009. These are currently being reviewed.

I note the reference in the attached correspondence to Regulation 3. As the statutory professional standards body for teaching in Ireland, the Council is of the view that all teachers should be first and foremost qualified and registered as teachers in their given sector, whether primary or post primary.

The Council is currently reviewing the Registration Regulations and is proposing to remove Regulation 3. I understand that it has consulted on the new draft regulations and in updating the regulations, I understand also that the Council intend to make appropriate provision for those who are currently registered. I agree with the views of the Council in this matter.

Stádas faoi Mhíbhuntáiste Scoileanna

514. D’fhiafraigh **Deputy Pearse Doherty** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna cén fáth gur fágadh scoil i nDún na nGall (sonraí tugtha) amach as an scéim D.E.I.S.; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [44713/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): Rinneadh suirbhé ar an scoil a bhfuil an Teachta ag déanamh tagairt di in 2005 agus measadh nach raibh dóthain comhchruinnithe de dhaltáí faoi mhíbhuntáiste le bheith curtha san áireamh in DEIS. Tar éis achomharc a bheith déanta ag an scoil chuig an bhforas athbhreithnithe neamhspleách in 2006, deimhníodh leis an leibhéal míbhuntáiste nár ghá an scoil a chur san áireamh.

B’fhéidir go bhfuil an Teachta ar an eolas freisin go bhfuil próiseas le hathbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar an gClár DEIS ar siúl faoi láthair ag mo Roinn. Tá an próiseas seo ar siúl le linn thréimhse na scoilbhliana reatha agus déanfar na saincheisteanna uile a bhaineann le míbhuntáiste oideachais a mheas d’fhonn bonn eolais a chur faoi threoir pholasaí amach anseo sa réimse tábhachtach seo. Agus an próiseas seo ar siúl, níl i gceist agam aon athruithe a dhéanamh ar an gclár reatha.

Schools Building Projects Expenditure

515. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 506 to 508, inclusive, of 24 November 2015, the status of the proposal from Castlethorn Construction regarding the provision of a sports hall and community centre at Adamstown community college in Lucan in County Dublin, including when she will make a decision on this proposal and if she will update the delegation of parents from the school with whom she recently discussed this the provision of this important facility. [44714/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): As previously outlined to the Deputy, my Department is seeking to ensure that Castlethorn Construction will honour the provisions of the original agreement with regard to the delivery of a community centre. Discussions with Castlethorn Construction are ongoing with a view to reaching an acceptable outcome.

Officials from my Department have recently reverted to representatives of Castlethorn Construction regarding a proposal to facilitate the delivery of the community centre and await their response.

I recently met with a delegation of parents from the school and will provide an update to them on the situation shortly.

Schools Building Projects Status

516. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the length of time Castlethorn Construction was given by the education and training board to build the sports hall and community centre at Adamstown community college in Lucan in County Dublin from the start date of the original contract, and if, when and by how long the original completion date was extended. [44715/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): As the Deputy is aware officials from my Department are engaged in discussions with Castlethorn Construction with a view to ensuring that the community facilities are delivered.

The Deputy will appreciate that given the sensitivities attached to the ongoing discussions between officials from my Department and Castlethorn Construction it would not be appropriate for me to disclose any further information at this time.

Capitation Grants

517. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will increase the capitation and ancillary grant in 2015 to 2016 to cover the increase in the minimum wage for cleaners, secretaries and caretakers in schools which comes into effect on 1 January 2016; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44733/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The majority of primary and voluntary secondary schools in the Free Education Scheme receive grant assistance to provide for secretarial and/or caretaking services. Within the 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.

In addition to this, other staff who are employed in schools through grant funding but who are not comprehended by the Arbitrator's recommendation will benefit from the pay increases introduced under the FEMPI Act 2015 and also, where applicable, by the recently announced increase in the National Minimum Wage which also take effect from 1 January 2016. The Circular will provide guidance to school management authorities in relation to the implementation of these measures at local school level.

Special Educational Needs Staffing

518. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if it is compulsory for a special needs assistant to retire at 65 years of age, if there is a mechanism to appeal this ruling; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44736/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): In accordance with the Superannuation scheme a Special Needs Assistant (SNA) who is not "a new entrant" under the terms of the Public Service Superannuation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2004, must retire at the end of the school year in which he/she reaches age 65.

The abolition of the compulsory retirement age under the Public Service Superannuation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2004 applies to new entrants only. The retirement provisions, which apply to public servants (including SNAs) who are not new entrants, are not affected by the Act.

Therefore a Special Needs Assistant employed prior to the Act is not a new entrant and must retire at the end of the school year in which he/she reaches the age of 65.

Educational Disadvantage

519. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a school (details supplied) in County Kerry will be able to reapply for delivering equality of opportunity in schools status given that its feeder schools mainly have this status; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44785/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The Deputy may be aware that a process for the review of the DEIS Programme is currently underway in my Department. This process is being undertaken over the course of the current school year and will consider all issues pertaining to educational disadvantage in order to inform future policy direction in this important area. While this process is underway, I do not intend to make any changes to the

current programme.

Question No. 520 answered with Question No. 511.

School Patronage

521. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an Educate Together school in the Drumcondra and Marino area of Dublin 3, her views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding this matter; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44844/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): My Department takes the decision to establish new schools (primary and post-primary) in order to meet demographic need. When the demographics of an area require the establishment of a new school, a separate process is then conducted to allow for patrons, patron bodies and prospective patrons to be considered as patron of the new school. Parental preferences are central to this process and applicants are required to provide evidence of demand for their particular type of school as part of their application under this process. My Department publicises school patronage determination processes and provides guidance to prospective applicants on the requirements to be fulfilled. It is envisaged that the patronage determination process for the new primary school which will open in September 2016 to serve the Drumcondra/Marino/Dublin 1 area will commence in early 2016. It will be open to all patrons, patron bodies and prospective patrons to apply for patronage of this school under this process.

Site Acquisitions

522. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a school (details supplied) in County Wicklow, when the permanent site will be purchased; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44914/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Officials in my Department have been working closely with Wicklow County Council in relation to the identification and acquisition of a site to accommodate both the school referred to by the Deputy as well as a Gaelcholáiste.

A site has been identified and the acquisition process is currently being progressed. Whilst I am aware that the school in question has raised some concerns about the site, my Department considers that a shared campus arrangement will benefit both schools and serve the entire community. It is my Department's intention to liaise with both schools in this regard in due course.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

523. **Deputy Noel Coonan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 1004 of 3 November 2015, if resource hours or additional special needs assistant hours will be allocated to person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44922/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The Deputy will be aware that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for allocating Resource Teaching hours

or Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) to schools to support children with special educational needs. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support, which in relation to SNA support is set out in my Department's Circular 0030/2014, and in relation to Resource Teaching support is set out in DES Circular 02/05. As the Deputy's question of 3rd November 2015 referred to an application for support in relation to an individual child, this issue was referred to the NCSE for its attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

The NCSE has advised that it replied directly to the Deputy in relation to this matter on 8th December, 2015.

School Transport Provision

524. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills her plans to provide school transport in a case (details supplied) in County Cork. [44932/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Damien English): I wish to advise the Deputy that Special Schools funded by my Department are intended to cater for children and young persons with special educational needs from 4 years until the end of the school year in which they reach their 18th year.

At that point, the Department of Health/Health Service Executive assumes direct responsibility for young adults with special educational needs who are over 18 years. My Department, at that stage, may allocate resources towards an education component of such provision.

Under the terms of my Department's School Transport Scheme for Children with Special Educational Needs, children are eligible for transport where they are attending the nearest recognised school that is or can be resourced to meet their special educational needs. Eligible children retain their transport eligibility while they remain enrolled in the special school.

As the training centres referred to by the Deputy do not come within the scope of the Department's school transport scheme for children with special educational needs the provision of school transport cannot be considered.

Teachers' Remuneration

525. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a person (details supplied) in County Dublin will receive the correct level of increment, given that other colleagues who the person taught with in Tripoli in Libya have received their increments according to their service; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44949/15]

526. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an incremental form for a person (details supplied) in County Dublin that was signed by a school in Tripoli in Libya as a result of the outbreak of political unrest there and that resulted in the person having to flee that country; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44950/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 525 and 526 together.

The criteria for the award of incremental credit to recognised teachers under Circulars 29/2007 and 29/2010 was agreed in the first instance, by the Teacher Conciliation Council. This Council is comprised of representatives of the teacher unions, school management bodies,

the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, and the Department of Education and Skills chaired by an official of the Labour Relations Commission. These Circulars are available on my Department's website at the following link - <http://www.education.ie/en/Education-Staff/Services/Payroll-Financial/Incremental-Credit/Information.html>.

I understand from the Deputy, that the teacher, to whom she refers, has not submitted an application to my Department in order to apply for incremental credit for their teaching service in Libya. They should complete an application form which is available on my Department's website at the following link - http://www.education.ie/en/Education-Staff/Services/Payroll-Financial/Payroll-Documents-and-Forms/Incremental_Credit_App_Form.pdf paying particular attention to the instructions for completion which can be found on page 8. Once received the application will be assessed by officials in my Department and a decision relayed to the teacher.

Departmental Properties

527. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the ground rents she or agencies under the remit of her Department pay, by named property, by name of landlord and by amount payable in 2015 and in 2016 in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45053/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The information requested by the Deputy in respect of ground rents paid to date by my Department in 2015 is contained in the following table. Information with regard to ground rents payable in 2016 is currently not available. With regard to payment by agencies under my remit, the matters raised by the Deputy are dealt with at local level by the agencies rather than centrally within my Department. The detailed information requested by the Deputy is not therefore available within my Department.

SCHOOLS/CENTRES	Amount Paid in 2015 (to date)	Paid to
St. Brigid's NS, The Coombe, Dublin 8	€106.00	Dublin City Council
Athlone Education Centre, Athlone, Co. Westmeath	€31.74	IDA Ireland Ltd.
Monaghan Education Centre, Monaghan, Co. Monaghan	€31.74	IDA Ireland Ltd.

School Transport Provision

528. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills her views on a matter (details supplied) in respect of a school bus that serves a school in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45063/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Damien English): Bus Éireann, which operates the school transport scheme on behalf of my Department, has confirmed that from a safety perspective there is not a suitable turning point at the school in question.

Bus Éireann has advised that some of the school transport services pass the school each morning and depending on the direction that the bus is coming from, children are set down at their school. In the evening all children must travel to meet the services at a central point.

Central drop off and collection points are a common feature of the school transport scheme and the level of service available to the children in question is considered reasonable in the context of the scheme nationally.

School Transport Provision

529. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills her views regarding correspondence in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford, the reason for the decision regarding school transport arrangements, if she will investigate why the queries raised in this case were not adequately dealt with or answered; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45084/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Damien English): Bus Éireann, which operates the Post Primary School Transport Scheme on behalf of my Department, has advised that payment details for this family were not submitted until three weeks after the closing date of 31st July; at this stage all tickets had been allocated and the service is now operating to capacity.

Should there be any change in the current position Bus Éireann will contact the family directly.

Questions Nos. 530 and 531 answered with Question No. 508.

Emergency Works Scheme Applications

532. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to advise on the emergency funding for a school (details supplied) in County Louth; when a decision will issue; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45155/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The school to which the Deputy refers submitted three applications under the Emergency Works Scheme in the past 12 months. The first of these was received on the 22 December 2014 seeking €11,644 to replace leaking pipes and carry out electrical repairs. This application was approved and the grant has been paid in full. The second application was received on the 22nd December 2014 seeking funding to replace the fire alarm system but this application was refused as it was outside the scope of works that would qualify for funding under the terms of the Emergency Works Scheme. The third application was received on the 9th June 2015 seeking €39,000 to replace the roof of the school building. This application was refused as it was also outside the scope of the Emergency Works Scheme. Following an appeal by the school in November, a grant of €7,730 was allocated to carry out repairs to the roof and the school was advised to apply under the Summer Works Scheme to have the roof replaced.

Schools Mental Health Strategies

533. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the mental health services available for children and young persons, particularly those with special education needs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45165/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): My Department is strongly supportive of the promotion of positive mental health awareness in both primary and post-pri-

mary schools and provides support and resources in this area. The Department adopts a holistic and integrated approach to supporting the work of schools in promoting positive mental health and to supporting those with a broad range of problems, behavioural emotional and social.

The process spans the curriculum in schools, whole-school ethos, quality of teaching, learning and assessment, student support and pastoral care and the provision of professional development for teachers. It also involves other supports such as educational psychological services and guidance and counselling services, and the interface with other agencies, both nationally and locally. Schools are assisted by the Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (2013) and the Well-Being in Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (2015) which have been developed by my Department to provide a framework and bring coherence to this area of work, and build upon the multitude of practices that are already in place to promote well-being and mental health in schools. Copies of the Guidelines have been circulated to all schools. The Guidelines emphasise the need to integrate all elements by using a coordinated whole-school approach in the promotion of social emotional well-being/mental health. This includes developing and integrating the Health Promoting Schools process, the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum, and the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) continuum of support. The Special Education Support Service (SESS) has a particular remit for provision of training in regards students with special needs. Building effective inter-agency relationships is also essential. The Well-Being Guidelines provide information for schools on the supports services that are currently available. Schools are advised to seek this support when developing the whole school approach. It is important that this support is well co-ordinated and that schools are clear about the responsibilities of the support agencies. The guidelines advise that in the event of pupils presenting with mental health difficulties which are above and beyond the school's capacity and ability to support, school authorities should identify and access the referral pathways for the various primary and secondary healthcare services in their particular area. My Department's National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) is available to advise schools on the matter. Referrals should, of course, be undertaken with parental or guardian consent and collaboration, except in an exceptional situation where there may be child protection issues. In normal circumstances referral to Clinical Psychology Services and to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is made through the student's G.P.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Schools Building Projects Status

534. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the proposed start and completion dates for the pending redevelopment of a college (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45170/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The major building project for the school to which the Deputy refers was recently authorised to proceed to advanced architectural planning – Stage 2b, detailed design. This stage includes the applications for Planning Permission, Fire Cert and Disability Access Cert and the preparation of Tender Documents. As the Deputy is aware, on Tuesday 17th November 2015 I announced details of the major school building projects where construction is expected to commence over the next 6 years. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the project to which he refers is included in this plan to proceed to construction in 2017. Information in respect of all projects on this 6 year plan is available on my Department's website www.education.ie.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

535. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills why Student Universal Support Ireland will not accept a sworn affidavit when an applicant's parents are separated and there is no legal separation agreement (details supplied). [45197/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): An affidavit in isolation is not considered acceptable as sole proof of separation, however, it may be considered as evidence of separation if accompanied by other supporting documentation. The type of other supporting documentation might include a separation agreement, divorce decree, evidence from the Department of Social Protection that either of the applicant's parents is currently in receipt of a payment for a one-parent family situation, such as one-parent family payment or deserted wife's allowance. Ultimately, the applicant has to establish to the satisfaction of the awarding authority that the parents are separated. If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI.

Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down, in writing, by SUSI, and remains of the view that the scheme has not been interpreted correctly in his/her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the independent Student Grant Appeals Board.

Third Level Institutions

536. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills her views on the system of degree courses being offered by private colleges which cost large amounts of money to complete but which are not recognised in countries outside our own; the steps she will take to ensure that certain private colleges which offer and actively encourage participation in such costly degree courses will make prospective course participants aware that the courses being offered may not be recognised abroad; the steps she will take to bring about a situation where a degree course in psychology provided by a private third level college (details supplied) will be recognised abroad; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45214/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The college referred to by the Deputy is a private third level college. Private colleges in Ireland are non-State aided institutions and do not come under the remit of my Department. My Department therefore has no role in relation to the fees charged, or the courses provided, by private colleges. Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is the State agency with statutory responsibility for the quality assurance of further and higher education and training in Ireland. QQI is responsible for maintaining the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The NFQ is a system of ten levels which aims to make the qualifications system in Ireland easier to understand, thus facilitating the recognition of Irish qualifications both at home and abroad. The course referred to by the Deputy is recognised at level 8 of the NFQ. QQI also hosts the Irish centre of the European Network of Information Centres/National Academic Recognition Information Centre (ENIC-NARIC). This service comprises a network of centres that facilitates the recognition of academic qualifications throughout Europe and further afield including Australia. Further details are available at: www.qualrec.ie.

School Curriculum

537. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will re-

move the current rule 68 for primary schools and replace it with another rule maintaining an integrated curriculum or requiring separate religious instruction and the teaching of the curriculum in a manner not informed by any particular religious denomination; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45215/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Report of the Advisory Group to the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector was published in April 2012. The Report recommended a review and updating of the Rules for National Schools and in particular, Rule 68. I believe that the language and tone of Rule 68 is archaic and does not reflect the reality of today’s primary education sector. I am currently engaged in a series of meetings with the different education bodies involved in implementing the recommendations of the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism. I have already met with the Education and Training Boards, and with representatives of the Catholic Church – am meeting with Educate Together and the Church of Ireland this week. The key objective of these meetings is to make further advance progress on the recommendations of the Forum and along. Following those meetings in the New Year I will outline a number of actions to advance the recommendations which arose from the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism, and these actions will include the immediate repeal of rule 68. Separately, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is developing a curriculum in Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics. An important part of a child’s education involves learning about and understanding the lives, values and traditions of friends, classmates and members of the wider community. Much of this learning already takes place in Irish classrooms where a child’s sense of their own identity and belonging is nurtured and valued. It is intended that the new ERB curriculum will ensure that every child has the opportunity for such learning, and that the good practices which already take place in schools are recognised. The consultation on the proposals for this new curriculum is now open and will continue into spring 2016. The NCCA will be engaging with a range of audiences, including: teachers, schools, parents, children, educational partners, patrons, children’s advocacy groups and other members of the general public. As part of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, the NCCA has already been tasked with looking at the suggested time framework for subjects contained within the primary school curriculum and advice on this is due in 2016. The NCCA also plans to begin a general consultation on the primary curriculum in 2016. Curricular change does not require reliance on the Rules.

School Enrolments

538. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Education and Skills given reports on 8 December 2015 of her view on religious discrimination in school admissions, if she will bring forward changes to section 7(3)(c) of the Equal Status Act 2000; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45216/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): 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. The Deputy will be aware of the many positive elements contained in the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2015, which was published in April of this year, and introduced a number of important changes to make enrolment policies fairer and more transparent. The issue of the need to amend the Equal Status Act was not a feature of the consultation paper published in advance of the Admission to Schools Bill. When the Oireachtas committee considered this matter, it simply noted that “there is a potential tension between Articles 42 (Education) and 44 (Religion) of Bunreacht na hÉireann, and this poses a particular difficulty

when legislating in this policy area.” No amendment to the Equal Status Act has been included in the published Admission to Schools Bill.

I have subsequently made clear my view that this is a matter that does need to be reviewed and addressed, and considering the time constraints involved it will need to be a priority for the next Government.

School Curriculum

539. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will bring forward changes to the Education Act 1998 to enable the teaching of the curriculum in an objective and pluralist manner and not informed by religious ethos; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45217/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the primary school sector, which issued its report in 2012, recommended steps that could be taken to ensure that the education system can provide a sufficiently diverse number and range of primary schools to cater for children of all religions and none. A follow-up paper to the Forum Report entitled “Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector: Progress to Date and Future Directions” was published in July 2014. This paper outlined the progress made to date on implementing the Forum’s recommendations with a particular focus on the issue of inclusion and diversity in schools. Last month the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment launched a consultation process on proposals for a curriculum in Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics, in line with the recommendations of the Forum. The consultation will run until spring 2016 and the NCCA aims to engage with as many stakeholders as possible to ensure balance in the development of a curriculum for ERB and Ethics.

Teachers’ Remuneration

540. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will clarify a matter in relation to a teacher’s degree allowance and salary (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45228/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): Under an agreement reached between my Department and the Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI) in 2014, it was agreed that three grades of staff would be recognised as appropriate for employment in the Youthreach sector i.e. Teacher, Youthreach Resource Person and Youthreach Co-ordinator. As an element of this, it was agreed that Tutors who were employed in Youthreach would have their posts converted to either Teacher or Youthreach Resource Person. From the date of conversion, the person would be subject to the normal terms and conditions of employment of their new grade in terms of salary, working hours etc.

It was a matter for each ETB to determine whether a particular tutor would be deemed to be a qualified teacher on conversion of their post. Where a Tutor post was converted to a qualified Teacher post, the Teacher would be entitled to incremental progression on the Teachers’ Common Basic Scale. This represents a significant benefit to the individual in the long-term as Tutors did not generally have access to an incremental salary scale.

Each ETB implemented the conversion process in respect of Youthreach Tutors in its employment and notified its staff of their new grade. Future recruitment to Youthreach will be to

Teacher or Youthreach Resource person posts.

Any query in relation to this conversion process should be addressed to Waterford Wexford ETB.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

541. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a pupil (details supplied) in County Louth will be reassessed for provision of special needs assistant or resource hours; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45232/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I wish to advise the Deputy that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for allocating resource teachers and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) to schools to support children with special educational needs. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support. The criteria by which SNA support is allocated to pupils is set out in my Department's Circular 0030/2014, while the criteria for the allocation of resource teaching support is set out in DES Circular 02/05.

All schools were asked to apply for SNA or resource teaching support for the 2015/16 school year by 18th March 2015. The NCSE also continued to accept applications after this date in recognition that enrolments may not have been completed or where assessments were not completed. The NCSE has published details of SNA allocations for schools for the current school year on its website.

All schools have the contact details of their local SENO, while Parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child's special educational needs, using the contact details available on www.ncse.ie.

It should be noted that all mainstream Primary schools have been allocated significant additional teaching resources under the General Allocation Model (GAM) to cater for children with high incidence special educational needs, including pupils with a Mild Learning Disability.

It is a matter for individual schools to use their professional judgment to identify pupils who will receive this support and to use the resources available to the school to intervene at the appropriate level with such pupils. Schools are supported in this regard by the National Educational Psychological Services. Schools are not required to apply directly to my Department for such learning support.

Schools should monitor and utilise their allocation of additional teaching support to best support the needs of identified pupils, in accordance with my Department's guidance. The teaching time afforded to each individual pupil is decided and managed by schools, taking into account each child's individual learning needs. My Department's Circular SP ED 02/05 provides guidelines for primary schools in relation to the utilisation of additional teaching resources which have been allocated to them for pupils with special educational needs.

As the allocation of support for pupils is managed locally by schools, a parent who feels that their child requires additional learning support in school should raise this matter directly with their school Principal in the first instance, or with the Board of Management of the school. Where a parent or school wishes to appeal a decision in relation to the allocation of SNA or resource teaching support for a child, details of the manner in which they may appeal such a decision in relation to support for a child in school, to the NCSE, is set out at www.ncse.ie.

School Curriculum

542. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will address a matter (details supplied) regarding sign language; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45233/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): A new course in Irish Sign Language (ISL) has been prepared by the Post-Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI), a project of my Department. This 100 hour course is based on the Generic Short Course in Modern Languages, which was in turn developed by the PPLI using the new Framework for Junior Cycle and the Junior Cycle Short Courses Draft Handbook ‘Developing Short Courses in Junior Cycle’. The course provides the ‘learning statements’ and key skills which all short courses are based upon. In this course, the emphasis is on developing communication skills in ISL at level A1 (Council of Europe scale called CEFR).

School Enrolments

543. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will consider an appeal on behalf of a person (details supplied) in County Galway regarding a school placement; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45246/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The selection and enrolment of pupils in schools is the responsibility of the authorities of the individual school. My Department’s main responsibility is to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking school places in an area. However, this may result in some pupils’ not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice. As schools may not have a place for every applicant, a selection process may be necessary. 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.

Under section 15 (2) (d) of the Education Act, 1998, each school is legally obliged to disclose its enrolment policy and to ensure that, as regards that policy, principles of equality and the right of parents to send their children to a school of the parents’ choice are respected.

Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 provides for an appeal by a parent or guardian to the Secretary General of my Department or, - in the case of an Education and Training Board (ETB) school, - to the ETB in the first instance, where a Board of Management of a school, or a person acting on behalf of the Board, refuses to enrol a student in a school, expels a student, or suspends a student for 20 or more days in any school year. My Department has no authority to compel a school to admit a pupil, except in the case of an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 being upheld.

Application forms for taking a section 29 appeal are available on this Departments website at the following link: <http://www.education.ie/en/Parents/Services/Appeal-against-Permanent-Exclusion-Suspension-or-Refusal-to-Enrol/Section-29-Appeals-Application-Form.doc>, or by contacting Section 29 Administration Unit, Friars Mill Road, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, phone 0761 108588.

The Educational Welfare Service (EWS) of the Child and Family Agency (TUSLA) is the statutory agency which can assist parents who are experiencing difficulty in securing a school place for their child.

Departmental Legal Costs

544. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 546 of 8 December 2015, the service providers who received payments from her Department in each of the years 2014 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45330/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The following were the service providers who received payments for the years 2014 and 2015:

In 2014, the payments were made to Arthur Cox Solicitors and Peter Ward S.C.

In 2015, payments have been made to Conor Feeney B.L. and Peter Ward S.C.

School Transport Fees

545. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to confirm that applications for concessionary fares on a school transport route (details supplied) in County Westmeath have been made by parents of pupils, where previous transport was discontinued during the summer and where this alternative route and school transport thereon can accommodate the number of pupils involved, get them to their place of education and minimise traffic hazards in doing so at the said school; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45339/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Damien English): Bus Éireann, which operates the School Transport Scheme on behalf of my Department, has advised that there are a number of concessionary, fare paying, places still available on a service which operates to the school in question.

The families referred to by the Deputy should contact Bus Éireann in Athlone, phone 090 6473277, if they wish to avail of school transport on a concessionary basis.

Questions Nos. 546 to 550, inclusive, answered with Question No. 508.

School Transport Provision

551. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 252 of 18 September 2013 and with reference to a request to publish the Farrell Grant Sparks, FGS, report of 2009 that was published in redacted form on 16 April 2014, if she will clarify that Bus Éireann does not make a profit from the school transport scheme, considering that the FGS report mentions, on page 150, a discarded option full cost recovery with no profit allocation. [45355/15]

552. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to my Parliamentary Question No. 252 of 18 September 2013 and with reference to her statement regarding a signed confidentiality agreement, if she will provide the date Farrell Grant Sparks, FGS, commenced work on redactions, the date it completed its work on reaching an agreement with Bus Éireann and on making agreed redactions to the FGS report so that it could be published; the date that Bus Éireann first indicated that it was satisfied with the agreed redactions; the date of the FGS invoice for payment; the date and amount paid to FGS for agreeing the redactions; the date it was first decided to publish the FGS report; the date that her Department's officials became aware that the freedom of information decision maker in the Department of

Public Expenditure and Reform decided that it was going to provide access to the FGS report in redacted form; the date Bus Éireann first became aware that the FGS report was going to be published on 16 April 2014; if she will explain the circumstances surrounding its publication; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45356/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Damien English): I propose to take Questions Nos. 551 and 552 together.

Bus Éireann has confirmed to my Department that they do not make a profit on school transport and my Department accepts this confirmation.

As the reply of 18 September 2013 indicated, in completing its work on this report, Farrell Grant Sparks (FGS) entered into a signed confidentiality agreement with Bus Éireann having regard to the fact that certain of the information made available to FGS by Bus Éireann was deemed to be commercially sensitive.

Farrell Grant Sparks commenced work on redactions in September 2010 and following consultations with Bus Éireann, the redacted report was submitted in February 2011. The FGS invoice for payment was submitted in March 2011. The payment was made in May 2011 in the sum of €5627.71

As the reply of 18 September 2013 also indicated, the publication of the report at that time was encompassed by an appeal to the Office of the Information Commissioner. When the decision of the Information Commissioner was given on 26 September 2013, given the existence of the confidentiality agreement and the passage of time, the Department and Bus Éireann undertook a further review of the report to agree publication on the Department's website of the report with minimal redactions focussed only on those elements deemed to be commercially sensitive.

The Department was notified on 27 March 2014 that an FOI had been received by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for the release of the October 2009 and 2011 versions of the FGS report. Bus Éireann was made aware on 15 April that the report with minimal redactions would be published the next day.

None of the recommendations of the report was implemented.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

553. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she is aware of the case of a person (details supplied) in County Sligo who has been residing here for almost two decades and who has attended secondary school here; that the Department of Justice and Equality granted this person permission to remain in Ireland and stamp 4; if she will confirm that the person is a prescribed student eligible for student support, in accordance with section 14 of the Student Support Act 2011; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45362/15]

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.

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.

Residential Institutions Redress Scheme

554. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills while understanding that in accordance with the provisions of the Residential Institutions Redress (Amendment) Act 2011 and that the board's power to accept late applications under sections 8(2) and 8(3) of the redress Act 2002 ceased at midnight on 16 September 2011, if she will consider allowing further late applications to be considered for hearing by the board in 2016; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45363/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The Residential Institutions Redress Amendment Act, 2011 removed the Board's power to accept late applications received on or after the 17th September 2011. This legislation was enacted some 8 and a half years since the Board was established and 5 and half years after the initial closing date and I am satisfied that sufficient time has been given to potential applicants to apply to the Board. There are no plans to allow further late applications.

Education and Training Boards Staff

555. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Education and Skills in respect of the rates of pay for casual and part-time teachers in secondary schools who are employed on an ad hoc basis depending on the immediate requirements of a specific school, if it is commonplace for such teachers to be employed as substitutes in more than one school in any academic year, whether it be a school run by an education and training board, a voluntary school, or otherwise, if there is a discrepancy in how casual part-time workers are remunerated depending on what school employs them for such work, given that her Department pays the full hourly rate of pay to qualified secondary school teachers for all substitution and supervision work and the education training boards only pay the full qualified rate to qualified teachers if the classes they cover are for subjects that they are registered for with the Teaching Council; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45419/15]

556. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if education and training boards are entitled to change the terms of employment for casual part-time teachers and if part-time teachers have employment rights in this regard; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45420/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 555 and 556 together.

It is the policy of my Department that only qualified personnel should be employed by schools. Unqualified personnel should not be appointed except in exceptional circumstances and then only when all avenues for recruiting qualified personnel have been exhausted and only for quite limited time periods.

Circular 31 of 2011 issued by my Department to the Managerial Authorities of schools states that each employer shall ensure that each person proposed for appointment to a teaching post, for which salary grant is being sought, must be registered with the Teaching Council and have qualifications appropriate to the sector and suitable to the post for which he/she is to be employed.

Circular 8 of 2013 provides that the unqualified rate of pay shall apply to a registered teacher who is not appropriately qualified for the teaching position to which s/he is appointed on or after 1 February 2012.

Special Educational Needs Staffing

557. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will ensure that a child (details supplied) in Dublin 13 is allocated a special needs assistant; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45456/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I wish to advise the Deputy that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for allocating Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) to schools to support children with special educational needs. The NCSE operates within my Department’s criteria in allocating such support, which is set out in my Department’s Circular 0030/2014.

All schools were asked to apply for SNA support for the 2015/16 school year by 18th March 2015. The NCSE has also continued to accept applications after this date in recognition that enrolments may not have been completed or where assessments were not completed. The NCSE has now published details of SNA allocations for schools for September 2015 on its website at www.ncse.ie.

SNAs are allocated to meet the assessed care needs of qualifying children in the school in the school. The management and deployment of the SNA support allocated to a school is then a matter for the school and should be organised by the school in a manner which appropriately meets the significant care needs of the children concerned. It is a matter for schools to allocate support as required, and on the basis of individual need, which allows schools flexibility in how the SNA support is utilised.

Schools may seek advice from their local National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) psychologist, from their NCSE Special Educational Needs Organiser, or from the National Behavioural Support Services, as to how children with behavioural needs can best be supported in school.

Published guidelines which are available to schools include:

Supporting Students with Behavioural, Emotional, and Social difficulties, which is available on the Department’s website www.education.ie; the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) guidelines for schools on Developing a Code of Behaviour and the National Educational Psychological Services document Behavioural Emotional and Social Difficulties - a Continuum of Support: Guidelines for Teachers.

Circular 11/95 and the Rules for National Schools provide that the minimum length of the normal full school day at primary level comprises of a period of not less than 5 hours and forty minutes.

The Deputy has not stated the class that the child is attending but Circular 11/95 and the Rules for National Schools also provide that pupils in infant classes may have a school day that is one hour shorter than the length of the normal school day.

It is a matter for the Board of Management of a particular school to decide whether this concession should be applied in the case of its school. If pupils in infant classes are being given a shorter day, their parents should be notified accordingly and invited to collect them at time of dismissal.

Where the implementation of the shorter day for pupils in infant classes may cause issues for some parents, my Department would encourage school authorities to engage with parents locally with a view to arriving at a mutually acceptable resolution.

My Department does not support the position of any school which may take a unilateral decision to shorten the school day for any pupil, irrespective of whether the pupil may have a special educational need or not. It is the position of my Department that all school children are entitled to participate fully in their school. If there are reasons why an earlier finishing time should be applied in the case of any child, any such arrangements should be agreed with the parents of the child in advance of their implementation.

Details of the manner in which a school or parent may appeal the level of SNA allocation which has been made to support a child in school, to the NCSE, is set out on the NCSE website.

All schools have the contact details of their local SENO, while Parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child's special educational needs, using the contact details available the NCSE website.

As this question relates to an allocation for an individual child, I will arrange to have the matter referred to the NCSE for their attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Irish Water Consultative Group

558. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will publish the minutes of the weekly meetings held in Government Buildings regarding Irish Water; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44709/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): My Department has held a number briefing and update meetings on water sector reform issues for senior officials and Ministerial advisors from relevant Government Departments, generally associated with key milestones in the water sector reform programme. These meetings, which are also attended by Irish Water, are usually held in Government Buildings.

Copies of these minutes have already been made available under the Freedom of Information Act, and I am happy to arrange for these copies to be provided to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Flood Prevention Measures

559. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide compensation measures for businesses in County Donegal to assist with the financial impact of recent flood damage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44682/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): As the Deputy will be aware the Government decided on 8 December to allocate €5m to provide emergency humanitarian support to small businesses that have been unable to secure flood insurance and have been flooded arising from the impact of Storm Desmond. The scheme is being overseen by the Department of Defence and is being administered by the Irish Red Cross. Details in relation to the scheme are available on the Red Cross website. The Deputy will appreciate as these payments are being funded through the Vote of the Department of Defence, my Department has no role in relation to this matter.

Flood Relief Schemes

560. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if a landowner is permitted to leave excess water from land drains on public roads; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44690/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): Flood relief works are a matter for the relevant local authority and, at national level, the Office of Public Works.

Water Conservation Grant Administration

561. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will change the 2015 closing date for the water conservation grant so that those persons who missed the deadline will have a further opportunity to apply; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44729/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The Water Services Act 2014 (Water Conservation Grant) Regulations 2015 govern the operation of the 2015 Water Conservation Grant scheme. The date for registration with Irish Water for the purposes of eligibility for payment of the grant in 2015 was set at 30 June 2015.

The deadline for submitting a completed application for the grant in 2015 was 8 October 2015, which was further extended to 22 October 2015 under the Water Services Act 2014 (Water Conservation Grant) (Amendment) Regulations 2015. These criteria were widely communicated by my Department, on www.watergrant.ie and in the print and radio media. I have no proposals to amend the regulations to further extend the deadline.

I will be reviewing the operation of the 2015 scheme and on completion I will set down the administration arrangements for the 2016 Grant scheme in regulations under the Water Services Act 2014.

Noise Pollution Legislation

562. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding the proposed new

street performing by-laws, if he will support the recommendations made by the Dublin City Buskers Association; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44845/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): National noise legislation does not directly address the problem of busking near residential areas. Although noise policy is a responsibility of my Department, the making of bye-laws under the Local Government Act 2001 is entirely a matter for local authorities. Enforcement of bye-laws is therefore a matter for local authorities or the Garda Síochána, as appropriate.

I understand that the street performers' bye laws in Dublin are currently being examined by Dublin City Council and that all interested parties will have an opportunity to comment on proposed changes to the bye-laws during the public consultation phase.

Private Rented Accommodation Price Controls

563. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if a private rental tenant who has been in a tenancy for more than 12 months and who has not had a rent review since 2014 will be subject to a rent review in 2016, subject to the period between rent reviews being no less than 24 months. [44848/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): Section 20 of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 provided that a review of rent may not take place more than once in any period of 12 months or in the first 12 months of the tenancy. The Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2015, which was enacted on 4 December 2015, amends Section 20 to provide that rent reviews can only take place every 24 months rather than every 12 months. This amendment involves no change to the mechanism for determining rents but provides the tenant with a longer fixed period of predictable rent. This measure will have effect for a period of 4 years, after which the duration between reviews will revert to 12 months.

The new provision applies to both new tenancies and to tenancies that commenced prior to the coming into operation of this section. It takes effect from the date of the last review – so if a tenant had a rent review in July 2014, it is intended that the next rent review will not be until July 2016.

Section 26 of the 2015 Act extends the period of notice of a new rent that a landlord must give their tenant from 28 days to 90 days.

Public Procurement Contracts

564. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government why and by whom a tender process (details supplied) was declared null and void in December 2014. [44890/15]

565. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government why none of the applicants to a tender process (details supplied) were contacted; why it took a further six months for the results to be announced following the completion of the scoring that was ready for the Minister to sign off on by 10 December 2015m the same day he had a meeting in Leinster House with the most successful bidder; and why the tender was then suspended and deemed null and void. [44891/15]

566. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local

Government why, in a tender process (details supplied), companies that use the same equipment scored differently on the same equipment; and why companies that scored higher points for declaring Garda clearance for their staff being in place on a different date from others were not asked to show proof of that clearance before contracts were awarded. [44892/15]

567. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government why, in a tender process (details supplied), such high scores were awarded to a company on the question of invoicing set out in ITT section 2.6.5 in regard to the awarding of that contract. [44893/15]

568. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government why he and Pobal did not follow through on tender rules ITT section 6.7 and instead allowed a process whereby the company that met him went on to become the most successful bidder in a tender process (details supplied) given the part of these rules that clearly stated canvassing would disqualify. [44894/15]

569. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will he initiate an order quashing a tender process (details supplied) given the absence of due diligence being carried out on it, as indicated by the information obtained under a freedom of information request and the compared scoring sheets of six of the tender applicants. [44895/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 564 to 569, inclusive, together.

My Department is responsible for the Seniors Alert Scheme which encourages community support for vulnerable older people in our communities by providing grant assistance towards the purchase and installation of personal monitored alarms to enable older persons, of limited means, to continue to live securely in their homes with confidence, independence and peace of mind.

The 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, and a panel of preferred suppliers was identified. The benefits of the new arrangements include the reduction of the bureaucratic and administrative burden for local community groups, who no longer have to get three tenders every six months and, consequently, frees up these groups to spend more time on engaging with their elderly neighbours.

Following the meeting of the 10 of December 2014 between Minister Kelly and Deputy Ryan, a question arose as to whether this meeting impacted the procurement process or could render the process void. As a result, the tender process was paused by my Department pending clarification of a number of technical issues in this regard, and legal advice was sought on whether the process was impacted.

In clarifying the technical issues, the focus for my Department was on ensuring that the parameters set out in the Pobal tender competition were in compliance with national and EU procurement guidelines and directives. Having considered the matter fully and taken advice, the process was found to be robust and compliant and it was agreed that Pobal would proceed with the tender process and bring it to a conclusion.

As part of this review, it was confirmed that there had been no interference in the tender

process or its outcome by any third party. As a result, the tender process was unaltered from the evaluation carried out independently by Pobal, and the original recommendations remained valid. Consequently, there was no need to contact the tender applicants. The pause in the process, however, required a rescheduling of technical development work for the programme schedule within Pobal which pushed back the planned rollout date to September 2015. However there was no significant impact or additional cost as a result of this pause in the schedule as my Department continued to administer the scheme in the interim to ensure continuity in service to support the elderly in their own homes.

As the criteria and scoring under the tender evaluation process were a matter for Pobal, I am not in a position to comment on such matters. However, I understand that the evaluation process was comprehensive and objective, centred around a designated set of procedures and disciplines. The results of the evaluation process were submitted to Pobal senior management, who ultimately decided the matter and signed off on the recommendations therein.

Having fully reviewed this matter, my Department is satisfied that the tender process managed by Pobal was conducted in a robust manner and adhered to EU and national procurement guidelines and directives. Pobal have confirmed that all decisions regarding the procurement process and its outcome were made independently by them in accordance with these guidelines. As a result, the issue of terminating the tender process does not arise.

Foreshore Issues

570. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has initiated enforcement proceedings under the Foreshore Acts for illegal dumping in a location in County Galway (details supplied). [44898/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): My Department has sought legal advice on how best to deal with the foreshore issues arising at the area in question. This advice, when received and considered, will assist my Department in identifying the appropriate next steps.

Rural Development Programme Projects

571. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the Leader programmes will fully commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44901/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): The LEADER element of the Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 will provide €250 million in financial resources to support the development of sustainable rural communities.

As the Deputy will be aware, Ireland is conducting a two stage process for the selection of local development strategies to support the delivery of the LEADER elements of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020. Stage one of the process is 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 mid-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, eight local development strategies have been received and these are being considered at present. Based on progress made to date, I expect that my Department will enter into contracts with Local Action Groups on a rolling basis in early 2016. Following this, Local Action Groups will be accepting applications from both private promoters and community groups for projects, which are consistent with the priorities identified in the local development strategies for their area.

National Oversight and Audit Commission Remit

572. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the role and purpose of the National Oversight and Audit Commission, the responsibilities it has taken over from the Local Government Management Agency, when the local government indicators report or the equivalent performance indicators report will be published. [44946/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) was established under the Local Government Reform Act 2014 to provide oversight of the local government sector.

The specific functions assigned to NOAC are set out in section 126C of the Local Government Act 2001 (as inserted by section 61 of the 2014 Act) and include scrutiny of the performance of any local government body against relevant indicators that NOAC considers it appropriate to refer to. Its functions do not involve taking over any responsibilities from the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA). However, its role in relation to the scrutiny of local government performance against relevant indicators, replaces, in respect of performance in 2014 and subsequent years, the service indicators initiative in local authorities that was introduced by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government in 2004.

The LGMA role in the collection of relevant data through its eReturns system, and in the compilation of tables and commentary on the data, continues in respect of the replacement performance indicators reports to be published by NOAC. Accordingly, in respect of 2014 and subsequent years, the LGMA will no longer be compiling and publishing annual service indicators reports but continues to be involved in compiling, for NOAC, data on the performance indicators determined by NOAC for inclusion in its annual performance indicators reports.

NOAC is statutorily independent of my Department so details relating to the timing of publication of the report on 2014 activity by local authorities are a matter for NOAC itself.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Funding

573. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the level of subvention by the State and local authorities to group water schemes, by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44953/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): Responsibility for the administration of my Department's Rural Water Programme, under which funding is provided for group water schemes, has been devolved to local authorities since 1997. The selection, prioritisation and approval of individual group scheme proposals

for advancement and funding under the programme, within the overall priorities set by my Department and subject to the block grant allocations provided, is therefore a matter for the local authorities.

Details of the block grant allocations notified to local authorities under the 2015 Rural Water Programme are outlined on my Department's website at:

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Environment/Water/WaterServices/RuralWaterProgramme/>.

Details of the level of subsidies available towards the Operational Costs of Group Water Schemes, which scheme is also administered by the local authorities and which are paid on a demand led basis, are also available on the same weblink.

Information on payments made directly to group water schemes would be available from individual local authorities.

Housing Issues

574. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the estimates of the reduction in the private housing stock in Dublin as a result of the introduction of new apartment size regulations, which affect bedsits in particular; the amount of funding he has provided to all Dublin local authorities for refurbishing and regenerating bedsit accommodation; the eligibility criteria for this scheme; and the criteria used in deciding which units are eligible for refurbishment. [44954/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): There will be no adverse implications for the quantum of private housing stock in Dublin as a result of the introduction of updated planning guidelines on apartment developments, because these guidelines will apply only to new build projects going through the planning process.

The updated guidelines I propose to publish shortly are intended to address difficulties in the construction of new apartments in Dublin, from an economic viability perspective, taking account of the fact that different local authorities in and around the city have different standards which are increasing cost for delivery and future maintenance.

In relation to funding my Department has provided to refurbish certain social housing bedsit units, this was first provided under the job stimulus package approved by Government in 2014. An allocation of €5 million was made available to Dublin City Council to convert a number of old bedsit social housing units into social housing apartments. This funding was available for those bedsit units that the City Council prioritised; it was a matter for the Council to select the units to be upgraded. To date, the Council has converted 42 bedsits into apartments.

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

575. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government why Tipperary County Council has refused to purchase a property (details supplied) in County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45016/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The provision of social housing services is a matter for each local authority as the housing authority for its area. Local authorities must identify their area's social housing need and respond as required. This includes delegated sanction from my Department to acquire suitable

properties for social housing, where they represent value for money, meet the social housing need in the area, while at the same time being sensitive to local market conditions. Therefore, it is a matter for Tipperary County Council to determine if the acquisition of a particular property is suitable for the social housing need in their area.

Departmental Properties

576. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the ground rents he or agencies under the remit of his Department pay, by named property, by name of landlord and by amount payable, in 2015 and 2016 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45054/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): My Department does not pay ground rent on the buildings it occupies. This would normally be a matter for the Office of Public Works, or, in the case of certain property occupied by Met Éireann, the Dublin Airport Authority and other Airport Authorities, where appropriate.

The information requested in respect of State Agencies is not collected by my Department.

Rural Development Programme Projects

577. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the details of the funding of each Leader programme administered by the Mayo north east company, by project, by amount, by date approved, by date paid, from 2007 to 2013, if the amount of €9,535,062 was fully allocated to the region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45086/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): In line with the ‘bottom-up’ approach to rural development, there are 35 Local Action Groups contracted on my Department’s behalf, to deliver the LEADER elements of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013. Mayo North East LEADER Partnership (MNELP) are the Local Action Group for the North East Mayo area and, as such, are the principal decision-makers in relation to the allocation of project funding in line with Programme’s Operating Rules and EU regulations. The projects, together with the amounts funded up to 12 October 2015, can be found on my Department’s website via the link:

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Community/RuralDevelopment/EURuralDevelopment/RuralDevelopmentProgrammeLEADER2007-2013/>.

I can confirm that €9,605,562 was made available to the Mayo North East and Gaeltacht areas within County Mayo and of that, €7,336,266 was committed to projects with the remaining €2,269,295 provided to MNELP towards programme administration costs.

Rural Development Programme Funding

578. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the details of the €30 million budget allocation to the rural regeneration and investment in rural communities’ package for each of the years 2015 to 2021 in tabular form, as announced in September 2015. [45092/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): As the Deputy will be aware, I recently announced a €30m investment to support Town and Village regeneration. The new scheme will support the revitalisation of rural towns and villages with the aim of improving the living and working environment in rural communities and enhancing their potential to support increased economic activity into the future.

The new scheme is proposed as part of a concerted effort to support the development of rural towns and villages not only as a component of a broader approach to rural development but also to improve the environment of rural dwellers in a way that will increase their quality of life and simultaneously support potential economic activity in their area.

It is proposed to allocate €5m to the Scheme in each year from 2016 to 2021.

Social and Affordable Housing Applications Data

579. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of applicants on housing waiting lists and why he is not aware of the level of housing need. [45124/15]

580. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of applicants on the housing waiting list for County Donegal. [45125/15]

581. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of applicants on the housing waiting list for County Galway. [45126/15]

582. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of applicants on the housing waiting list for County Mayo. [45127/15]

583. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of applicants on the housing waiting for list County Sligo. [45128/15]

584. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of applicants on the housing waiting list for County Leitrim. [45129/15]

585. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of applicants on the housing waiting list for County Roscommon. [45130/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 579 to 585, inclusive, together.

The statutory Summary of Social Housing Assessments 2013 identified 89,872 households assessed by housing authorities as being eligible and in need of some form of social housing support as at 7 May 2013. The 2013 results provide details on the number of qualified households on the waiting lists of each individual authority and are available on my Department's website at the following link:

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Housing/FileDownload,34857,en.pdf>.

The 2013 figures are the most up-to-date and reliable figures available and are based on a comprehensive review by housing authorities of the households on their waiting lists on a set date in accordance with a prescribed methodology to ensure consistency. This process involved local authorities contacting individual households to confirm their continued requirement and qualification for social housing support. The 2013 figure is of course subject to ongoing fluctuation due to households being allocated housing and new households applying for housing support.

Taking the numbers on a housing list without a full assessment of eligibility and need would be a flawed process as it does not compare like with like. Such figures are based on the numbers of households currently held on file by individual local authorities, which were not subject to the comprehensive review applied under the 2013 summary. For example there may be households included where members of the household have secured employment or whose circumstances may have otherwise changed since 2013 meaning the household is no longer qualified for or in need of social housing. The 2013 figures do not include duplicate entries and those already in local authority, voluntary and co-operative housing or the Rental Accommodation Scheme, and as such, are the most accurate that are available.

By way of illustrating this point, I understand that one local authority wrote to all households held on file as requiring social housing in August of this year, in the context of changes to the social housing allocation procedures locally. In 2013, at the time of the last full assessment, the authority had a waiting list of 6,440 households. In response to a Freedom of Information request this year it reported 8,043 households on file for social housing purposes. As a result of the recent correspondence and based on the responses received the local authority identified 5,790 qualified households on its waiting list at the end of October with a further 528 on transfer lists. The local authority in question accepts that some households may yet still respond and is open to that eventuality. This example illustrates the risk of taking the waiting list as being the number of households on file at a point in time without the requisite check for ongoing eligibility and need.

I recognise that we need up to date and comprehensive data on housing need on an on-going basis but this data needs to be robust and must be gathered based on a sound methodology. In order to ensure we have that data, the Social Housing Strategy 2020 includes a commitment to undertake a statutory Summary of Social Housing Assessments on an annual basis from 2016 onwards.

Fire Safety

586. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government what the Dublin Docklands Development Authority is doing, as owner of the Longboat Quay common areas, to ensure that the cost for the Longboat Quay fire safety works is urgently addressed, so works can commence on fire safety. [45162/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The matters raised by the Deputy are currently before the Courts and, as a consequence, are sub judice. In the circumstances, it would be inappropriate for me to comment at this time.

Mortgage Protection Policies

587. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to the reply to Parliamentary Question No. 1028 of 3 November 2015 re-

garding overpriced mortgage protection insurance charged to owners of affordable home units, wherein he states that the matter is currently being examined and a response will be issued, if he will forward the outstanding response, his plans to put this policy out to tender and if there will be more transparency around this process in the future. [45169/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): I assume the Deputy is referring to her letter to me, dated 4 November 2015, in follow up to her Parliamentary Question No. 1028, dated 3 November 2015. A response to the letter has now issued.

The local authority mortgage protection insurance (MPI) scheme is overseen by the Mortgage Protection Committee, which is a sub-committee of the County and City Management Association (CCMA) and is representative of the CCMA, local authorities, the Housing Finance Agency and my Department.

I understand that a formal procurement process is due to be held in 2016, in accordance with official procurement rules, in order to secure the most appropriate MPI cover at the best value for money for local authority borrowers with effect from 1 January 2017.

Planning Issues

588. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if the inquiries into planning matters in counties Wicklow, Dublin, Cork, Donegal, Galway and Carlow have been completed; and when he will make the results available. [45207/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): MacCabe Durney Barnes Consultants were appointed in February 2014 to carry out an independent planning review on the performance of planning functions having regard to specific planning issues in respect of six planning authorities (Carlow, Cork, Galway and Meath County Councils and Cork and Dublin City Councils) in accordance with section 255 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

I received the final report from the consultants in July 2015 and, having fully considered its contents, I intend to publish the report on my Department's website today.

A separate review follows on from the Order made by the High Court on 14 June 2013, quashing that part of my Department's Planning Review Report (2012) relating to Donegal, following a settlement between my Department and the party concerned who had brought judicial review proceedings in respect of that part of the Report. The matter has been disposed of to the satisfaction of both sides. In light of these proceedings, my Department subsequently sought the advice of the Attorney General on how best to proceed in the case of issues raised in relation to planning matters in Donegal. Taking account of advice from the Office of the Attorney General my Department has appointed, on a non-statutory basis, Senior Counsel to prepare a review report in relation to these matters and a report is awaited.

I have also received correspondence in relation to a number of complaints regarding certain matters in County Wicklow which is being considered. A reply will be issued in due course.

Capital Assistance Scheme Applications

589. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local

Government how long he has been considering (details supplied) a proposal from Dublin City Council on the refurbishment of a block of units at Jamestown Court, Inchicore, Dublin 8, and when he will respond to it. [45234/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): My Department received the initial proposal regarding this development from Dublin City Council in April last, when all local authorities submitted new proposals in relation to my Department's Capital Assistance Scheme. My Department is in correspondence with Dublin City Council regarding the project and is currently awaiting a report from the Council regarding access routes to the site, which it is expected will be received later this month.

Local Improvement Scheme Administration

590. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the measures in place under the Local Government (Business Improvement Districts) Act 2006, a statutory instrument or a departmental circular that oblige the rating authorities, which oversee the corporate entities established to operate the business improvement districts schemes, to ensure that these entities are democratically accountable to the levy-payers in these schemes; that the required annual general meetings are held and that the boards of directors are directly elected by the levy-payers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45257/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The Local Government (Business Improvement Districts) Act 2006 provided for the establishment of Business Improvement Districts within the functional areas of local authorities.

A Business Improvement District (BID) scheme is an organisational and financing mechanism with a legal basis, through which businesses can, on a self-help basis, develop and implement initiatives in defined areas to improve those areas for the betterment of the trading environment in which they operate. In a BID, a group of businesses are empowered, where a majority of those businesses agree, to raise a special levy payable by all the businesses in the defined area to pay for complementary local services and improvements, within that defined area.

The Act sets out a framework for comprehensive consultation with the public and business community in an area. In the first instance, a BID proposal submitted to a local authority must be made available for public inspection under section 129D. Following publication of a BID proposal, the local authority must, by way of public notice, invite submissions from the public on the proposal. If following consideration of the submissions received, the local authority is of the opinion that the BID proposal may be inconsistent with the interests of the local community, it must notify the BID proponents of the nature of the inconsistency.

Section 129G provides for the holding of a plebiscite, organised by the local authority, to determine the level of support among ratepayers in an area. In the BID plebiscite, each rateable business has one vote. If a majority of the ratepayers who vote in a plebiscite vote in favour, the BID scheme can then be considered by the local authority.

Section 129I sets out requirements in relation to the BID company which will be responsible for implementing and managing a BID scheme. The board of directors will be made up of businesses or their representatives and nominees of the local authority. At least two thirds of the directors must be ratepayers or ratepayer representatives.

The BID company adopts a budget each year. The amount of the levy on any individual business is determined by the rateable valuation of that business. The local authority collects a

BID contribution levy from each business in the BIDS area.

Section 129B provides that a BID operates and has effect for the number of years (not exceeding 5 years) as may be specified in the terms of the scheme. However, this limit does not prevent a BID scheme from being approved for renewal for one or more periods.

Departmental Funding

591. **Deputy Derek Nolan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he or an agency under the remit of his Department provide funding for a minibus to facilitate greater resources for elderly citizens in a community in Galway city to assist them in their daily routines and to improve their health and well-being; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45333/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): Funding for the type of measure referred to may be available under the Dormant Accounts legislation whereby balances on dormant accounts with banks, building societies and An Post are paid into the Dormant Accounts Fund, which is managed by the National Treasury Management Agency.

The primary purpose of the legislation is to reunite the original account holders with their moneys, including all interest due. In addition, the legislation provides that disbursements from the Fund may be made for charitable purposes or for purposes of community benefit.

A Disbursement Scheme sets out the moneys that may be disbursed from the Fund. The current scheme was approved by Government in December 2013 and will run until November 2016. In addition, a Dormant Accounts Fund Action Plan is prepared each year in order to implement the Disbursement Scheme. The most recent Action Plan was adopted on 1 July 2014 and contained an allocation in excess of €26m to be expended through a number of Government Departments and agencies.

Under the 2014 Plan, Pobal are administering the two measures (Social Enterprise and the Disadvantaged Youth Employment Initiatives/Entrepreneurship) for which my Department has responsibility and a number of other measures on behalf of the Department of Social Protection and the Department of Health.

A decision on the measures for which my Department has responsibility is expected shortly.

It is anticipated that a new Dormant Accounts Action Plan will be drafted early in 2016.

Further data in relation to the Dormant Accounts Fund are available on my Department's website at <http://www.environ.ie/en/Community/DormantAccounts/>.

Capital Assistance Scheme Administration

592. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government with regard to the voluntary and co-operative funding schemes, if the capital assistance scheme will provide residential care or nursing home type accommodation and if accommodation provided in designated centres under the Health Information and Quality Authority, or in cases where residents cannot hold an individual tenancy agreement, will qualify for funding under this scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45428/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The terms and conditions of the Capital Assistance Scheme do not support the provision of residential care or nursing home type accommodation. Accordingly, the provision of accommodation in centres deemed as designated centres by the Health Information and Quality Authority, or where residents cannot hold an individual tenancy agreement, had not qualified for funding under the Scheme, including in the last invitation to submit proposals which issued in March 2015.

However, my Department and the Department of Health are now collaborating on the development of new guidelines for the Scheme which will support people with disabilities to access community-based living arrangements, with maximum independence and choice. These are currently being finalised and are expected to issue shortly.

Mortgage to Rent Scheme Applications

593. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the status of a mortgage-to-rent case for persons (details supplied) in County Cork, including the next steps in the process and the date of completion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45438/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): Under the Approved Housing Body (AHB) Mortgage to Rent scheme properties are offered to AHBs, which have expressed an interest in the scheme, by the Housing Agency. Financial details of the case are provided to enable the organisation make an informed choice as to the feasibility of the transaction. If an AHB cannot progress the case the Housing Agency is informed to enable it to seek an alternative AHB.

In respect of the case referred to in the Question, the property was assigned to an AHB for purchase. However, that AHB subsequently determined that the purchase was not financially viable. The case was then returned to the Housing Agency for consideration by other AHBs.

The Housing Agency has since worked over several months to identify an alternative AHB. However, no AHB has declared an interest in the case and the lender has been advised accordingly. In these circumstances, the Mortgage to Rent application is terminated.

Departmental Agencies

594. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the annual cost to the Exchequer of establishing and maintaining the digital hub development agency and any other related or investment or grant costs since 2003 to date related to the digital hub, in tabular form. [45090/15]

595. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of new jobs created at or arising from the establishment of the digital hub, in tabular form. [45091/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 594 and 595 together.

The Digital Hub Development Agency (DHDA) was established in 2003 under the Digital Hub Development Agency Act 2003 to support digital entrepreneurship through the creation of a cluster of enterprises focussed on digital content and technology.

The Digital Hub campus comprises a nine-acre site. Its property portfolio consists of a number of properties which have been developed by the DHDA and are being used by digital companies. It also includes many protected structures, and a number of derelict buildings. The Agency has developed a new strategy for developing the campus, including those buildings which are derelict.

In addition to commercial income, the Agency receives an Exchequer subvention from my Department towards meeting its operational and capital expenditure. A number of strategic digital initiatives have also been funded by my Department. It has also received grant funding from sources other than my Department.

The following table sets out the grant funding by year since the DHDA's establishment and the number of persons employed full-time by digital enterprises located at the DHDA, in respect of the period commencing 2008, being the first year for which such data is available.

Year	Subvention – Operational Expenditure (€)	Subvention – Capital Expenditure (€)	Other Grants (€)	Number of employees working for companies in DHDA
2003	585,750			
2004	0			
2005	3,350,000		309,240	
2006	1,940,000		57,750	
2007	1,940,000		33,347	
2008	1,940,000			607
2009	1,731,200			501
2010	2,060,000	204,248		551
2011	2,473,633			522
2012	2,066,720	1,148,295		503
2013	2,045,795	323,102		598
2014	1,774,226	849,087	20,000	627
2015 (to date)	1,555,422	622,168	2,281	701

The Agency is currently focussed on a significant expansion of its office capacity through the development and refurbishment of its properties. It aims to increase commercial income with a view to eliminating reliance on the Exchequer, while simultaneously contributing to the major regeneration of the Dublin 8 area.

Work is underway to prepare legislation to effect the merger of the DHDA with Dublin City Council, allowing the DHDA to leverage the considerable property and urban regeneration expertise of the Council, while simultaneously growing its client base.

Renewable Energy Generation Targets

596. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources how he will enhance the security of Irish energy supplies, given the central role provided by Whitegate oil refinery, if he has examined proposals put forward to enable the Government attain European Union 2020 renewable targets on biofuels and yield-improvement projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44686/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White):

The owners of the refinery, Phillips 66, advised my Department in October that they were putting the Whitegate refinery up for sale. A refinery sale would be a commercial matter between Phillips 66 and a potential purchaser. As this process is underway Whitegate will continue to be operated on a business as usual basis.

The Government views the continued operation of the Whitegate refinery on a commercial basis as highly desirable from an energy security and economic perspective. Security of supply remains a fundamental tenet of our energy policy. I have recently met a number of my Cabinet colleagues to discuss the refinery and I updated Government on the matter last week.

The Corrib Gas Field Development has a strategic benefit for Ireland in terms of strengthening Ireland's energy security of supply and it will meet on average 42% of the all island gas demand over its first two years of operation.

The 2009 Renewable Energy Directive sets all Member States a binding target that at least 10% of the energy used in the transport sector must come from renewable sources by 2020. Ireland aims to meet this target mainly through the use of sustainable biofuels with electric vehicles also making a contribution.

The Biofuels Obligation Scheme was introduced in July 2010 and obliges the road transport fuel industry to ensure that a certain amount of the fuel placed on the Irish market is biofuel. The scheme also offers increased incentives for biofuels produced from waste materials and residues. I understand the refinery owners have been considering the potential for Whitegate to operate as a biorefinery. As a private entity, such an investment project is a matter for the owners. The increasing requirement for biofuels to meet Ireland's 2020 target can afford opportunities for indigenous producers, including the refinery, particularly those which produce biofuels from wastes and residues.

Rural Broadband Scheme

597. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the progress of the rural broadband scheme since its introduction when a company (details supplied) was awarded the contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44730/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White):

Ireland's telecommunications market has been liberalised since 1999 and has developed into a well-regulated market, supporting a multiplicity of commercial operators providing services over a diverse range of technology platforms. The State is not a service provider and can only intervene, subject to EU competition rules, to ensure access to broadband services in areas where the competitive market has failed to deliver such services.

My Department's National Broadband Scheme (NBS), which was delivered by Hutchison 3G Ireland Ltd ("3"), is an example of such an intervention. The Scheme operated from December 2008 to August 2014, and ensured the availability of a basic and affordable retail broadband service to some 238,000 fixed residences and businesses located in 1,028 Electoral Divisions across 25 Counties. Combined with private investment, it allowed Ireland to meet the EU Commission's "Digital Agenda for Europe" target of having a basic broadband service available to all areas by 2013.

The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to ensure that every citizen and business, regardless of location, has access to a high quality, high speed broadband service. This

is being delivered through a combination of commercial and State investment.

A key principle of the NBP is to support and stimulate commercial investment through policy and regulatory measures. Commercial investment since the publication of the NBP has considerably exceeded expectations. In 2012, industry committed to providing high speed broadband to 1m addresses in Ireland by 2015, with top speeds ranging from 70Mbps to 100 Mbps. Today, cable is delivering speeds of up to 240 Mbps to over 700,000 addresses and eFibre services of up to 100 Mbps are available to circa 1.2m addresses.

Legislation enacted in 2014 has enabled the use of ESB's national distribution system to deliver fibre services. This has resulted in SIRO entering the market, adding increased competition for ultra-fast services. Two companies are now investing in fibre-to-the-home services. This commercial activity represents a significant step-change in the quality of broadband connectivity now available to many business and residential customers.

The Government is committed to a State-led intervention into those areas where it has been demonstrated that industry investment will not be forthcoming. Last November I published a national high speed coverage map for 2016.

The areas marked BLUE on the map represent those areas that will have access to commercial high speed broadband services. The AMBER areas show the target areas for the State intervention. The map allows all members of the public, be they business or residential, to see whether their premises/home will have access to commercial high speed broadband services by end 2016 or whether they will be included in the Government's proposed intervention.

Over 40 responses were received following the publication of the NBP proposed Intervention Strategy in July last. Non-confidential versions of these submissions are being published and can be accessed at www.Broadband.gov.ie.

I expect to proceed to formal procurement before the end of the year.

It is anticipated that speeds of at least 30Mbps will be also delivered through the Government's intervention and the network will be designed to cater for future increased demand from consumers and business.

The Government is determined to ensure that the network is built out as quickly as possible and engagement with industry stakeholders has indicated that this could be achieved within 3-5 years of the contract award.

In this context, the NBP proposes that through the combination of commercial investment and State intervention, 85% of addresses in Ireland will have access to high speed services by 2018 with an ambition of 100% coverage by end of 2020.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

598. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the status of the proposed 30 megabits per second broadband network for all houses by 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44731/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to ensure that every citizen and business, regardless of location, has access to a high quality, high speed broadband service. This will be achieved through a combination of commercial investments and a State led intervention

in areas where commercial services will not be provided.

In July last I published a detailed draft Intervention Strategy for public consultation. Over 40 responses were received in response to the public consultation process and non-confidential versions of these submissions are being published and can be accessed at www.Broadband.gov.ie.

That strategy proposes that the State-funded network must be capable of delivering high-quality, high speed broadband of at least 30mbps download and 6mbps upload. It must also be capable of catering for higher performance in the future so as to keep pace with consumer demand. This will be a specific requirement of the tender and it will be a matter for bidders to select the technology they consider will best deliver the service.

In accordance with EU State Aid Guidelines we must observe a strict policy of technology neutrality in any procurement process. We will set out a detailed service specification, including a requirement to scale up services over the lifetime of the contract, and allow bidders show how they propose to meet these contractual requirements.

Over 40 responses were received following the publication of the NBP proposed Intervention Strategy in July last. Non-confidential versions of these submissions have been published and can be accessed at www.Broadband.gov.ie.

Meanwhile, my Department continues to review the technical and financial detail relating to potential new commercial investment proposals.

I expect to proceed to formal procurement before the end of the year. The Government is determined to ensure that the network is built out as quickly as possible and engagement with industry stakeholders has indicated that this could be achieved within 3-5 years of the contract award.

In this context, the NBP proposes that through the combination of commercial investment and State intervention, 85% of addresses in Ireland will have access to high speed services by 2018 with an ambition of 100% coverage by end of 2020.

Broadband Service Speeds

599. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the status of high-speed broadband being delivered to the Ballinabrackey and Castlejordan areas in County Meath; the anticipated plans for these areas under State intervention or by commercial operators; the date of completion; the status of any ongoing pilot programmes taking place or planned in these areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44734/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The provision of electronic communications infrastructure, including the significant investment required to make high speed telecommunication services publicly available, occurs within a fully liberalised market. It is a matter for the competing networks providers to decide those areas which can be served on a commercial basis, in the first instance. Intervention by the State is limited to investment or co-investment in those areas of the country the commercial market will not serve.

The National Broadband Plan aims to ensure that every citizen and business, regardless of location, has access to a high quality, high speed broadband service. This will be achieved

through a combination of commercial investments and a State led intervention in areas where commercial services will not be provided.

The commercial telecommunications sector is currently investing approximately €2.5 billion in network upgrades and enhanced services. These very significant investments represent a step-change in the quality of broadband services available.

Last November I published a national high speed coverage map for 2016. This map is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. The areas marked BLUE represent those areas that will have access to commercial high speed broadband services.

The AMBER areas show the target areas for the State intervention. All premises within the AMBER areas will be included in the State's intervention and includes Castlejordan and Balinabrackey, Co Meath.

The map allows all members of the public, be they business or residential, to see whether their premises/home will have access to commercial high speed broadband services by end 2016 or whether they will be included in the Government's proposed intervention.

It is anticipated that speeds of at least 30Mbps will be also delivered through the Government's intervention and the network will be designed to cater for future increased demand from consumers and business.

I would encourage consumers to consult the websites of the various commercial operators to ascertain details of current and planned future deployment plans.

I am informed by the commercial operators that next generation broadband services have been rolled out to over 28,600 premises to date in Co Meath with over 22,600 more expected to be served by commercial investment. Approximately 31,000 remaining premises in Meath will be covered either by further commercial investment or the proposed State intervention.

Over 40 responses were received following the publication of the NBP proposed Intervention Strategy in July last. Non-confidential versions of these submissions are being published and can be accessed at www.Broadband.gov.ie.

Meanwhile, my Department continues to review the technical and financial detail relating to potential new commercial investment proposals with a view to updating the intervention area Map.

I expect to proceed to formal procurement before the end of the year.

The Government is determined to ensure that the network is built out as quickly as possible and engagement with industry stakeholders has indicated that this could be achieved within 3-5 years of the contract award.

In this context, the NBP proposes that through the combination of commercial investment and State intervention, 85% of addresses in Ireland will have access to high speed services by 2018 with an ambition of 100% coverage by 2020.

Renewable Energy Generation Targets

600. **Deputy Helen McEntee** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if Ireland can reach its 2020 climate change and energy security targets without constructing industrial wind farms in residential areas; if he will request EirGrid to engage mean-

ingfully with local communities in counties Cavan, Monaghan and Meath regarding regional environmental concerns in respect of proposals for an interconnector project connecting the North of Ireland's energy grid with that of the Republic of Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44052/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The 2009 EU Renewable Energy Directive set Ireland a legally binding target of meeting 16% of our energy requirements from renewable sources by 2020 and in order to reach that target, Ireland is committed to 40% of electricity demand from renewable sources. In 2014 8.6% of our energy consumption came from renewables, and renewables accounted for 22.7% of our electricity consumption. In setting a target for electricity from renewable sources, the Government has not set specific targets for given renewable technologies. To date, wind energy as the most cost effective of the technologies available to Ireland, has been the largest driver of growth in renewable electricity. The Government recognises that wind must be complemented by other policies to meet our renewable energy ambitions. In addition to our onshore wind resource, bioenergy, solar and other technologies may play a critical role in diversifying our renewable generation portfolio over the period to 2020.

In terms of the proposed North-South Transmission Link project, EirGrid, in discharging its duties as operator and developer of the national transmission grid, engages with communities and citizens on an on-going basis. There has been extensive public consultation on the North-South Transmission Link project including statutory consultation as required under Regulation (EU) No. 347/2013 on guidelines for trans-European energy infrastructure and Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended.

EirGrid has also opened offices in Navan, Cootehill, and Carrickmacross and has appointed Community Liaison Officers and Agricultural Liaison Officers who are all involved in outreach to the local communities along the intended route of the North-South Transmission Line project.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

601. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will tackle the inadequate broadband service to houses and businesses in County Kerry; the number of premises that will be connected to high-speed broadband via State intervention and commercial operators; the date of completion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44832/15]

602. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will tackle the inadequate broadband service to houses and businesses in Cork county and city; the number of premises that will be connected to high-speed broadband via State intervention and commercial operators; the date of completion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44833/15]

603. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will tackle the inadequate broadband service to houses and businesses in Waterford county and city; the number of premises that will be connected to high-speed broadband via State intervention and commercial operators; the date of completion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44834/15]

604. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will tackle the inadequate broadband service to houses and businesses

in County Tipperary; the number of premises that will be connected to high-speed broadband via State intervention and commercial operators; the date of completion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44835/15]

605. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will tackle the inadequate broadband service to houses and businesses in Limerick county and city; the number of premises that will be connected to high-speed broadband via State intervention and commercial operators; the date of completion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44836/15]

606. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will tackle inadequate broadband service to houses and businesses in County Clare; the number of premises that will be connected to high-speed broadband via State intervention and commercial operators; the date of completion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44837/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 601 to 606, inclusive, together.

The National Broadband Plan aims to ensure that every citizen and business, regardless of location, has access to a high quality, high speed broadband service. This will be achieved through a combination of commercial investments and a State led intervention in areas where commercial services will not be provided.

The commercial telecommunications sector is currently investing approximately €2.5 billion in network upgrades and enhanced services. These very significant investments represent a step-change in the quality of broadband services available.

Last November I published a national high speed coverage map for 2016. The areas marked BLUE on the map represent those areas that will have access to commercial high speed broadband services.

The AMBER areas show the target areas for the State intervention. All premises within the AMBER areas will be included in the State's intervention.

The map allows all members of the public, be they business or residential, to see whether their premises or home will have access to commercial high speed broadband services by end 2016 or whether they will be included in the Government's proposed intervention. The High Speed Map contains a breakdown of premises covered per townland.

It is anticipated that speeds of at least 30Mbps will be also delivered through the Government's intervention and the network will be designed to cater for future increased demand from consumers and business.

Consumers can also consult the websites of the various commercial operators to ascertain details of current and planned future deployment plans.

Over 40 responses were received following the publication of the NBP proposed Intervention Strategy in July last. Non-confidential versions of these submissions are being published and can be accessed at www.Broadband.gov.ie.

Meanwhile, my Department continues to review the technical and financial detail relating to potential new commercial investment proposals.

I expect to proceed to formal procurement before the end of the year. The Government is

determined to ensure that the network is built out as quickly as possible and engagement with industry stakeholders has indicated that this could be achieved within 3-5 years of the contract award.

In this context, the NBP proposes that through the combination of commercial investment and State intervention, 85% of addresses in Ireland will have access to high speed services by 2018 with an ambition of 100% coverage by end of 2020.

The following table details the specific information requested by the Deputy. This information is based on the map produced by the Department in November 2014, and is available on the Department's website.

Notes: Existing and Planned Commercial High Speed Broadband: This is the number of premises by county that commercial operators indicated would be able to receive high speed broadband by end 2016.

Number of Premises covered by State Intervention: This is the number of premises by county that is currently expected to be covered by the proposed Intervention Strategy.

County	Existing Commercial High Speed Broadband Premises covered to date	Further Planned Commercial High Speed Broadband Premises by end 2016	Number of premises covered by State Intervention under the NBP
CLARE	20,451	13,206	34,501
CORK	126,118	55,664	85,972
KERRY	27,582	11,242	51,180
LIMERICK	48,872	14,826	33,963
TIPPERARY	26,569	16,799	41,207
WATERFORD	31,693	11,405	17,897

Broadband Service Provision

607. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the date for the roll-out of high-speed broadband for an area (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44962/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The National Broadband Plan aims to ensure that every citizen and business, regardless of location, has access to a high quality, high speed broadband service. This will be achieved through a combination of commercial investments and a State led intervention in areas where commercial services will not be provided.

The commercial telecommunications sector is currently investing approximately €2.5 billion in network upgrades and enhanced services. These very significant investments represent a step-change in the quality of broadband services available.

Last November I published a national high speed coverage map for 2016. The areas marked BLUE on the map represent those areas that will have access to commercial high speed broadband services.

The AMBER areas show the target areas for the State intervention. All premises within the AMBER areas will be included in the State's intervention.

Based on information provided by commercial operators, and the current high speed broadband map the townland of Laherdane in County Cork will be covered by the commercial sector.

The map allows all members of the public, be they business or residential, to see whether their premises or home will have access to commercial high speed broadband services by end 2016 or whether they will be included in the Government's proposed intervention. The High Speed Map contains a breakdown of premises covered per townland.

It is anticipated that speeds of at least 30Mbps will be also delivered through the Government's intervention and the network will be designed to cater for future increased demand from consumers and business.

Consumers can also consult the websites of the various commercial operators to ascertain details of current and planned future deployment plans.

More generally I am informed by the commercial operators that next generation broadband services have been rolled out to over 126,000 premises to date in County Cork with a further 55,600 expected to be served by commercial investment. The remaining 86,000 premises in County Cork will be covered by commercial investment or be the target for the proposed State intervention under the National Broadband Plan.

Over 40 responses were received following the publication of the NBP proposed Intervention Strategy in July last. Non-confidential versions of these submissions are being published and can be accessed at www.Broadband.gov.ie.

Meanwhile, my Department continues to review the technical and financial detail relating to potential new commercial investment proposals.

I expect to proceed to formal procurement before the end of the year. The Government is determined to ensure that the network is built out as quickly as possible and engagement with industry stakeholders has indicated that this could be achieved within 3-5 years of the contract award.

In this context, the NBP proposes that through the combination of commercial investment and State intervention, 85% of addresses in Ireland will have access to high speed services by 2018 with an ambition of 100% coverage by end of 2020.

Broadband Service Speeds

608. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will improve broadband services in the village of Ashford in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45022/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The National Broadband Plan aims to deliver high quality, high speed broadband to every citizen and business, regardless of location. This is being achieved through a combination of commercial investment by telecoms operators, and a State led intervention in those parts of the country where commercial services will not be provided.

Last November I published a national high speed coverage map for 2016. The areas marked BLUE on the map represent those areas that will have access to commercial high speed broadband services.

The AMBER areas show the target areas for the State intervention and this includes Ash-

ford, County Limerick.

It is anticipated that speeds of at least 30Mbps will be also delivered through the Government's intervention and the network will be designed to cater for future increased demand from consumers and business.

I am informed by the commercial operators that next generation broadband services have been rolled out to over 48,800 premises to date in County Limerick with over 14,800 more expected to be served by commercial investment. Approximately 33,900 premises in Limerick will be covered either by further commercial investment or the proposed State intervention.

Over 40 responses were received following the publication of the NBP proposed Intervention Strategy in July last. Non-confidential versions of these submissions are being published and can be accessed at www.Broadband.gov.ie.

Meanwhile, my Department continues to review the technical and financial detail relating to potential new commercial investment proposals with a view to updating the intervention area Map.

I expect to proceed to formal procurement before the end of the year.

The Government is determined to ensure that the network is built out as quickly as possible and engagement with industry stakeholders has indicated that this could be achieved within 3-5 years of the contract award.

In this context, the NBP proposes that through the combination of commercial investment and State intervention, 85% of addresses in Ireland will have access to high speed services by 2018 with an ambition of 100% coverage by 2020.

Petroleum and Gas Exploration

609. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources further to Parliamentary Question No. 601 of 1 December 2015, who made the oral agreements with the companies involved; and when they were made. [45039/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Joe McHugh): I have stated previously that it is a matter for the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources to determine whether or not to grant a Petroleum Prospecting Licence when an application for such a licence is made, and the agreement of an applicant is not required.

Gas Exploration Licences

610. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources further to Parliamentary Question No. 600 of 1 December 2015, if any oral or tacit agreements have been made regarding the unconventional gas exploration and extraction research project currently underway. [45040/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Joe McHugh): I refer to the reply to Question No. 600 of 1 December 2015. The position is unchanged.

Departmental Properties

611. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the ground rent he or agencies under the remit of his Department pay, by named property, by name of landlord and by amount payable, in 2015 and in 2016 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45051/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): All properties occupied by my Department are either owned by or leased by the Office of Public Works and as such my Department does not have any ground rent liability.

In relation to bodies under the aegis of my Department, this is an operational matter for each body. My Department will ask the bodies in question to supply the information directly to the Deputy.

Energy Resources

612. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the position regarding the future of the Whitegate oil refinery, County Cork in view of the announcement that it is now for sale; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45244/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The Whitegate refinery was privatised as a result of its sale by the State in 2001. Under the terms of the sale, the owners are obliged to continue to operate the refinery for a minimum of fifteen years, a commitment which remains in place until July 2016. That commitment is not affected by the planned sale.

The owners of the refinery, Phillips 66, advised my Department in October that they were putting the Whitegate refinery up for sale and indicated their intention to market it for sale as an operational refinery. A refinery sale would be a commercial matter between Phillips 66 and a potential purchaser. As this process is underway Whitegate will continue to be operated on a business as usual basis.

The Government views the continued operation of the Whitegate refinery on a commercial basis as highly desirable from an energy security and economic perspective. Security of supply remains a fundamental tenet of our energy policy. I have recently met a number of my Cabinet colleagues to discuss the refinery and I updated Government on the matter last week.

Energy Policy

613. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will respond to climate change discussions in the context of reducing dependency on fossil fuels; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45365/15]

620. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if natural energy resources continue to be developed and made available to the public; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45375/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 613 and 620 together.

The overarching objective of the Government's energy policy, as set out in the White Paper on Energy Policy which I will publish tomorrow, is to ensure secure and sustainable supplies of competitively priced energy to all consumers as our energy system undergoes the fundamental transformation required to meet our climate policy objectives. A well balanced fuel mix that provides reliable energy, minimises costs and protects against supply disruptions and price volatility, is essential to Irish consumers as we make this transition. To achieve this, it is vital that our natural energy resources continue to be developed. By 2050, greenhouse gas emissions from the energy sector will be reduced by between 80% and 95%, compared to 1990 levels in line with the EU objective. Fossil fuels will remain a progressively decreasing part of the energy mix as we transition to a largely decarbonised energy system by 2050, and significant progress is already being made in increasing the share of renewables in that mix.

Our immediate focus is on the period to 2020. In addition to the EU's 2020 targets for emissions reductions, the 2009 EU Renewable Energy Directive sets Ireland a legally binding target of meeting 16% of our energy requirements from renewable sources by 2020. Ireland is committed to achieving this target through meeting 40% of electricity demand, 12% of heat and 10% of transport from renewable sources of energy, with the latter transport target also being legally binding. Figures provided by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland show that, in 2014, 8.6% of Ireland's overall energy requirements were met from renewable sources. More specifically, the SEAI has calculated that 22.7% of electricity, 6.6% of heat and 5.2% of transport energy requirements were from renewable sources. Biofuels represented 1.9% of gross electricity consumption in the same year. This means we were just over halfway towards each of the separate targets for contributions of renewable energy in electricity, heat and transport. The SEAI has estimated that this avoided €346 million of fossil fuel imports.

Ireland is ambitious to make a cost-effective and fair contribution to the EU's overall 2030 ambition, which seeks to have at least 27% of energy demand met from renewable sources by 2030. To this end, Government policy will continue to be supportive of the increasing deployment of renewable energy. In addition, to the extent that non-renewable sources will remain an ever decreasing part of the energy mix, Government policy will also seek to reduce import dependency by supporting the identification and harnessing of indigenous supplies. Corrib gas coming on stream will make a significant impact on reducing energy imports, meeting 40% of all-island demand in its first years of production.

Broadband Service Provision

614. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he has examined the extent of broadband deficiency in terms of availability, quality and speed in rural and in urban areas; if the ongoing investment programme will address these issues; if he has identified specific deadlines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45367/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The provision of electronic communications infrastructure, including the significant investment required to make high speed telecommunication services publicly available, occurs within a fully liberalised market. It is a matter for the competing networks providers to decide those areas which can be served on a commercial basis, in the first instance. Intervention by the State is limited to investment or co-investment in those areas of the country the commercial market will not serve.

The National Broadband Plan aims to ensure that every citizen and business, regardless of location, has access to a high quality, high speed broadband service. This will be achieved

through a combination of commercial investments and a State led intervention in areas where commercial services will not be provided.

The commercial telecommunications sector is currently investing approximately €2.5 billion in network upgrades and enhanced services. These very significant investments represent a step-change in the quality of broadband services available.

Last November I published a national high speed coverage map for 2016. The areas marked BLUE on the map represent those areas that will have access to commercial high speed broadband services.

The AMBER areas show the target areas for the State intervention. All premises within the AMBER areas will be included in the State's intervention.

The map allows all members of the public, be they business or residential, to see whether their premises/home will have access to commercial high speed broadband services by end 2016 or whether they will be included in the Government's proposed intervention.

It is anticipated that speeds of at least 30Mbps will be also delivered through the Government's intervention and the network will be designed to cater for future increased demand from consumers and business.

Consumers can also consult the websites of the various commercial operators to ascertain details of current and planned future deployment plans.

Over 40 responses were received following the publication of the NBP proposed Intervention Strategy in July last. Non-confidential versions of these submissions are being published and can be accessed at www.Broadband.gov.ie.

Meanwhile, my Department continues to review the technical and financial detail relating to potential new commercial investment proposals with a view to updating the intervention area Map. I expect to proceed to formal procurement before the end of the year.

The Government is determined to ensure that the network is built out as quickly as possible and engagement with industry stakeholders has indicated that this could be achieved within 3-5 years of the contract award.

In this context, the NBP proposes that through the combination of commercial investment and State intervention, 85% of addresses in Ireland will have access to high speed services by 2018 with an ambition of 100% coverage by end of 2020.

Post Office Network

615. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will augment and fully utilise the postal services network, through the provision of extra compatible facilities, through modernising in the competitive economic climate and through putting provisions in place to retain post offices in areas which might otherwise be bereft of utility services, in the context of public service obligations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45368/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): It is Government policy that An Post remains a strong and viable company, in a position to provide a high quality postal service and maintain a nationwide network of customer focused post offices in the community.

The post office network plays an important role in serving the needs of business and domestic customers alike. However, the postal sector is undergoing systemic change, with migration towards electronic communications resulting in significant core mail volume decline year-on-year. However, post offices, having being fully computerised some years ago, also stand well positioned to become the front office provider of choice for Government and the financial services sector for both electronic transactions as well as the more traditional over the counter transactions.

In recognition of the changing commercial environment I established the Post Office Network Business Development Group earlier this year, the remit of which is to examine the potential from existing and new Government and commercial business that could be transacted through the Post Office network. The Group presented its initial report to me in May 2015. In summary, the initial report outlined that the future of the Post Office network would be best secured by seeking out opportunities in the following areas: financial services, including services delivered by the Department of Social Protection, and basic banking for the unbanked; Government services; social capital and enterprise; and white labelling of financial and other products.

To gain further insight into these areas, a public consultation exercise was held from 16 June to 28 July last, inclusive. Interested parties were invited to submit their views on the initial report. It is clear from the responses received that there is a strong public desire to maintain the nationwide network of post offices. The consultation responses have assisted the Group in identifying opportunities that can benefit the post office network and have informed the final report, which I expect to receive presently.

It is premature to speculate, in advance of receiving the final report, on matters until I have had the opportunity to consider in detail the findings of the Group.

Exploration Licences Data

616. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he has granted and activated exploration licences in each of the past ten years to date, with particular reference to oil, gas and other minerals; the number that have shown commercially viable results to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45370/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Joe McHugh): The following table outlines the exploration licences issued by my Department over the past ten years. Details of all authorisations granted by my Department are published on my Department's website on a quarterly basis and can also be found in the six monthly reports which I am obliged to lay before the Oireachtas under the Minerals Development Acts, 1940 to 1999, and the Petroleum and Other Minerals Development Act, 1960, respectively. The last such reports were in respect of the six month period ending 30 June 2015. These reports are also available on my Department's website at www.dcenr.gov.ie.

Year	Petroleum Exploration Licences Issued	Prospecting Licences (Minerals) Issued
2006	4	84
2007	5	143
2008	5	91
2009	1	66
2010	0	93
2011	2	98

Year	Petroleum Exploration Licences Issued	Prospecting Licences (Minerals) Issued
2012	0	102
2013	5	142
2014	6	71
2015	0	75
Total	28	965

There have been no commercial discoveries of oil or gas within the territory of the State in the last ten years. Ireland, however, has witnessed a positive upswing in the level of petroleum exploration activity in recent years, in particular acquisition of new seismic data and the record number of applications received in the 2015 Atlantic Margin Licensing Round. We need to see this translate into an increased level of exploration drilling in the coming years, if Ireland's true petroleum potential is to be realised

In a similar manner, while the number of active mineral prospecting licences (currently in excess of 560), indicates the positive prevailing state of mineral exploration in Ireland, no new commercially viable deposits of minerals have been discovered during this period. While there have been some encouraging results, particularly in Counties Limerick and Clare, it is too early to determine whether these results will lead to identification of commercially viable deposits.

Corrib Gas Field

617. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when supply from the Corrib gas field will be available to the national grid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45372/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): Following completion of the construction of the Corrib gas pipeline, Shell E&P Ireland Limited, on behalf of the Corrib Gas partners, submitted an application on 18 August, 2015, under Section 40 of the Gas Act 1976, as amended, for consent to operate the pipeline. This consent is required by the developer before production of gas can commence. A public consultation process in relation to the application was initiated on 25 August and closed on 25 September. 11 submissions were received and these are currently being considered as part of the application which will inform the evaluation and decision process.

As previously advised, I understand that the bulk of the gas produced from the Corrib field will be supplied to the national grid via the 149km pipeline constructed by Bord Gáis Networks, which runs from the gas terminal in Bellanaboy County Mayo to Ballymoneen outside of Galway.

Bioenergy Strategy

618. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources to outline the developments in the production of biodiesel and bioethanol, their contribution to projected renewable energy requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45373/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The 2009 Renewable Energy Directive sets all Member States a binding target that at least 10% of the energy used in the transport sector must come from renewable sources by 2020. Ireland

aims to meet this target mainly through the use of sustainable biofuels with electric vehicles also making a small contribution.

The Biofuels Obligation Scheme was introduced in July 2010 as the primary means through which Ireland would meet the transport target and is the principal support for the uptake of biofuels in Ireland. The scheme, administered by the National Oil Reserves Agency (NORA), is certificate based and, since January 2013, an obligated road transport fuel supplier, at the end of each calendar year, must hold six biofuel obligation certificates for every 94 litres (6.383%) of petroleum based fuel it has placed on the road transport market. Two certificates are awarded for each litre of biofuel produced from wastes, residues, non-food cellulosic material, and ligno-cellulosic material placed on the market with one certificate awarded per litre of other biofuels. Certificates are only issued for biofuels that have been demonstrated to have complied with the sustainability criteria of the Renewable Energy Directive.

The 2014 Biofuels Obligation Scheme Annual Report, which can be downloaded from www.nora.ie, reported that almost 167 million litres of biofuel was placed on the road transport fuel market. Over 114 million litres was biodiesel (69%), of which 98 million litres of which was produced from wastes and residues, with approximately 25 million litres produced in Ireland. The remaining biodiesel was produced from oil crops, such as rape seed, palm and soy, all of which were imported. All bioethanol was imported and was from crop based feedstocks.

The European Commission recently adopted a Directive which limits to 7% the amount of energy that Member States can count towards their 2020 renewable energy targets in transport from certain crop based biofuels, whose use could lead to Indirect Land-Use Change (ILUC). The new Directive also contains incentives to encourage the development of advanced biofuels that do not affect food production.

Telecommunications Infrastructure

619. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when he expects the telecommunications sector, encompassing broadband, to become comparable to the best in Europe; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45374/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The Government's National Broadband Plan aims to ensure that every citizen and business, regardless of location, has access to a high quality, high speed broadband service. This is being achieved through a combination of the commercial investments and a State led intervention in areas where commercial services will not be provided.

Currently approximately 1.2m premises in Ireland have access to high speed services, provided commercially. It is expected that 1.6m premises will have access to such services by the end of 2016. Industry is investing significantly in the market, with top speeds of up to 240mbps available in some areas, and up to 1gbps where fibre-to-the-home services are being rolled out.

It is anticipated that speeds of at least 30Mbps will be delivered through the Government's intervention and the network will be designed to cater for future increased demand from consumers and business.

The National Broadband Plan proposes that through the combination of commercial investment and State intervention, 85% of addresses in Ireland will have access to high speed services by 2018 with an ambition of 100% coverage by 2020. This complex and ambitious project is a key priority for Government. It aims to conclusively address current connectivity challenges

in Ireland.

I am confident that the combination of existing commercial investment and the State intervention will make Ireland an exemplar in Europe and beyond, in terms of providing high speed services to all citizens regardless of where they live or work.

In the mobile telephony market, market operators are currently investing in the rollout of 4G networks. These are providing a substantial level of improvement in performance and capabilities over previous 3G and 2G technologies. These 4G networks use the same technology as the most modern mobile networks providing public access internationally.

Question No. 620 answered with Question No. 613.

Broadband Service Provision

621. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if the quality and speed of broadband will be improved over the next three years, particularly in County Kildare; if meeting the requirements of customers is a matter of urgency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45376/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The National Broadband Plan aims to ensure that every citizen and business, regardless of location, has access to a high quality, high speed broadband service. This will be achieved through a combination of commercial investments and a State led intervention in areas where commercial services will not be provided.

The commercial telecommunications sector is currently investing approximately €2.5 billion in network upgrades and enhanced services. These very significant investments represent a step-change in the quality of broadband services available.

Last November I published a national high speed coverage map for 2016. The areas marked BLUE on the map represent those areas that will have access to commercial high speed broadband services.

The AMBER areas show the target areas for the State intervention. All premises within the AMBER areas will be included in the State's intervention.

The map allows all members of the public, be they business or residential, to see whether their premises or home will have access to commercial high speed broadband services by end 2016 or whether they will be included in the Government's proposed intervention.

It is anticipated that speeds of at least 30Mbps will be also delivered through the Government's intervention and the network will be designed to cater for future increased demand from consumers and business.

I am informed by the commercial operators that next generation broadband services have been rolled out to over 55,000 premises to date in County Kildare with over 12,500 more expected to be served by commercial investment. Approximately 20,500 remaining premises in Kildare will be covered either by further commercial investment or the proposed State intervention.

Over 40 responses were received following the publication of the NBP proposed Intervention Strategy in July last. Non-confidential versions of these submissions are being published and can be accessed at www.Broadband.gov.ie.

Meanwhile, my Department continues to review the technical and financial detail relating to potential new commercial investment proposals with a view to updating the intervention area Map.

I expect to proceed to formal procurement before the end of the year. The Government is determined to ensure that the network is built out as quickly as possible and engagement with industry stakeholders has indicated that this could be achieved within 3-5 years of the contract award.

In this context, the NBP proposes that through the combination of commercial investment and State intervention, 85% of addresses in Ireland will have access to high speed services by 2018 with an ambition of 100% coverage by 2020.

Hydraulic Fracturing

622. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding a ban on hydraulic fracturing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45383/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Joe McHugh): The multi-agency trans-boundary programme of research on the potential impacts on the environment and human health from Unconventional Gas Exploration and Extraction projects is administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and co-funded by the EPA, my Department and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, with oversight from a broad based Steering Committee that includes my Department. This All-Island Joint Research Programme is a collaborative approach between Northern Ireland and this jurisdiction and is working very well. I regard the sharing of expertise between the various State Agencies in both jurisdictions as a positive initiative.

The research programme is broad in its scope, covering several environmental parameters, as well as operational practice and regulatory approaches around the world. The Terms of Reference for this research programme were agreed by a broadly based Steering Committee. The draft Terms of Reference had earlier been published for consultation and more than 1,300 submissions were received. The EPA and the Steering Committee reviewed the submissions and the draft Terms of Reference were amended and strengthened after this public consultation.

I understand that the contract for this programme of research was awarded following a robust evaluation process in compliance with public procurement guidelines, where the tender submitted by the winning consortium was evaluated as being the strongest bid. The constitution of the evaluation panel was approved by the project Steering Committee, which included personnel with the capacity to make informed decisions on the tenders received. The evaluation panel consisted of 27 existing and retired personnel from various State agencies spanning four jurisdictions.

The programme of research will assist regulators, both North and South, in making informed decisions about hydraulic fracturing and I believe that we should await the outcome of this research. Any policy decision on hydraulic fracturing will be taken in the context of the objective of achieving a low carbon energy system by 2050.

Hydraulic Fracturing

623. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding research on hydraulic fracturing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45384/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Joe McHugh): The multi-agency trans-boundary programme of research on the potential impacts on the environment and human health from Unconventional Gas Exploration and Extraction (UGEE) projects is administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and co-funded by the EPA, my Department and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, with oversight from a broad based Steering Committee that includes my Department. This All-Island Joint Research Programme (JRP) is a collaborative approach between Northern Ireland and this jurisdiction and is working very well. I regard the sharing of expertise between the various State Agencies in both jurisdictions as a positive initiative.

As is usual in major projects such as this, the project team involves a wide range of expert institutions and companies. CDM Smith is the lead consultant in the consortium engaged to carry out the programme of research, with the consortium also including the British Geological Survey, University College Dublin, Ulster University, AMEC Foster Wheeler and Philip Lee Solicitors. Each offers a particular specialism required by the project scope.

I am aware that there has been some comment on the fact that internationally, CDM Smith has provided expert advice to oil companies involved in the development of unconventional gas resources. I should point out that CDM Smith has also provided advice to State bodies and regulatory agencies across its area of expertise. As I am sure the Deputy will appreciate, it is common that a broad range of parties will seek to draw on the specialist expertise available from a firm such as CDM Smith. The fact that disparate entities seek to draw on such expertise, is generally seen as an indicator of a company's recognised experience.

I can also confirm that Queens University Belfast (QUB) was initially participating as part of the Research Consortium. Due to a change in resources available in QUB, the tasks allocated to QUB were transferred to CDM Smith, supported by GSNI. QUB is still involved as part of the internal review process carried out by the consortium. While this internal review is carried out by the consortium as a quality control before submission of any interim and/or final deliverables of the UGEE JRP, all outputs are reviewed by a Technical Review Group which includes Steering Committee members and other external experts. This process is fully independent from the internal quality control process put in place by the consortium.

The programme of research will assist regulators, both North and South, in making informed decisions about hydraulic fracturing and I believe we should await the outcome of the research. Any policy decision on hydraulic fracturing will be taken in the context of the objective of achieving a low carbon energy system by 2050.

Road Traffic Legislation

624. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the production of breathalyser test results in both Irish and English; if the Road Traffic Act 2010 should be amended in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44775/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Section 13(2) of the Road Traffic Act 2010 requires that in cases where testing of a breath specimen has indicated an alcohol concentration higher than the legal limit, the breath test apparatus should print

'2 identical statements' of the result in a prescribed form. The form itself was prescribed by SI 541 of 2011 which provided both English and Irish versions of the form. The apparatus are programmed to be able to print either.

The High Court determined in a ruling on 21 September 2015 that the Regulations governing the circumstances where a person who has been arrested on suspicion of intoxicated driving provides a breath specimen, at a Garda station, by exhaling into an Evidential Breath Test (EBT) apparatus, provide that the printed statement produced by the EBT apparatus should be in both Irish and English.

Following the ruling, I revoked S.I. 541 of 2011 and replaced it with new Regulations on 22 September 2015 which state what was always intended, i.e. that there are two alternative versions of the form, one in Irish and one in English.

I have no plans to amend the Road Traffic Act in this regard.

Road Projects

625. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45140/15]

639. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when funding will be provided to address erosion on the lower road at Rossbeigh in County Kerry and to ensure a permanent road is built. [44863/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 625 and 639 together.

The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads in Kerry is the statutory responsibility of Kerry 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.

I understand that Kerry County Council has examined a number of options concerning road access at Rossbeigh and that officials from my Department have met with an official from Kerry County Council in relation to possible options. Funding for regional and local roads continues to be constrained and the proposal from the Council will be considered in the context of the overall 2016 budget available to my Department. I expect to announce the 2016 allocations for regional and local roads early in the new year.

Greenways Funding

626. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the Blessington greenway project (details supplied) in County Wicklow, which is shovel-ready, will be allocated funding given that several projects have not drawn down their allocated funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45378/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am not in a position to say at this stage which of the greenway projects already awarded funding under my Department's funding programmes will not draw down the full grant amount. I recognise that a

small number of projects awarded funding are not progressing as expected, however, each will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

I have stated on many occasions that Local Authorities, if they wish to attract funding from the Exchequer, should carry out as much work as possible, including Part 8 planning, from their own resources so that if funding becomes available they would then be well positioned to obtain any such funding. Local Authorities should invest their own money and resources into preparing these projects rather than waiting on central Government funding to do so.

The fact that Wicklow County Council do not currently have Part 8 planning in place means that the project is not “shovel ready”. Wicklow County Council may wish to consider proceeding with the Part 8 planning process for the Blessington Greenway so as to be shovel ready and well placed to compete in any future funding calls.

Road Network

627. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated total cost to the Exchequer of completing an integrated motorway network from Cork to Letterkenny, County Donegal, along the western corridor. [45425/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects (such as an integrated motorway network from Cork to Donegal) is a matter for the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (formerly known as the NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy’s question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Cycling Facilities Data

628. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to reply to Parliamentary Question No. 601 of 24 November 2015 in which the National Transport Authority stated that it provides funding to a range of public agencies for bicycle lockers, the amount of funding and the number of bicycle lockers provided to date. [44684/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I refer to your further Parliamentary Question regarding secure bike parking requesting details of funding provided for the provision of bicycle lockers to public agencies and the number of lockers provided. I have forwarded your question to the National Transport Authority (NTA) for direct response. If you have not received a response within 10 working days please contact my office.

Taxi Regulations

629. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will consider an amendment to the Taxi Regulation Act 2013 to facilitate licensed taxi drivers

of small public service vehicles who, upon reaching the age of 66, wish to sell or transfer the ownership of their taxi plates to a third party, as the current provisions of the Act are preventing this and retirees are losing out on any return from their initial investment in a taxi plate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44728/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Action 14 of the Taxi Regulation Review Report 2011 recommended the introduction of a prohibition on the transferability of small public service vehicle (SPSV) licences with effect from 1st October 2012. The Taxi Regulation Review Group included representatives of the taxi industry and its recommendations were widely publicised to the industry, including through the National Transport Authority's website and industry updates.

The underlying principle for the recommendation was that a licence should determine a person's suitability to carry out a function and it should have no monetary value or be traded on the open market. The measure was provided for in Section 14(1) of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013 which was commenced with effect from 6th April 2014. Special provisions apply in the case of the death of the licensee.

I do not intend bringing forward amendments to the Taxi Regulation Act 2013 in relation to this matter.

Sports Organisations

630. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the efforts he is making to ensure the inclusion and integration of members of the Traveller community within sporting circles and clubs. [44742/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Sport Ireland, which is funded by my Department, is the statutory body with responsibility for the promotion, development and co-ordination of sport, including the development of strategies for increasing participation in sport.

As this question is a matter for Sport Ireland, I have referred it to Sport Ireland for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within 10 days.

Light Rail Projects

631. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 600 of 10 November 2015 and the response from the National Transport Authority confirming that only a base-case economic appraisal has been undertaken to date for the revised metro north project, if future funding beyond the design and planning stages will be contingent upon the results of the more comprehensive business-case analyses, including sensitivity tests, that are to be undertaken; and if he will continue to progress the project even if business-case analyses indicate that the transport-related benefits or the economic-related benefits are not as substantial as considered by the National Transport Authority in the initial analysis. [44780/15]

632. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amounts of the €166 million invested to date on the design and planning stages of the original metro north project that will and will not be recoverable for use on the revised project. [44781/15]

633. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport how long the design and planning stages for the revised metro north project will take; and if the revisions made to the original project are justified in terms of Exchequer savings and a passenger cost-benefit analysis, given the additional length of time the revised project will take to go through planning and design stages and to be granted a railway order in comparison with the original project. [44782/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 631 to 633, inclusive, together.

As explained to the Deputy in my response to PQ No. 600 of 10 November, the Government's decision to include the new Metro North project in its Capital Plan *Building on Recovery 2016-2021* was based on the conclusions and recommendations of the Fingal/North Dublin Transport Study, which was undertaken by Aecom on behalf of the National Transport Authority (NTA).

As part of the Study, the technical and operational feasibility, environmental impact and cost of each shortlisted scheme was developed and detailed transport modelling undertaken to understand how each scheme might respond to future travel demand within the Study area. The economic analysis established a comparative benefit to cost ratio of the new Metro North option as 1.5 indicating that it is the economically preferable project.

I am satisfied that new Metro North generates the highest level of transport benefits of all of the options assessed and has the highest number of additional public transport trips in the a.m. peak travel period, delivering the highest benefit to cost ratio of all of the options assessed. It will also deliver a connection right into the heart of the city, serving O'Connell Street and St. Stephen's Green.

The NTA, in their role as Sanctioning Authority, will now prepare the full business case for the project based on more detailed design and cost estimates prior to lodging the Railway Order for the proposed scheme. The comprehensive appraisal will be conducted in accordance with the Government's Public Spending Code.

I understand from the NTA that new revised Metro North retains a large proportion, possibly up to 50%, of the value of the almost €170 million invested to date in the original Metro North project. However the precise scale of the value retained will not be finally established until more detailed design and analysis has been completed.

Rail Network Expansion

634. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he accepted the recommendation of the National Transport Authority that the design and planning work of the revised Dublin Area Rapid Transit underground project should be advanced to facilitate commencement of construction after 2020, the funding to be apportioned for this and if funding has been included to progress the project with a revised lower-cost tunnel to design and planning stages. [44783/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): A project of the magnitude of the DART Underground Project has to be designed and delivered in a way that best ensures cost effectiveness for the taxpayer and the State. Following a review of the project, the National Transport Authority recommended that the tunnel element should be redesigned in order to provide a lower cost technical solution and the Government has accepted that recommendation.

Funding is being made available under the new Capital Plan (2016-2021) for design and planning work on the revised tunnel element of the wider DART Underground Project. Planning will be advanced in order to be available for the commencement of construction in the context of the next Capital Plan (post-2022) subject to compliance with the requirements of the Government's Public Spending Code.

The overall DART Expansion Programme remains a key element of integrated transport for the Greater Dublin Area and for the wider rail network and the Government intends to progress elements of that Programme which bring value in themselves, such as the electrification of the line to Balbriggan, subject to appropriate business cases and the availability of funding.

Rail Services Provision

635. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the hourly Enterprise train service into and out of Connolly Station in Dublin will commence, if a proposed timetable is available for consultation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44857/15]

636. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he is aware of the chronic overcrowding on the Enterprise train service into and out of Connolly Station in Dublin; if he has discussed this with Irish Rail, the outcome of this discussion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44858/15]

637. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the work being done to improve travel times on the Enterprise train service into and out of Connolly Station in Dublin; when travellers will see an improvement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44859/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 635 to 637, inclusive, together.

The issues raised are operational matters for Iarnród Éireann, in conjunction with the National Transport Authority (NTA) in Ireland, and for Translink in Northern Ireland and I have forwarded the Deputy's questions to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Rail Services Provision

638. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he is aware of the delays facing the Enterprise train refurbishment project; if he is satisfied with the explanation for these delays; when this refurbishment project will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44860/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Enterprise Refurbishment project is being implemented through the EU Interreg IV programme under the auspices of the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). Following consultations with all key stakeholders, including my Department, the SEUPB recently confirmed that there is no significant risk associated with the timely completion of the project, which is on schedule for completion by the end of December.

Question No. 639 answered with Question No. 625.

Sports Organisations

640. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 587 of 24 November 2015, if he is satisfied with the conduct of the National Sports Campus Development Authority and Sport Ireland in their handling of this matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44978/15]

641. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 587 of 24 November 2015, if he is satisfied that it was in the best interest of the taxpayer that taxpayers' money has been spent in an attempt to prevent the release of these documents [44982/15]

642. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 587 of 24 November 2015, if he was aware of the existence of advice and the nature of the advice given; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44983/15]

652. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the commissioner's comments in relation to the conduct of the National Sports Campus Development Authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45168/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 640 to 642, inclusive, and 652 together.

I refer the Deputy to my replies to his previous questions on this matter. As I have already informed the Deputy, the processing of this FOI request and the decision of the Information Commissioner are a matter for Sport Ireland and I have no role in the process. I have also already informed the Deputy that I am satisfied with the conduct of Sport Ireland and - before its establishment - of the National Sports Campus Development Authority.

Rail Services Provision

643. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he or the National Transport Authority provide the funding to upgrade the audio announcements on the Dublin Area Rapid Transport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45013/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. The National Transport Authority (NTA) has responsibility for the development and implementation of public transport infrastructure projects in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) and this would include projects such as the upgrading of audio systems on the Dublin Area Rapid Transport.

Therefore, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Ministerial Meetings

644. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the date he last met the chairperson and chief executive officer of Iarnród Éireann; the topics discussed; when he will next meet them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45014/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department has regular contact with the Iarnród Éireann CEO and his management team as part of its ongoing relationship with CIE and its operating subsidiaries. As required, I would also have contacts with the Chair and CEO of Iarnród Éireann. My last formal meeting with the Iarnród Éireann Chair was on 1 September 2014 and I last met the CEO of Iarnród Éireann on the 29th October 2015.

I have no immediate plans at present to meet the Chairman and CEO of Iarnród Éireann but the Deputy can be assured that there will continue to be a strong level of communication between my Department and Iarnród Éireann on all key areas of the company's activities.

Hotel Accommodation

645. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of hotels and guesthouses that were warned by Fáilte Ireland in 2013 and 2014 to take action in order to retain their classification as three-star establishments, four-star establishments or five-star establishments; how many were subsequently upgraded or downgraded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45017/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The registration of accommodation is an operational matter for the Board and management of Fáilte Ireland and are not matters in which I, as Minister, have any role or function. I have referred the Deputy's question to the agency for direct reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Driver Licence Applications

646. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding an application for a driver certificate of professional competence licence by a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45019/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As Minister, I have no power to intervene in individual cases. I can however comment more generally on the legislation in this area.

The CPC system came into operation in Ireland in 2008, through Statutory Instrument No. 359 of 2009, which represents the transposition into Irish law of EU Directive 2003/59/EC. The legislation created a regime under which new professional drivers would have to acquire a CPC by qualifying through a series of tests. In order to retain the CPC, they must also undergo 35 hours of periodic retraining over a 5-year period. Under regulation 11 of S.I. No 359 of 2009, a person who was a professional driver and held a full licence for a truck (including category C, among others) issued before 10 September 2009 was automatically entitled to a CPC without being required to pass the new tests. These are the so-called 'grandfather rights.' People in the latter position were required to undergo the mandatory 35 hours of retraining over a 5-year period in order to retain their CPC.

It is not clear from the information provided how the law in this case affects your constituent. If he held his full licence in category C before 10 September 2009 and continued to hold it, he would have been automatically entitled to a CPC, but would by now (more than 5 years since that date) have had to renew it, based on the mandatory retraining. If he held a category C licence at some time in the past but had let it lapse, and was retested in order to get a category C licence again after 10 September 2009, the 'grandfather rights' would not apply.

Road Projects

647. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the level of funding he or agencies under the remit of his Department provide for the Galway city bypass project; and the status of the project. [45046/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects (such as the N6 Galway City Transport Project) is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (formerly known as NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2015 in conjunction with Galway County Council.

Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended).

Noting this I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

National Transport Authority Funding

648. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the National Transport Authority funding for County Kildare will remain at the same level as in previous years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45047/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware, the National Transport Authority (NTA), which has statutory responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), recently published a draft Transport Strategy for the GDA for the period 2016-2035. The draft Strategy provides a framework for the planning and delivery of transport infrastructure and services in the GDA for the next two decades, including two transport corridors serving North Kildare. A public consultation was recently undertaken by the NTA on the draft Strategy.

The long term strategy includes proposals for the expansion of Dart services to Celbridge/Hazelhatch and other measures along the Kildare corridors. Delivery of projects prioritised in the final GDA Strategy will be dependent on the availability of funding under the next capital plan post-2022, including from non-Exchequer sources.

Additionally, the NTA's Sustainable Grants Programme supports and provides funding to the local authorities in the GDA, including Kildare County Council, for a wide range of projects that support the development and implementation of sustainable transport modes such as cycling, walking and public transport.

Given the NTA's responsibility with regards to this matter, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply in relation to funding levels in Co. Kildare. Please advise

my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Departmental Properties

649. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the ground rents he or agencies under the remit of his Department pay, by named property, by name of landlord and by amount payable in 2015 and 2016 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45062/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): No Ground Rent was payable in respect of properties owned by this Department for 2015 nor will any fall due for 2016. With a few exceptions, the Office of Public Works is responsible for the procurement of office (and other) accommodation required for the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and accordingly, Ground Rent for those properties is a matter for that Office.

The position regarding the agencies under the remit of this Department is a matter for them. I have forwarded a copy of your question to them for a direct reply. If you have not heard from the Agencies within ten working days, please contact my private office.

Tourism Project Funding

650. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the board of Fáilte Ireland has made a decision on an application for funding for phase 2 development of parking and toilet facilities at Malin Head in County Donegal and if the decision has been communicated to him, the level of funding awarded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45122/15]

651. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a decision on a funding application for development of plans for phase 3 facilities at Malin Head, County Donegal, has been made by the board of Fáilte Ireland; if their decision has been communicated to him; the level of funding to be awarded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45123/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 650 and 651 together.

While my Department provides the capital funding for investment in tourism attractions, it is not directly involved in developing or managing these. The allocation of funding to individual projects is an operational matter for the Board of Fáilte Ireland.

That said, I understand that the Failte Ireland Board has recently decided to allocate funding to a maximum of €396,795 for developments at Malin Head to include road widening, car and bus parking, and a new toilet block. The funding is subject to a number of conditions.

In regard to further development at Malin Head I understand that, following discussions with Fáilte Ireland, Donegal County Council is working on a Malin Head Experience Development Plan that will incorporate the wider Inishowen area. I have referred the question to Fáilte Ireland for further details and direct reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Question No. 652 answered with Question No. 640.

Services for People with Disabilities

653. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the details of the expenditure on making public transport wheelchair accessible in each of the past five years [45174/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department provides funding to the National Transport Authority (NTA) for the development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) which includes a rolling programme of bus replacement and refurbishment of the Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann PSO fleets both in the GDA and nationally.

Wheelchair Accessibility is built into all new public transport infrastructure projects and vehicles from the design stage and new systems such as the Luas are fully accessible. In addition, 100% of the Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann city fleets are wheelchair accessible, as well as 65% of the Bus Éireann coach fleet.

My Department also funds an on-going programme of accessibility improvement grants to upgrade existing public transport infrastructure and facilities. The bulk of this funding has been provided for the upgrading of Iarnród Éireann rail stations to make them accessible, and to allow wheelchair users to travel on Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann buses. This programme is being managed by the NTA on behalf of my Department.

In light of the NTA's responsibility in the matter I have referred the Deputy's question to the Authority for a more detailed reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Tourism Promotion

654. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to promote the bed and breakfast sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45188/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): This is an operational matter for the Board and management of Fáilte Ireland. I have referred the Deputy's question to the agency for direct reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Sports Events

655. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide funding to the University of Limerick arena in Limerick city to replace the boom to enable it to host some of the top national events on the Swim Ireland calendar. [45208/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The works referred to by the Deputy are not funded under my Department's Sports Capital Programme and the Local Authority Swimming Pools Programme is not open for applications. I would advise the Deputy that while I have received a number of representations on behalf of the University of Limerick swimming pool, the University of Limerick has not expressed any concern about this matter to me.

Sport Ireland, which is funded by my Department, is the statutory body with responsibility for the promotion, development and co-ordination of sport. Sport Ireland provides an annual subsidy to the University of Limerick for the operation of the 50 metre pool. I have referred the Deputy's question to Sport Ireland for direct response on this matter. I would ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within 10 days.

Infrastructure and Capital Investment Programme

656. **Deputy Noel Coonan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the Shannon river crossing project at Killaloe in County Clare and Ballina in County Tipperary, including when it will proceed, the impact of the judicial review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45218/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of each local authority, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from local authorities' own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the local authority.

I understand that An Bord Pleanála granted planning approval to Clare County Council respect of this scheme in 2013 but that this decision was subsequently referred for judicial review. As a decision on the outcome of the judicial review process is awaited, it is not possible to confirm any further details until that process is completed.

Question No. 657 withdrawn.

Tourism Promotion

658. **Deputy Helen McEntee** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of his efforts to develop the Ireland's Ancient East project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44877/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): While my Department provides the capital funding for investment in tourism propositions such as Ireland's Ancient East, it is not directly involved in developing or managing these, as this is an operational matter for the Board and Management of Fáilte Ireland.

I have therefore referred the Deputy's question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Rural Transport Services Provision

659. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views regarding rural transport services being used to undercut commercial operators, as articulated at the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Transport and Communications in November 2015, regarding the Kerry Flyer. [44878/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The National Transport Authority (NTA) is responsible for the management of the Rural Transport Pro-

gramme funded by my Department. I have referred your question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Rural Transport Services Provision

660. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the important of the role of Nifti in providing rural transport in north County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44879/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The National Transport Authority (NTA) is responsible for the management of the Rural Transport Programme funded by my Department. I have referred your question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Public Transport Provision

661. **Deputy Derek Nolan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he or any agency under the remit of his Department provide funding for minibuses to provide elderly citizens in a community in Galway city with greater resources to assist them in their daily routines and to directly improve their health and general well-being; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45332/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department has no funding for the direct provision of such services.

From monies made available by my Department, the National Transport Authority (NTA) provides funding for socially necessary but financially unviable public transport services, known as Public Service Obligation (PSO) services and also for the provision of services under the Rural Transport Programme.

I have referred your question to the NTA for further direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Road Safety Data

662. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of pedestrian road deaths, by county, in each of the years from 2005 to date in tabular form. [45397/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. I have therefore referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

Road Safety Strategy

663. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will introduce legislation or regulations to place a mandatory or statutory obligation on pedestrians walking on unlit roads at night to wear high-visibility clothing; if such an obligation would enhance road safety for pedestrians; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45398/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): To create a statutory obligation on the wearing of reflective clothing would entail making it a criminal offence under Road Traffic legislation for any person guilty of not wearing high visibility clothing. A person in breach of such a provision would be issued with a fixed charge notice by a Garda or summonsed to court depending on whatever administrative procedure would be put in place for the processing of such offences.

In my view, safety issues such as these are best addressed by way of educational and publicity campaigns, such as those undertaken by the Road Safety Authority (RSA) which has responsibility for the promotion of road safety awareness, advertising and the dissemination of road safety information. The RSA is engaged on an ongoing basis in efforts to change our cultural attitude to road safety through advertising, publicity, education and community initiatives. As part of this process it has undertaken a number of campaigns to promote awareness among pedestrians of the need for visibility on our roads.

In addition, almost four million high visibility vests, armbands, rucksack covers and other high visibility materials have been distributed by the RSA, An Gardaí Síochána, Road Safety Officers, Age Action and the Vintners Federation over the past three years. A number of measures have also been included in the Road Safety Strategy 2013-2020 aimed at increasing the wearing of high visibility clothing among pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists.

Ultimately, the safety of all road users is a matter of personal responsibility. In that context, the Rules of the Road include a strong recommendation supporting the wearing of light and preferably high-visibility clothing.

Road Network

664. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide a substantial increase in funding for the non-national road network to local authorities in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45410/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of each local authority, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from local authorities' own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the local authority.

In order to address the national finances there were substantial cutbacks in recent years in the funding available for State grants for regional and local road programmes and this has had a major impact across the board. I know that it is important to restore over time capital funding for the transport sector to ensure that land transport infrastructure is maintained and renewed to support economic development but as of now my Department is continuing to operate within a very constrained budget and grant allocations reflect that.

Within the budget available to my Department I have tried to allocate funding on as fair and equitable basis as I can and this will remain the position in 2016. In this context grants in the three main grant categories (Restoration Improvement, Discretionary Grant and Restoration Maintenance) are allocated based on the length of regional and local roads within a local authority area.

I am also emphasising to local authorities that the purpose of State grants for regional and local roads is to supplement the own resources spending by local authorities rather than meet

the full cost of schemes and it is a matter for the local authority to select and to prioritise the works that are to be progressed.

Appointments to State Boards

665. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport why the board of Iarnród Éireann has so many directors from the United Kingdom; and how directors are nominated or selected (details supplied). [45426/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Section 113 of the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008 requires a Minister appoint persons to the boards of the three CIÉ subsidiary companies, including Iarnród Éireann, who have wide experience in relation to transport, commercial, financial, land use planning or environmental matters and the organisation of workers or administration.

In addition to this statutory requirement, earlier this year the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform announced a new process for appointments to state boards. Applications for state boards are now managed by the Public Appointments Services (PAS) and can be viewed on www.stateboards.ie. All appointments to vacancies on state boards are now dealt with through the PAS website www.stateboards.ie. This new process also applies to any appointment to the board of Iarnród Éireann.

Directors appointed to the board of Iarnród Éireann must satisfy the statutory criteria and relevant experience and expertise as highlighted in the PAS processes. As a result, appointments to the board are made by me in line with the statutory requirements and reflect the PAS identification of suitable candidates to fill the specific roles identified on the board.

Rail Services Provision

666. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount it cost Iarnród Éireann to change its name from Irish Rail; why it still uses former addresses for communications purposes (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45427/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The issue raised is a matter for Iarnród Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Payments

667. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she is aware that turf cutters who complied with the restriction to their bog in the past have received no compensation under the turf cutting compensation scheme, given that turf has not been cut in the previous five years and turf cutters who continued cutting turf illegally on the same bog received compensation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45243/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme was established in 2011 for those who have been

required to cease turf cutting on the 53 raised bog special areas of conservation. The scheme has been extended to land owners and turbary right holders affected by the curtailment of turf cutting on raised bog natural heritage areas.

The qualifying criteria for the scheme are that:

- The claimant must have a legal interest in one of the 53 raised bog special areas of conservation or 36 raised bog natural heritage areas – ownership or turbary right;
- The claimant must have been the owner or entitled to exercise turbary rights on the land in question on 25 May 2010;
- The turbary on the site must not be exhausted;
- The claimant must have been cutting turf on the land in question during the relevant five year period; and
- No turf cutting or associated activity is ongoing on the property.

Departmental Agencies Staff Remuneration

668. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht why employees of Údarás na Gaeltachta, grades 1 to 5, are not employed on pay scales comparable to the public service, when this pay differential first came into place, its impact on pensions for those employees, the engagement she has had with the staff unions on behalf of employees; if a resolution to the issue is possible; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44861/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): I am advised that pay scales and a staff structure at Údarás na Gaeltachta were originally agreed between management and the unions and implemented in October 2000. I understand that a request for a review of that agreement has been submitted to my Department and will be examined, in due course, in consultation with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Departmental Properties

669. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the ground rents he or agencies under the remit of his Department pay, by named property, by name of landlord and by amount payable, in 2015 and 2016 in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45049/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Any properties occupied by my Department are either leased or owned by the Office of Public Works and the question of any ground rents payable is the responsibility of that body.

Bodies operating under the aegis of my Department are separate legal entities in their own right. The issues raised by the Deputy are part of the day-to-day operational responsibilities of the bodies in question and are matters for the bodies concerned.

Departmental Schemes

670. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will reopen the built heritage scheme, given that the strict time constraints attached to it caused difficulties for groups and individuals to submit adequate applications (details supplied); if she will ensure that the window to apply for the scheme is longer in 2016; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45164/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I announced the scheme in question on 21 October 2015 and local authorities were formally notified of their allocations on 23 October 2015. Applications for funding under the scheme had to be made by the applicant directly to the relevant local authority no later than 7 December 2015. This was the final date for applications and cannot be changed.

Each local authority is required to submit a provisional schedule of projects to my Department by 16 December 2015 and these will be assessed before formal approval is given for projects to proceed. However, dependant on final returns by the local authorities this week, I will keep this under review.

The Deputy's comments have been noted in the event that an equivalent scheme is put in place for 2017.

Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Eligibility

671. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of a compensation payment to a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45173/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): An application for compensation under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme has been received by my Department from the individual referred to in the Deputy's Question.

I am advised that a payment of €1,521 in respect of Year 1 of 15 (2014) has been made to this applicant.

The qualifying criteria for the scheme are that:

- The claimant must have a legal interest in one of the 36 raised bog natural heritage areas – ownership or turbary right;
- The claimant must have been the owner or entitled to exercise turbary rights on the land in question on 25 May 2010;
- The turbary on the site must not be exhausted;
- The claimant must have been cutting turf on the land in question during the relevant five year period; and
- No turf cutting or associated activity is ongoing on the property.

My Department is examining the application in view of the qualifying criteria for the scheme. I am advised that officials from my Department have been in contact with the applicant and an inspection of the plot of bog in respect of which the applicant has applied for compensation is to be undertaken.

Departmental Funding

672. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will allocate funding to the Hawk's Well Theatre in County Sligo in the near future in order to help improve its facilities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45364/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): In August this year, I launched the 2015 Arts and Culture Small Capital Grants Scheme and made €300,000 available for allocation. The scheme allows for the funding of capital projects of up to €10,000, to meet up to 70% of project costs. I hope to make an announcement shortly in relation to the award of grants under this scheme.

In addition, the Government has announced a new grant scheme for works at arts and cultural centre across the country under the Exchequer Capital Investment Framework 2016-2021. An annual allocation of €3 million is included in the Investment Framework for each of the next six years. I will announce details of the scheme early in the New Year.

Census of Population Publication

673. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will publish the results of the 1926 census online; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45408/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Current legislative provisions, as contained in the Statistics Act 1993, require that census data must be withheld for 100 years. Accordingly, it is not possible at this time to release 1926 Census returns before the statutory period has elapsed in 2026. If the records were to be released before the expiry of 100 years, a major change in legislation and policy would be required to allow for such an early release. This is not currently being proposed.

Departmental Funding

674. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the supports and funding she will make available to the Howth Maritime Museum in County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45421/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): There are no formal proposals before my Department in relation to this project.