

## Written Answers.

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

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*Questions Nos. 1 to 3, inclusive, answered orally.*

*Questions Nos. 4 to 28, inclusive, resubmitted.*

*Questions Nos. 29 to 38, inclusive, answered orally.*

### **Arts in Education Charter**

39. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the implementation of the Arts in Education Charter; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13333/16]

66. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the resources being made available to support the arts in education, in particular for children's books and Poetry Ireland; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13115/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 39 and 66 together.

While the provision for arts in the education system is primarily a matter for the Department of Education and Skills, I am firmly committed to continuing the work of the ongoing partnership between that Department, my own Department and the Arts Council, in line with the *Arts in Education Charter*. In this regard, I am pleased that the *Programme for a Partnership Government* commits to the continued implementation of the *Arts in Education Charter*.

The work of the two Departments and the Arts Council in implementing the Charter is achieved largely through existing structures, such as education centres and Education and Training Boards. My Department provides a small amount of funding under the Charter to assist with its implementation, for example, in relation to the funding of artists to assist in the Teacher Artist Partnership Initiative. In 2015, the Arts in Education Portal was launched and this now serves as an effective key communications and information channel for both education and arts sectors.

As recently as last April, a very successful inaugural National Arts in Education Day was held in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, with over 200 attendees from both education and artistic fields.

In terms of direct support for the arts, this is primarily a matter for the Arts Council operating under the provisions of the Arts Act 2003. The Arts Council's ten-year strategy *Making Great Art Work (2016-2025)* places specific emphasis on the need to plan and provide for chil-

dren and young people. The strategy also commits to working to achieve full implementation of the *Arts in Education Charter*.

The Arts Council contributes funding to a number of organisations to assist in the delivery of Arts in Education projects in schools. These include Poetry Ireland's Writers in Schools Scheme, where writers and storytellers visit primary and post-primary schools, as well as the Bringing to Book Artist-in-Residence Scheme, a Children's Books Ireland project.

### Departmental Functions

40. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she is aware of the significant public demand for the reinstatement of a Department with responsibility for arts, heritage and the Gaeltacht; if she has engaged with senior members of the arts community regarding their demands for such a Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13257/16]

42. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her response to public concerns regarding the lack of priority given to the arts at Government level and the lack of recognition of its contribution to society; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13113/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 40 and 42 together.

As indicated by the Taoiseach in his statement to Dáil Éireann of 6th May, my Department will, in its new configuration, retain all of the functions previously assigned to it, in addition to taking on a number of new functions in relation to rural affairs and regional development. This continuing commitment is reflected in the *Programme for a Partnership Government*.

I can assure the House that the creation of a larger Department with a greater remit will not in any way diminish the importance of arts and culture within Government. In fact, I consider that a larger Department with wider responsibilities can bring greater weight to bear in promoting the importance of arts and culture right across Government.

Officials of my Department are currently engaging with their counterparts in the relevant Departments to establish the precise details of the functions that will now come under the remit of my Department and to identify the associated personnel and other resources to be transferred. I anticipate that this process will be brought to a conclusion shortly, following which the issue of delegations to the newly appointed Ministers of State in my Department will be addressed, as appropriate.

Since my initial appointment as Minister with responsibility for the arts, I have succeeded in securing increased funding for the sector year on year. Building on this, the *Programme for a Partnership Government* contains a very important commitment to work to progressively increase funding to the arts, including the Arts Council and the Irish Film Board, as the economy continues to improve. I can assure the Deputy that I will be engaging with my colleagues in Government and with the Oireachtas to seek to advance this commitment in the context of the forthcoming estimates and budgetary processes.

Finally, I would like to state that I have met with representatives of the National Campaign for the Arts and I have assured them of my continuing commitment to the arts, to the delivery of relevant undertakings in the Government Programme and to a new National Cultural Policy - *Culture 2025* - which is built on ongoing dialogue and collaboration with the cultural sector.

## Arts Funding

41. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her objectives for arts funding in the coming years; the specific commitments that are in the programme for Government; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13344/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** As I set out in my reply to Priority Question No 32, the *Programme for a Partnership Government* contains a very important commitment to work to progressively increase funding to the arts, including the Arts Council and the Irish Film Board, as the economy continues to improve.

Other priorities, in line with the *Programme for a Partnership Government*, include:

- The publication of *Culture 2025*, Ireland's first national cultural policy, which I intend to finalise shortly, and which will provide a framework for considering a range of important issues, including improving access to culture, breaking down barriers in areas of social exclusion and disadvantage, and how culture is enriched by greater cultural diversity;

- The continued implementation of the Arts in Education Charter;

- Encouraging local authorities to strengthen the role of arts and heritage officers including by building stronger links with local development. This will also feed into my expanded brief covering regional development and rural affairs;

- Opening the new capital grants scheme for applications to provide upgrades to existing regional arts and cultural centres around the country;

- Boosting supports to regional museums and facilitating increased loans between our National Cultural Institutions and our network of regional museums;

- Working with the Irish Film Board/Screen Ireland to ensure that Ireland is maximised as a location for international film production; and

- Further encouraging strong, mutually beneficial links between the business community and arts organisations.

These priorities represent an ambitious agenda and I look forward to working with all partners and across all parties of this House to develop and implement these initiatives.

With regard to funding, I would like to point out that, following years of reductions in Exchequer funding of the arts, I have succeeded in securing increased funding for the sector year on year since my initial appointment as Minister with responsibility for the arts. For example, the allocation to the Arts Council in 2016 is some €60.1m, an increase of 6% over the past 2 years. I can assure the Deputy that I will be engaging with my colleagues in Government and with the Oireachtas to seek to advance these priorities in the context of the forthcoming estimates and budgetary processes.

*Question No. 42 answered with Question No. 40.*

## Natural Heritage Areas

43. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to

Parliamentary Question No. 255 of 25 June 2015, the action, if any, she has taken since June 2015 to stop bait digging on Bull Island, a practice described by naturalists as inconsistent with the nature reserve status of the island and which is having a negative impact on birds on the mudflats. [13117/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** As I indicated in my reply to Question No 171 on 26 May 2016, I am very aware that the Bull Island is a hugely important amenity resource for the people of Dublin, as well as being of very high nature value. Clearly, the concept of sustainable use is important in the management of such areas, particularly if there is a long history of such amenity use by the local population.

It has been long recognised that bait digging occurs at the Bull Island and that such digging removes some worm species that are also used as food by the birds on the Island. As I stated in my recent reply, the Bull Island is surveyed annually as part of the Irish Wetland Birds Survey, which collects data on the number of wintering birds at sites around the country. This survey is coordinated by BirdWatch Ireland under a contract from my Department. Officials from the Scientific Unit of my Department's National Parks and Wildlife Service have reviewed the data for the Bull Island from 2001 to 2014 and concluded that there is no evidence of any decline of the bird groups, such as waterfowl and waders, that use and feed on the mudflats. For example, in the winter of 2001/2002, the peak number of waders, one of the main groups of birds species, was 16,513. In the winter of 2014/15, the peak number was almost identical, at 16,733. There were some fluctuations in numbers over those years, especially during and after the exceptionally cold winter in 2010, but numbers have recovered since then.

There is a very similar pattern for ducks and geese, another important group of birds associated with the mudflats.

I am advised therefore that there is no current evidence of a negative impact from the bait diggers, although there will be temporary disturbances in small areas. Accordingly, I am not convinced that there is a need to intervene on bait digging. My Department will continue to review data from the Bull Island and from other relevant sites elsewhere in the country.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

44. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount of investment from capital spend her Department has made in County Kildare since 2013; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13116/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Details of the annual funding allocation to my Department at subhead level are published in the annual Revised Estimates Volume. Through these subheads, my Department administers and delivers a wide range of programmes and measures, descriptions of which are available on its website at <http://www.ahg.gov.ie/>.

Expenditure under these programme areas is recorded and accounted for on a national basis and it is not possible to give a regional or county-by-county breakdown of that expenditure. For example, a number of my Department's programmes are delivered through agencies and other intermediary bodies that operate across county boundaries and in respect of which there is no detailed breakdown on a county basis held by my Department. Groups and organisations that receive grants directly from my Department are not typically constituted on a single-county basis.

In view of this and because of the wide range of my Department's schemes and programmes,

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and the large volumes of payments and grants involved, it is not possible to provide the information sought. However, if the Deputy has specific queries relating to a particular programme or grant, I will endeavour to provide him with relevant information in that regard.

### **Arts Funding**

45. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount of funding awarded to the arts, excluding commemoration specific pieces of work, since 2011; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13256/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Details of the funding allocations made available to my Department are published each year in the Revised Estimates Volume with the outturn published in the annual Appropriation Account. These publications are available on the website of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and on the website of the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Most of my Department's arts and culture budget is allocated to the agencies under its remit. Within these allocations, the Arts Council is the primary State agency for funding the arts in Ireland. In 2016, I provided €60.1m to the Arts Council, an increase of over 7.5% since 2014. This does not include any specific funding for commemorations.

Details of the Arts Council's expenditure including its individual grants are published on the Arts Council's website at [www.artscouncil.ie](http://www.artscouncil.ie).

Where my Department makes direct grants to organisations, the figures are published on the website of my Department at [www.ahg.gov.ie](http://www.ahg.gov.ie). The figures for 2016 will be published in due course.

It should be noted that the support provided directly by my Department for the arts primarily relates to capital investment in arts infrastructure. In this regard, I announced a new €9 million investment scheme for arts and cultural centres to run over the next three years focussed on upgrading the existing stock of arts and cultural centres around the country.

My Department is finalising the guidelines and application forms in relation to the scheme which I intend to open for applications very shortly.

### **Film Industry Development**

46. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the plans she has to improve supports to the Irish film sector; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13263/16]

52. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in view of the recent success of a number of Irish films internationally, her plans to improve supports for the audiovisual sector; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13265/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 46 and 52 together.

The *Programme for a Partnership Government* contains a very important commitment to progressively increase funding for the arts over the lifetime of the Programme, with specific reference to the Arts Council and the Irish Film Board. I can assure the Deputy that I will be

engaging with my colleagues in Government and with the Oireachtas to seek to advance this commitment in the context of the forthcoming estimates and budgetary processes.

The *Programme for a Partnership Government* also contains a commitment to work with the Irish Film Board to ensure that Ireland is maximised as a location for international film production.

In this regard, I am pleased that I have already been able to provide some additional support to the Film Board this year, with additional current funding of €500,000. This increased investment will help to maximise the benefits brought about by the Government's enhancement of the Section 481 film tax credit system, including the decision to increase the cap for eligible expenditure on film projects to €70 million, as announced as part of Budget 2016. Decisions in relation to tax relief are, of course, a matter for the Minister for Finance.

Under the *Action Plan for Jobs*, my Department, in conjunction with other stakeholders, is committed to commissioning an economic analysis of the current value of the audio visual industry in Ireland, to assess the scale, strengths and contribution of the sector in terms of economic activity and employment levels and its potential to expand further. My Department has also concluded a new co-production treaty with Canada, which will come into effect in the coming weeks.

### Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge

47. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht cé na tosaíochtaí a bheidh aici i leith na Gaeilge agus na Gaeltachta do théarma an Rialtais seo; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [13311/16]

48. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht an bhféadfadh sí léiriú a thabhairt ar an mbuiséad atá aontaithe aici don Ghaeilge agus don Ghaeltacht don bhliain atá romhainn. [13270/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Tógfaidh mé Ceisteanna Uimh. 47 agus 48 le chéile.

Mar is eol do na Teachtaí, tá spriocanna sonracha leagtha síos sa Chlár Rialtais maidir le:

- Forfheidhmhiú na Straitéise 20-Bliain don Ghaeilge;
- Cruthú fostaíochta sa Ghaeltacht trí Údarás na Gaeltachta;
- Páistí a spreagadh chun freastal ar réamhscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge nó ar naíonraí sa Ghaeltacht;
- Aitheantas a thabhairt don tábhacht a bhaineann leis an Ghaeilge mar theanga oibre iomlán in institiúidí an Aontais Eorpaigh agus céimeanna cuí a thógáil chun deireadh a chur leis an mhaolú; agus
- Infheistíocht sa Ghaeilge a mhéadú.

Ar ndóigh, tá an Straitéis 20-Bliain don Ghaeilge fite fuaite le gníomhaíochtaí mo Roinne thar na réimsí Gaeilge agus Gaeltachta go léir agus beidh sé mar chéad thosaíocht agamsa an Straitéis sin a chur i bhfeidhm i gcomhar leis na páirtithe leasmhara.

Maidir le cúrsaí buiséid, ní miste dom a mheabhrú do na Teachtaí gur tríd an phróiseas

Meastacháin agus Cáinainéise a dhéantar leithdháileadh ar an soláthar airgid a chuirtear ar fáil ar bhonn bliantúil do mo Roinnse agus, go deimhin, do na Ranna Rialtais go léir. Sa chomhthéacs sin, tuigfidh an Teachta go ndéanfar an soláthar airgid don Ghaeilge agus don Ghaeltacht ón Státhchiste don bhliain 2017 a mheas i gcomhthéacs an phróisis sin níos déanaí i mbliana.

### Commemorative Events

49. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans for the Ireland 2016 centenary programme; if the programme of events will continue for the remainder of 2016; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13261/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme is the centrepiece of the Decade of Centenaries and has been met with widespread support across all sectors of our society. The Programme is a year-long initiative, with a huge diversity of programmes and events running throughout 2016, to commemorate the centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising.

The Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme has engaged our communities at home and abroad in an unprecedented way and I believe strongly that the benefits at community level, and indeed nationally, should not be underestimated. The inclusive nature of the Programme has enabled citizens to re-engage actively with our history and has encouraged them to consider the future of their communities, as they look back, and reflect upon, the events of 100 years ago that led to the birth of our democratic State.

While a large number of key events took place around the Easter period, the Programme will continue through the remainder of 2016 and there are a number of exciting and innovative programmes and initiatives planned, including many activities at local level.

*Reimagine* is the final phase of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme – the third component of the overall *Remember, Reflect, Reimagine* theme. The objective of the *Reimagine* phase is to create an enduring impact and long-term legacy of 2016, building on the momentum and very positive public responses to the *Remember* and *Reflect* phases of the Centenary Programme. The *Programme for a Partnership Government* commits to continuing to commemorate the most significant events in the history of this State, ensuring that these commemorations are inclusive, and enhance our understanding of our shared history, particularly among children and young people, so that they have a meaningful and lasting impact. I am confident that our citizens will continue to engage energetically with these issues as we move into the final phase of the Programme.

### Commemorative Events

50. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if the centenary funds dedicated to the 2016 programme will be ring-fenced for the purpose of arts, heritage and culture in budget 2017. [13193/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme, which was launched last year, is a wide-ranging year-long series of events, which has been hugely successful to date in engaging citizens right around the country. In this regard, I secured an allocation of €18.1m in current funding for 2016 to support centenary events, both at home and abroad.

Since my initial appointment as Minister with responsibility for the arts, I have succeeded in securing increased funding for the sector year on year. The *Programme for a Partnership Government* contains a very important commitment to work to progressively increase funding to the arts, including the Arts Council and the Irish Film Board, as the economy continues to improve. I can assure the Deputy that I will be engaging with my colleagues in Government and with the Oireachtas to seek to advance this commitment in the context of the forthcoming estimates and budgetary processes.

### **Legislative Measures**

51. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht to provide an update on the Heritage Bill 2016 and, in particular, on the proposed amendment to the closed period for hedge cutting; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13260/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Heritage Bill 2016, which passed its 2nd Stage reading in Seanad Éireann on 20 January 2016, provides, inter alia, for a power to the Minister to permit, by regulations, the burning of vegetation in March (a month normally closed to burning) during such period or periods and in such areas of the State as the Minister may specify. The regulations may also set out conditions or restrictions to protect protected habitats and species in areas where such burning is permitted. There is also proposed provision to allow landowners or their agents to cut, grub or destroy vegetation in any hedge or ditch during August, subject to such regulations as the Minister may make. Both of these provisions would remain active for a pilot period of two years, with provision for continuation by resolution by each House of the Oireachtas.

I have sought the restoration of the Heritage Bill 2016 to the legislative programme through the Offices of the Government Chief Whip and the Leader of the Seanad. I am informed they are currently finalising this programme with a view to moving it shortly.

*Question No. 52 answered with Question No. 46.*

### **Heritage Sites**

53. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the funding streams available for heritage buildings and protected structures within her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13255/16]

58. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht to introduce an incentive scheme for persons for the upkeep of protected structures. [11546/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 53 and 58 together.

My role, as Minister for Arts Heritage and the Gaeltacht, with regard to the protection and management of our architectural heritage, is set out in the provisions of relevant legislation, as are the role of local authorities and the responsibilities of owners as regards heritage assets.

With regard to the provision of incentives, as the Deputy can appreciate the scope for funding for the conservation of the built heritage is currently constrained by the significant demands on public finances within the context of a recovering economy that is facing a challenging national and international environment.



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Financial support is being provided by my Department through a number of structured schemes for the conservation and protection of heritage buildings. My Department operates a *Structures at Risk Fund* to enable conservation works to heritage structures, in both private and public ownership that are protected under the Planning and Development Acts and are deemed to be at significant risk of deterioration. This fund is administered through the local authorities and seeks to encourage the regeneration and reuse of heritage properties and to help to secure the preservation of protected structures which might otherwise be lost. Applications for this scheme have now closed for 2016 and recommended projects are currently being finalised.

I launched a new €2 million scheme - the *Built Heritage Investment Scheme* - for the repair and conservation of protected structures on 21 October 2015. This scheme will operate in 2016, via the local authorities, on the same model as the very successful *Built Heritage Jobs Leverage Scheme*, which ran in 2014. It is expected to support a significant number of projects across the country and to create employment in the conservation and construction industries, while helping to regenerate urban and rural areas. The scheme for this year is now closed for applications.

The terms and conditions for both these schemes can be found on my Department's website at [www.ahg.gov.ie](http://www.ahg.gov.ie).

The Heritage Council, which my Department funds, also provides grants for the protection and preservation of the built heritage. For 2016, the Council is administering a community based heritage grants scheme available for projects that contributed to particular heritage themes. Further details can be found at [www.heritagecouncil.ie](http://www.heritagecouncil.ie).

I also consider applications for determination under Section 482 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997. Under the terms of the Act, owners and/or occupiers of approved heritage buildings and/or gardens can apply for tax relief in respect of expenditure incurred on repair, maintenance and restoration, on condition that they open to the public. In order to be approved for this relief, a building/garden must be intrinsically of significant scientific, historical, architectural or aesthetic interest and reasonable access to the property must be afforded to the public.

Late last year, I launched an *Action Plan for Irish Historic Houses in private ownership*. The objectives of the plan will be to assist historic houses in general with their on-going protection, management and promotion into the future. Nine key actions form the backbone of the plan and its successful delivery will require the coordinated work of private owners, government Departments, local government and agencies. I am open to considering introducing further instruments to protect our national built heritage, but these must be considered within the overall context of the current economic situation and the need to prioritise the demands on public finances.

The remainder of my Department's built heritage capital budget for 2016 will be focused on the conservation and presentation of the State's heritage portfolio, which is managed by the Office of Public Works.

## Cultural Policy

54. **Deputy Kate O'Connell** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when she intends to publish Culture 2025, the national cultural policy; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13112/16]

67. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht to update Dáil Éireann on the progress of Culture 2025. [13267/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 54 and 67 together.

Significant progress has been made in drafting the first National Cultural Policy - *Culture 2025*. This followed a major public consultation process in 2015, including a national cultural workshop held in October at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham.

Work by my Department, the expert steering group and a wider expert committee continued on the document in early 2016 and is currently on-going.

The *Programme for a Partnership Government* commits to the publication of *Culture 2025* as a priority and I intend to submit the draft policy to Government for consideration in the coming weeks. As I have stated previously, this first such policy will be a living document and will form the basis of an on-going dialogue with all who are interested in cultural policy.

### Offshore Islands

55. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to increase the operational grant paid to the non-Gaeltacht island community companies each year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13328/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne):** My Department assumed responsibility for the funding structure for the non-Gaeltacht island development companies in May 2015 and subsequently maintained that funding at the same level as had been previously provided by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government. This has also been the case in 2016. Comhar na nOileán Teo is presently administering the funding structure on behalf of my Department.

I can assure the Deputy that funding for the non-Gaeltacht island companies will continue to be a priority for my Department but, as she will appreciate, the estimates and budgetary processes for 2017 have not yet been initiated.

### Foireann Roinne

56. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht an dtabharfaidh sí na sonraí maidir leis an laghdú atá tagtha ar líon na bhfoirne i Roinn na Gaeltachta le deich mbliana anuas. [13195/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Tá sé curtha in iúl dom go raibh 68 oifigeach sannta do Rannóg na Gaeilge/Gaeltachta nuair a bunaíodh mo Roinn ar an 2 Meitheamh 2011. Is é 53 an líon oifigeach atá sannta don Rannóg sin faoi láthair, idir Na Forbacha agus Baile Átha Cliath. Déantar athbhreithniú leanúnach ar an leibhéal foirne i bhfianaise riachtanais ghnó atá ag teacht chun cinn, mar atá le feiceáil i bpróiseas pleanála mo Roinne don fhórsa oibre.

### Commemorative Events

57. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her Department has carried out an assessment of the success and impact of the State commemorative events held throughout the Easter period; to provide attendance figures for the events; and

if she will make a statement on the matter. [13254/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** A large number of events took place over the Easter weekend as part of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme, all of which were very well attended by invited guests and members of the public. In particular, the military parade and ceremony at the GPO on Easter Sunday saw approximately 4,500 guests attending (predominantly relatives of those who took part in the 1916 Rising) as well as many thousands of citizens attending the parade right along its route. Easter Monday saw the largest public history and cultural event ever staged in Ireland, with more than 500 free talks, exhibitions, music, theatre, debates and performances across a number of venues and zones in Dublin city centre. It is estimated that over 1 million people were present to participate in and enjoy these two events alone.

Feedback from members of the public and the media clearly indicated the very positive engagement of the general public with the commemorative events, as well as the extent to which citizens felt a great sense of national pride and respect during this historic time.

The Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme is a year-long initiative, with a huge diversity of programmes and events running throughout 2016. While a large number of the key events took place around the Easter period, the Programme will continue through the remainder of 2016 and there are a number of exciting and innovative programmes and initiatives planned, including many activities at local level. I am confident that our citizens will continue to engage with the Programme over the coming months.

I will decide in due course on the approach that should be adopted to appropriately assess the impact of the Centenary Programme, following the conclusion of the year's events.

*Question No. 58 answered with Question No. 53.*

### **Tourism Promotion**

59. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when Richmond Barracks will open for tours to the public; her views on the potential tourism benefits; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13262/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The refurbishment and restoration of Richmond Barracks is one of the flag-ship capital projects of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme and was supported with capital funds from my Department. The project was officially opened on 2 May 2016 and I understand that it will open to the public in June. This is a Dublin City Council/community partnership project and the City Council will be responsible for the day to day management of the building.

As with all of our flagship capital projects, the refurbishment and restoration of Richmond Barracks will greatly enhance the surrounding area and will provide significant potential for tourism in the area, including through its connections with the nearby Kilmainham Gaol and Courthouse complex and the Royal Hospital Kilmainham.

### **Tourism Promotion**

60. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her

plans for the increased development of Blueway trails such as the Shannon-Erne Blueway; her views on how these trails could be utilised to help attract visitors to rural counties; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13110/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Waterways Ireland has been actively progressing the development of Blueways as a means to attract new visitors to use the waterways and in response to the growth in demand for recreational activities such as walking, canoeing, cycling and stand up paddle boarding.

The first Blueway was launched in October 2014 on the Shannon and it has been very successful. It links Drumshanbo with Carrick-on-Shannon and comprises a 16.5km paddling trail, a 10km walking trail and a 5km cycle trail. The 10km Camlin River paddling loop is also in operation.

The Shannon-Erne Blueway, which I had the privilege of officially opening on Saturday 28 May 2016, links Leitrim Village with Belturbet, Co Cavan and provides a 70km series of paddling journeys, 25kms of walking trails and 8kms of cycling trails. There are also plans to upgrade a further 8kms later in 2016. Based on existing monitoring of visitor usage, Waterways Ireland expects that 100,000 people will use the Shannon-Erne Blueway over the next year.

Further development on the Shannon during 2016 will include:

- A 20km trail from Carrick-on-Shannon to Boyle;
- A 50km trail from Carrick-on-Shannon to Lanesborough, and
- A 30km looped trail around Lough Allen.

On the Barrow Navigation, Waterways Ireland plans to submit proposals to upgrade the Barrow towpath to relevant planning authorities in summer 2016. This will enhance the 112kms of off-road trackway from Lowtown in Co. Kildare to St Mullins in Co Carlow. Waterways Ireland is working with the relevant local authorities and Leader groups to establish the necessary funding for this development.

On the Royal Canal and Grand Canals, 45kms and 21kms of towpath trails have been developed respectively. Plans for upgrading the remaining towpaths on these canals are at varying stages and Waterways Ireland is working with local authorities, Leader groups, the National Transport Authority and the National Trails Office to progress these developments.

Clearly, the development of Blueways presents valuable opportunities for rural communities to attract more visitors. Their value lies not only in the recreational opportunities that they offer but also in their potential to stimulate local businesses and regenerate local areas. Blueways also provide an effective model for partnership between the private, community and voluntary sectors and relevant State bodies.

### **An Clár Rialtais**

61. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht an bhféadfadh sí léiriú a thabhairt ar roinnt an bhuiséid atá geallta d'Údarás na Gaeltachta sa Chlár don Rialtas. [13192/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Mar is eol don Teachta, tá spriocanna sonracha leagtha síos sa Chlár Rialtais maidir leis an nGaeilge agus an Ghaeltacht, lena n-áirítear cruthú fostaíochta sa Ghaeltacht trí Údarás na

Gaeltachta agus infheistíocht sa Ghaeilge a mhéadú.

Ar ndóigh, is tríd an phróiseas meastacháin agus cáinainéise a dhéantar leithdháileadh ar an soláthar airgid a chuirtear ar fáil ar bhonn bliantúil do mo Roinnse agus, go deimhin, do na Ranna Rialtais go léir. Sa chomhthéacs sin, tuigfidh an Teachta go ndéanfar soláthar airgid an Údaráis ón Státhiste don bhliain 2017 a mheas i gcomhthéacs an phróisis sin níos déanaí i mbliana.

### Arts Centres

62. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to provide much needed support for regional arts centres; her further plans to address a pressing need for capital injection in these buildings; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13264/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Last January, I announced a new €9 million investment scheme for arts and cultural centres to run over the next three years, focussed on upgrading the existing stock of arts and cultural centres around the country. The funding is being made available as part of the Capital Investment Framework 2016-2021.

The scheme will target investment at a range of different facilities and will be broken down into three streams as follows:

- The refurbishment and enhancement of existing purpose-built arts and cultural facilities, with maximum grants of €300,000. Eligible facilities would include arts centres, theatres, galleries, museums, artists' studios and creative spaces (Stream 1).

- Significant improvements to a smaller number of key facilities. Ideally, projects seeking this stream of funding would have financial support from the relevant local authority. Grants of up to €2 million may be offered under this stream (Stream 2).

- Smaller grants of up to €20,000 for community or voluntary organisations operating in facilities, which have not been purpose-built (Stream 3).

It is my priority to target investment at existing facilities in order to enhance the current stock of arts centres around the country.

My Department is finalising the guidelines and application forms in relation to the scheme, which I intend to open for applications very shortly.

### Arts Funding

63. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will restore funding for the arts to pre-2011 levels; if she is satisfied with her Department's role in supporting the arts and in particular the allocation of funding; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13259/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Funding across the public service was severely impacted by the economic crisis, including the funding which could be provided to bodies such as the Arts Council and the Irish Film Board.

Since my initial appointment as Minister with responsibility for the arts, however, I have succeeded in securing increased funding for the arts sector year on year. For example, the allocation to the Arts Council in 2016 is €60.1m, an increase of 6% over the past 2 years.

The Programme for a Partnership Government contains a very important commitment to work to progressively increase funding to the arts, including the Arts Council and the Irish Film Board, as the economy continues to improve. I can assure the Deputy that I will be engaging with my colleagues in Government and with the Oireachtas to seek to advance this commitment in the context of the forthcoming estimates and budgetary processes.

### **Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge**

64. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht cén uair atá an Roinn chun stiúirthóir na Gaeilge a cheapadh. [13194/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Táthar ag breathnú ar na roghanna sa chás seo faoi láthair agus déanfar cinneadh i gcomhairle leis an Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe. San idirlinn, tá cúramaí an phoist á mbainistiú, mar is cuí, ag Ard-Rúnaí na Roinne.

### **Hare Coursing**

65. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 52 of 8 December 2015, how confident she is that the evidence regarding the effect of coursing on hare populations that forms the basis of the decision to issue licences for hare coursing is valid, given the last hare survey of Ireland took place almost a decade ago in 2007. [13118/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Hares are a protected species under the Wildlife Acts and may only be hunted during the prescribed Open Season. There is also a facility under these Acts to issue a licence for coursing.

I am advised that there is no current evidence that hare coursing has a significant negative impact on hare populations. The most recent population estimate for the Irish hare - undertaken in 2007 - was 535,000 animals. Coursing Clubs affiliated to the Irish Coursing Club catch in the region of 5,500 hares each coursing season, equivalent to approximately 1% of the national resource. I am further advised that more than 95% of the hares captured for hare coursing are returned to the wild each year. In addition, independent scientific studies have estimated that hare mortality during captivity and coursing in Ireland is equivalent to less than 0.1% of the total adult hare population annually.

My Department has been working with the National Biodiversity Data Centre to collate distribution records for all Irish mammals. The most recent map of these records, which are available online, show that the Irish hare remains very widespread throughout the country.

The Irish hare is also listed on Annex V of the EU Habitats Directive and this means that my Department is required to undertake an assessment of its conservation status every six years. The most recent conservation assessment, undertaken in 2013, identified changes in agricultural practises, in particular intensification of grassland usage, as the main pressure facing the hare. Nonetheless, the overall assessment considered the species to be in a favourable conservation status and concluded that "...the hare is widespread and common in Ireland with a broad habitat

niche. None of the identified threats are considered likely to impact on its conservation status.”

The next EU Habitats Directive assessment is due in 2019. In advance of that, my Department will review the need for a new national hare survey to inform that report and provide up to date information on the population status of this species in Ireland.

*Question No. 66 answered with Question No. 39.*

*Question No. 67 answered with Question No. 54.*

### **Broadband Service Provision**

68. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht how she will work in conjunction with the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources to prioritise broadband provision in rural areas; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13114/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Delivering the National Broadband Plan is a top priority for Government, as reflected in the Programme for a Partnership Government. The allocation of new responsibilities at Cabinet level also signals the Government’s firm intention to address broadband and other telecoms challenges in rural Ireland. To this end, I will be working closely with the Minister for Communications, Climate Change and Natural Resources to deliver key elements of the National Broadband Plan and to accelerate and prioritise the rollout of the programme in rural areas.

Under the new arrangements, the Department of Communications, Climate Change and Natural Resources will continue with the procurement process for the State Broadband Intervention, which commenced in December 2015. The next stage in that process is to qualify potential bidders and to invite those shortlisted bidders to engage in detailed formal dialogue.

Meanwhile, my own Department will focus on establishing county/regional broadband taskforces, in which Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Offices, LEADER Groups and other relevant agencies will immediately engage with communities and with the telecoms industry in order to eliminate delay factors in advance and enable effective rural broadband delivery once a contract(s) has been awarded under the National Broadband Plan procurement.

As committed to in the Programme for a Partnership Government, within the first 100 days a Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce will be established, co-chaired by my Department and the Department of Communications, Climate Change and Natural Resources. It will also include other relevant Departments, ComReg, the County and City Management Association (CCMA), relevant agencies and the telecommunications industry. The Taskforce will address existing barriers in the areas of infrastructure planning, road opening/reinstatement and environmental consents, industry investment and any other measures which could address telecommunications deficits in rural Ireland.

The two Departments will also establish a joint working group to ensure that the procurement and rollout planning are progressed in parallel and as a priority.

### **Cultural Policy**

69. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she is satisfied with the current State expenditure on culture as a percentage of gross domestic

product, which according to Council of Europe data was 0.11% of GDP in 2012 as opposed to a European average of 0.6% in the same year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13258/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Programme for a Partnership Government contains a very important commitment to work to progressively increase funding to the arts, including the Arts Council and the Irish Film Board, as the economy continues to improve.

I can assure the Deputy that I will be engaging with my colleagues in Government and with the Oireachtas to seek to advance this commitment in the context of the forthcoming estimates and budgetary processes.

The figures quoted from the Council of Europe are from a project called Compendium - Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe. I understand that many European countries are not included in the figures, including ten EU member states. The data for the Compendium project are provided by independent researchers and it is not a standardised system for collection of statistics.

I further understand that the Compendium itself warns that data provided by the researchers are not comparable across countries because each researcher includes different elements in the definition of culture and these elements are reflected in the figures for public expenditure. Figures can also include some, or all, of national, regional or local expenditure.

The issue of a definition of culture and of capturing public expenditure on culture is one which was discussed in the public consultation process that was held for the purpose of developing Ireland's first national cultural policy, Culture 2025. This will be reflected in the draft policy document which I intend to submit to Government for consideration in the coming weeks.

Expenditure on the arts in Ireland comes from multiple sources, both public and private. I understand that the CSO does not produce national statistics that capture the totality of this expenditure as a percentage of GDP. However, I do consider that further research on this issue is warranted in the context of Culture 2025.

### **National Library**

70. **Deputy Kate O'Connell** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she can provide an update on the planned capital works at the National Library of Ireland; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13111/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The National Library is one of our foremost National Cultural Institutions, charged with collecting, preserving, promoting and making accessible the documentary and intellectual record of the life of Ireland.

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



The investment will be delivered as a phased programme of works in partnership with the Office of Public Works (OPW). The OPW is currently working on plans, in conjunction with the Library and my Department, and will shortly present a design scheme. I would expect works to start in 2017.

The redevelopment will address the following key areas:

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

I am confident that the investment plan will help transform the Library into a world-class facility for the storage and display of some of our most important historical documents. It will not only allow the Library to deliver on its core objectives of protecting and conserving the national collection, but will also enable it to develop its place as a venue for research, culture, learning and tourism.

### **Ministerial Responsibilities**

71. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach why he did not nominate a Minister with specific responsibility for infrastructure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13986/16]

**The Taoiseach:** The term infrastructure covers a number of different areas which fall under the responsibility of a range of individual Ministers. I believe that it is appropriate that the different Ministers lead in respect of infrastructure issues within their areas of responsibility. The Cabinet Committee system will continue to be used to ensure an appropriate “whole of Government”, coordinated approach to infrastructure issues and delivery, as necessary.

### **Departmental Properties**

72. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality her plans for a former Garda station (details supplied); the discussions that have taken place with the local authority and other stakeholders on the future of the premises; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13848/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Deputy will appreciate that properties which were formerly used as Garda stations are the responsibility of the Office of Public Works and I, as Minister, have no function in relation to the manner in which they are managed.

I understand that the former station at Walsh Street, Ballina has been returned to, and is now under the control of, the Office of Public Works and that the current Garda Station in Ballina, which was opened in 2005, is located on Lord Edward Street.

## **Garda Investigations**

73. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the status of a review of the investigation into the death of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13900/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** It has not been possible in the time available to ascertain any information which might be relevant to the Deputy's Question. I will communicate further with the Deputy in relation to this matter.

## **Services for People with Disabilities**

74. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the progress made to date, in conjunction with other Departments and State agencies, in implementing the comprehensive employment strategy for persons with disabilities; the resources that will be allocated to the strategy to enable its full implementation; and the timeframe for implementing and adequately resourcing the strategy. [13901/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities, which was launched on Friday 2 October 2015, sets out a ten-year approach to ensuring that people with disabilities who are able to, and want to, work are supported and enabled to do so. People with disabilities are only half as likely to be in employment as others of working age. The reasons for this are complex, and include level of education and skills, fears around loss of benefits, employer know-how, low expectations, and limited re-entry to work following onset of a disability, as well as a higher incidence of ill-health. The Strategy is a cross-government approach that brings together actions by different Departments and State agencies in a concerted effort to address the barriers and challenges that impact on employment of people with disabilities. In tandem with that, it seeks to ensure there will be joined-up services and supports at local level to support individuals on their journey into and in employment.

The Strategy's six strategic priorities are to:

- Build skills, capacity and independence;
- Provide bridges and supports into work;
- Make work pay;
- Promote job retention and re-entry to work;
- Provide coordinated and seamless support;
- Engage employers.

The Programme for Partnership Government reaffirms the Government's commitment to fully implement the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities. It pledges to ensure the Strategy's actions are compatible with mainstream activation policies and that it addresses concerns surrounding the loss of secondary benefits, so that work always pays more than welfare.

The focus in implementing the Strategy is on continuing interdepartmental cooperation and a joined-up approach to supports and services for jobseekers and workers with disabilities, rather than on additional resources. The implementation of the Strategy will be subject to regu-

lar monitoring, and there will be a review and renewal every three years. The Comprehensive Employment Strategy Implementation Group met recently to review progress in implementing the Strategy, and will prepare an annual report before the end of 2016, which will be published.

### **Protected Disclosures Data**

75. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the time-frame for response to and resolution of matters brought to her attention under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014. [13915/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Deputy will appreciate that disclosures under the Act can vary in complexity and in relation to the procedures necessary to address them. In the circumstances, it is not possible to indicate a timeframe for response to and resolution of these matters.

### **Garda Resources**

76. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality her plans to ensure that sufficient Garda Síochána cover is in place in Ballybunion Garda station for the tourist season, given that normal Garda numbers at the station for this period are eight but have been reduced to four; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13930/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for the distribution of resources, including personnel, among the various Garda Divisions and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. I am assured by the Garda Commissioner that the allocation of Gardaí is continually monitored and reviewed taking into account all relevant factors including crime trends, demographics, and security assessments relating to the area in question so as to ensure optimal use is made of Garda human resources.

I have been informed that the station in question is part of the Listowel Garda District, which forms part of the wider Kerry Garda Division. The number of Gardaí assigned to the Division on the 31 March 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was 297 of which 52 and 7 were assigned to the Listowel District and Ballybunion Garda station, respectively.

This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. Key to achieving this goal is the commitment in the Programme for Government, “A Programme for a Partnership Government” to continue the ongoing accelerated Garda recruitment programme with a view to increasing Garda numbers to 15,000.

As the Deputy will be aware, since the Garda College reopened in September 2014, a total of 700 Garda trainees have been recruited with a further 450 planned to be recruited during the remainder of this year. So far 395 of the new Garda trainees have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream uniform duties nationwide. I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that 10 newly attested Gardaí have been assigned to the Kerry Garda Division.

It is expected that a further 300 trainees will attest by the end of this year which, taking account of projected retirements, will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark. We must, I believe, endeavour to make more rapid progress than this to reach our target of 15,000 and I

am engaging with my colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, in relation to increasing the planned annual intake this year and in coming years.

### **Crime Data**

77. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of harassment complaints the Garda Síochána received involving online harassment through social media websites in each of the years 2015 and 2016 to date; the number of ongoing prosecutions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13962/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy will be aware the Central Statistics Office (CSO), as the national statistical agency, is responsible for the publication of the Official Recorded Crime Statistics. I am advised that it is not possible to provide the level of disaggregation sought by the Deputy in relation to the category of offences referred to. I have, however, asked the CSO to provide such relevant statistics as are available to the Deputy.

### **Crime Data**

78. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of bench warrants outstanding in the Garda Síochána R and J districts and the number outstanding for six months plus; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13963/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I have requested the information the Deputy is seeking from An Garda Síochána and will contact the Deputy directly when this information is to hand.

### **Garda Operations**

79. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the status of Garda Operation Thistle, including the quantity of drugs seized; the number of persons arrested and charged; the number of convictions obtained to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13964/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I wish to advise the Deputy that I have requested the information sought from An Garda Síochána and I will revert to the Deputy when the information is to hand.

### **Garda Expenditure**

80. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of the security arrangements for the visit of Charles Windsor to County Donegal this week in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13972/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy will be aware, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the allocation of necessary resources to ensure the safety of visiting dignitaries, having regard to the security considerations involved.

1 June 2016

I am advised by the Garda authorities that a precise costing in respect of the visit of HRH Prince Charles to Donegal is not yet available. When the information is to hand, I will make it available to the Deputy.

### **Visa Applications**

81. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for a visa; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13997/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the visa application referred to by the Deputy was received by the Irish Visa Office in Dublin on 20/05/2016. The application was approved on 30/05/2016 and the applicants were notified directly of this decision by the Visa Office on that date.

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

In addition, applicants may themselves e-mail queries directly to INIS (visamail@justice.ie).

### **Credit Availability**

82. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance following the recent publication of Costs of Doing Business in Ireland 2016, which reported that new businesses are paying 80% more on interest rates than the average in the EU for loans, the steps he is taking to facilitate affordable loan credit to small businesses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13984/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The Deputy will be aware that I, as Minister for Finance, have no direct function in the relationship between the banks and their customers. I have no statutory function in relation to the banking decisions made by individual lending institutions at any particular time and these are taken by the board and management of the relevant institution. This includes decisions in relation to product interest rates as determined by the banks from time to time.

It should be noted that in the most recent Department of Finance SME credit demand survey, covering the six month period to September 2015, only 1% of SMEs that did not seek credit said the reason was because it was too expensive to borrow. The same survey notes that, among those SMEs with outstanding loans, the average claimed cost of credit across all outstanding loans is 4.7%. Further, close to a quarter of SMEs with outstanding loans report a very low cost of credit between 0-2%.

In the latest Central Bank of Ireland report on Trends in Business Credit and Deposits: Q4 2015, the total weighted average interest rate on new non-financial SME loan draw-downs during Q4 2015 was 4.52 per cent. This represents a 58 basis point decline over 2015. In contrast,

the existing stock of Irish SME loans carry a lower weighted average interest rate; recorded at 3.16 per cent at end-Q4.

This Government recognises that small businesses play a central role in the sustainable recovery of the Irish economy. To facilitate this, Government policy since 2011 has been focused on ensuring that all viable SMEs have access to an appropriate supply of credit from a diverse range of bank and non-bank sources.

My Department has been involved in a range of initiatives to encourage access to credit for small and medium sized businesses and the SME State Bodies Group chaired by my Department provides a forum for the development and implementation of policy measures to enhance SMEs' access to a stable and appropriate supply of finance.

One such policy measure is the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, whose goal is to ensure access to flexible funding for Irish SMEs by facilitating the provision of:

- Flexible products with longer maturity and capital repayment flexibility, subject to credit approval;
- Lower cost funding to financial institutions which is passed on to SMEs;
- Market access for new entrants to the SME lending market, creating real competition.

The Government's aim for the SBCI is to enhance the range and profile of SME finance providers in Ireland. The SBCI is achieving this by working with existing and new providers to develop specific funding products and by supporting new entrants to the SME lending market through allocating funding to a number of non-bank SME finance providers. The SBCI is also pursuing its objective of driving competition within the SME funding market through the provision of funding to a broad range of potential lending partners.

The SBCI publishes results bi-annually. To the end of December 2015, the SBCI has lent just under €172 million to circa 4,600 SMEs. The average loan size was €37,000 and the loans were for a variety of purposes including investment, working capital and refinancing. The SMEs who received SBCI finance were from a variety of business sectors. 85% of the lending was to SMEs based outside of Dublin (West 13%, Midlands 7%, Mid West 14%, South West 19%, South East 11%, Mid East 10%, border region 11%). The SBCI will publish half year results at the beginning of the third quarter of 2016 for the first half of the year.

### **Property Tax Exemptions**

83. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Finance to examine a matter (details supplied) regarding local property tax. [13849/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by Revenue that the property in question was remediated from pyrite in April 2009 and on that basis is not entitled to the exemption, which was incorrectly claimed by the person concerned.

Regulations made in 2013 by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG Regulations) describe the procedures that must be followed in assessing and testing a property for pyrite damage and in certifying the level of damage. The DECLG Regulations are based on procedures described in an Irish Standard published by the National Standards. The Regulations in question - the Finance (Local Property Tax) (Pyrite Exemption) Regulations 2013 ( S.I. 147/2013) - came into effect on 2 May 2013.

Properties that had been damaged by pyrite but were remediated prior to publication of the DECLG Regulations on 2 May 2013 are not eligible for the LPT exemption.

Revenue has been in contact with the person concerned in regard to the property tax due for 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 and is willing to consider a phased payment arrangement if that helps the person concerned to deal with this matter.

### Universal Social Charge Yield

84. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 59 and 79 of 26 May 2016, to answer these questions again using the current parameters within which USC is charged, to provide for the non-indexation of USC bands and thresholds and to take into account the buoyancy of USC annual receipts over the period, given that USC receipts are forecast to reach €4.9 billion by 2021. [13874/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The following table sets out the broad projected revenues that would be generated by the Universal Social Charge (USC) for each of the next five years assuming that no provision is made for the indexation of USC thresholds and bands. It should be noted that for 2017, Exchequer USC receipts are impacted by the carryover effect of Budget 2016 changes and timing effects.

Forecast for USC	€ billion*
2017	c. €3.9
2018	c. €4.7
2019	c. €4.8
2020	c. €5.2
2021	c. €5.6

\*Exchequer receipts basis

With regard to the Deputy's request for an estimate of the individual annual costs of four variations of a 5-year plan to reduce or abolish the USC, taking into account projected buoyancy of USC receipts over the 5-year period, I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the information sought by the Deputy is not currently available.

The estimated cost to the Exchequer of the Universal Social Charge (USC) measures suggested by the Deputy in Parliamentary Questions Numbers 59 and 79 of 26 May 2016 were generated using an income tax model maintained for the purpose of estimating the effect of budgetary changes to the income tax system. These figures were estimated by reference to 2016 incomes, using latest actual data for the year 2013, adjusted as necessary for income, self-employment and employment trends in the interim. I am informed by Revenue that it would not be possible to extend the model to include the ability to forecast over multiple future reference years at the full range of income levels without undertaking an extensive and costly development of the model. However, Revenue are currently preparing the model for reference year 2017 (in advance of Budget 2017) and updates with regard to the year 2017 will therefore be available in due course.

### Motor Insurance Coverage

85. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the impediments to an Irish driver seeking motor insurance from an insurance company operating in another EU state; and

if he will make a statement on the matter. [13875/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The provision of motor insurance cover is a commercial matter for insurance companies, which is based on a proper assessment of the risks they are accepting and the making of adequate provisioning to meet these risks. In my role as the Minister for Finance, I have responsibility for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation.

The current legal and regulatory framework for the provision of insurance in the European Economic Area (EEA), and the supervision of that activity, is prescribed by European Union Law in the Life and Non-Life Insurance Directives or Solvency II. The provision of insurance throughout the EEA on a freedom of services basis and a freedom of establishment basis (i.e. a branch) within this framework is predicated upon the absence of internal market frontiers and the mutual recognition of the authorisation of insurance undertakings by Member States. Therefore, in general terms, there should be no impediment to an Irish driver seeking motor insurance from an insurance company operating in another EU Member State. It should be noted, however, that it is up to each insurance company to decide on which jurisdictions or locations in which it will underwrite insurance risk. Insurance companies would generally operate in jurisdictions where they are familiar with the market.

Many insurance companies which are authorised in other EU Member States sell insurance into Ireland. I am informed by the Central Bank of Ireland that any EU authorised undertaking wishing to offer motor insurance in Ireland is allowed to do so subject to complying with the local 'general good' requirements for motor insurance. These 'general good' requirements include membership of the Motor Insurers' Bureau of Ireland (MIBI) and being a signatory to the Declined Cases Agreement operated by Insurance Ireland. Both Irish authorised and EU authorised undertakings are required to comply with these requirements. Other EU Member States will have their own but similar 'general good' requirements for motor insurance.

The Central Bank informs me that there are currently approximately 15 Irish authorised undertakings and a further 22 EU authorised undertakings offering motor insurance cover in Ireland. The full list can be accessed at [www.mibi.ie](http://www.mibi.ie).

### Vehicle Registration

86. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of abolishing the €100 administration fee deducted from repayable vehicle registration tax when importing a car. [13876/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by Revenue that, assuming a modest year-on-year growth in the value and number of vehicles taken out of the State under the Export Repayment Scheme, the full year cost of abolishing the fee would be in the region of €160,000. The fee assists with the costs of administering the Scheme.

### Tax Code

87. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the gains in revenue from the cumulative effect of six proposed measures (details supplied). [13880/16]

88. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the gains in revenue from the cumulative effect of six proposed measures (details supplied). [13881/16]



**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 87 and 88 together.

I assume the Deputy's questions refer to the measure to limit the use of certain tax reliefs and exemptions (known as 'specified reliefs') by high-income individuals introduced in the 2006 and 2007 Finance Acts (the restriction was subsequently modified in later Finance Acts).

As the Deputy may be aware, Revenue publishes an annual report on the functioning of the restriction. These reports are available at: <http://www.revenue.ie/en/about/publications/other.html#reports>.

I am advised by Revenue that the data required to provide a definitive estimate of the yield from the totality of measures outlined by the Deputy is not available. Form RR1s, which must be returned in respect of the use of specified reliefs, are not available for the additional cases who would be newly subject to the relief restrictions under proposals (iii), (iv) and (v) concerning the computation of the unrestricted amount of specified reliefs, vis the reduction of the Relief Threshold Amount from €80,000 to either €35,000 or €30,000 and the reduction of the alternate Adjusted Income criteria from 20% to 15% or the inclusion of additional reliefs. Nor are the requisite data in respect of Trusts available to enable the yield from proposal (vi) to be estimated.

In relation to proposals (i) and (ii) in respect of the first question, based on personal income tax returns filed for the year 2013, the latest year for which data are available, it is tentatively estimated that reducing the entry level adjusted income threshold to €120,000 and the full restriction level to €200,000, would generate an additional yield in the order of €41 million.

In relation to proposals (i) and (ii) in respect of the second question, based on personal income tax returns filed for the year 2013, the latest year for which data are available, it is tentatively estimated that reducing the entry level adjusted income threshold to €110,000 and the full restriction level to €200,000, would generate an additional yield in the order of €43 million.

It should be noted that these estimates take no account of any changes in taxpayer behaviour.

## Tax Code

89. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the revenue that would be generated by reducing the standard fund threshold from €2 million to €1.7 million, to €1.5 million, to €1.3 million and to €1 million. [13882/16]

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

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

changes to be made. There is no readily available underlying data or methodology on which to base reliable estimates of the revenue that would arise from further changes to the SFT of the scale envisaged in the question.

### **Revenue Commissioners Resources**

90. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the revenue that would be raised by increasing the Revenue Commissioners personnel by 125 qualified persons to target tax evasion and black market activity. [13883/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by the Office of the Revenue Commissioners that Revenue's Comprehensive Review of Expenditure 2014 estimated that by increasing audit staffing resources by c. 100 staff an additional exchequer yield of €50 million per annum could be achieved. It estimated that by increasing staff on compliance projects such as oils, tobacco and alcohol by 100 could raise €20 million per annum. It also estimated that increasing staffing on investigations by 20 staff could achieve exchequer savings of €12 million per annum.

In that context Budget 2015 and Budget 2016 provided for an increase of 176 (126 and 50) in additional resources to deal with a wide variety of staffing requirements across audit and compliance functions, debt management functions, international tax, etc.

Revenue appointed over 400 staff from open competitions in 2015, these staff were mainly deployed on Local Property Tax support, International Tax and on compliance interventions. Revenue has appointed over 230 staff to date in 2016 from open recruitment. The recruitment in 2015 and to date in 2016 has been at all levels and across a diverse range of specialist skills areas such as tax and legal professionals, data analysts, economists and information technology experts.

It should be noted that the recruitment of staff and their training and development is addressed as part of an overall workforce planning process in Revenue. The investment in the training and development of a Revenue auditor or investigator can take up to three years, depending on previous relevant experience. The capacity to recruit and develop Revenue staff needs to be addressed in a coordinated fashion.

### **Property Tax**

91. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the net cost of abolishing the local property tax. [13884/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the Local Property Tax (LPT) is forecast to collect €440 million in 2016. These receipts would be lost if LPT was abolished. It should be borne in mind that under the fiscal rules of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact, this policy choice would use up available fiscal space unless offset by either discretionary revenue increases or expenditure reductions elsewhere.

### **Budget 2016**

92. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the details of the net effect of

measures carried over for a year as a result of budget 2016, in tabular form. [13885/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I assume the Deputy is referring to the carryover effect of Budget 2016 tax measures. It was estimated that there would be a total negative carryover into 2017 as a result of Budget 2016 tax measures in the region of €192 million. It should be noted that while the following table sets out the carryover effect of Budget 2016 measures, it also includes measures announced in Budget 2016, which will take effect in 2017, such as the extension of the levy of financial institutions.

Tax-Head	Carryover effect - €m
Income Tax	-292
PRSI	-3
Corporation Tax	-37
Capital Gains Tax	-2
Capital Acquisition Tax	-7
Stamp Duty	+149
Total	-192

I should point out that the exact impacts of carryover will be reviewed as part of the normal Budgetary process, as there are a lot of moving parts to be considered, such as economic growth, take up of various schemes and specific tax relevant factors, which could impact on the expected return from the measures.

### Financial Services Regulation

93. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the savings that would accrue from moving the entire cost of regulation of the financial sector onto the industry, as opposed to the current 50%. [13886/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The Central Bank's total funding requirement for financial regulation activity is determined on an annual basis by the resources required to discharge its legal responsibilities under domestic and EU law. Section 32D and 32E of the Central Bank Act 1942, as amended, provide that the Central Bank Commission may make regulations relating to the imposition of levies and fees on the financial services sector in respect of the recoupment of the costs of financial regulation.

The financial services industry currently funds 50% of the costs incurred by the Central Bank for financial regulation with certain exceptions including the banks which had participated in the Eligible Liabilities Guarantee Scheme, AIB, Bank of Ireland and Permanent TSB, which are required to fund 100% of the Central Bank's regulatory costs. Credit Unions currently contribute approximately 8% to the cost of their regulation.

The current 50% funding arrangement translates into a corresponding reduction in the annual surplus remitted by the Central Bank to the Exchequer. I have been informed by the Central Bank that of the order of €69 million of the Central Bank's 2015 surplus income was redirected to make up for the difference between the costs of regulation and the funding received from the financial services industry.

My Department and the Central Bank last year issued a joint consultation paper to canvass views on the potential for changing the current funding model. My Department is presently working with the Bank on addressing the issues that arose from the 2015 Public Consultation,

the results of which will feed into my overall deliberations on this matter.

### Tax Code

94. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of dividing the capital gains tax categories into passive and active and applying a 40% rate to the passive tax activity, for example, buying shares, and the following 35% to active engagement, for example, selling on a business. [13888/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that as tax returns do not provide a basis for compiling estimates in relation to the amount of Capital Gains Tax liability separately associated with passive and active activity, there is no basis on which Revenue could provide the information requested by the Deputy.

### Tax Code

95. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the revenue generated by applying certain measures (details supplied). [13889/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that Betting Duty of 1% is levied on both traditional and online (remote) betting, with the latter being in place since 1st August 2015. As there is not yet a full year's data available for online betting, the value of a full year has been estimated and the expected yield is shown in the table below.

-	Traditional Bet	Remote Bet	Total
-	€m	€m	€m
Full Year @ 1%	27.4	19.7	47.1
Full Year @ 3%	82.3	59.0	141.3
Additional Yield	54.9	39.3	94.2

The incidence of the Duty will be the same whether the duty is paid directly by the bookmaker or collected by the bookmaker from customers and paid to Revenue; as such it does not affect the costing and, regardless of how the duty is applied in law, it is borne in practice by consumers.

In relation to the level of increase in duty proposed by the Deputy, I would be reluctant to proceed with a 200% increase on the current rate because of the general compliance implications of an increase of this magnitude, and I think it is particularly important that taxation of remote betting, which commenced on 1 August last, is given a reasonable period in which to settle before considering such an increase.

### Tax Code

96. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance how he will operate, when he will apply and the amount he will raise from the proposed tax on sugar sweetened drinks. [13890/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The Programme for a Partnership Gov-

ernment states that increased public spending and reductions in personal taxes will be funded through, among other things, a new tax on sugar sweetened drinks.

Details of the design of such a tax is a budgetary matter. In this regard, I would draw the Deputy's attention to the General Excise Duties Tax Strategy Group papers of 2014 and 2015 which examine issues surrounding a tax on sugar sweetened drinks. These papers are available on my Department's website.

### Tax Credits

97. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of increasing the self-employed tax credit to €800; €900; €1,000; €1,100; €1,200; €1,300; €1,400; €1,500 and €1,650 and tapering out the increase in the credit, for example, €800 minus €550 equals €250 for first taper, from income in excess of €80,000, by 5% per €1,000, for gross income between €80,000 and €100,000, and a second taper on the credit value before the increase credit, €550 from income in excess of €100,000, a reduced credit, by 5% per €1,000, for gross income between €100,000 and €120,000. [13891/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by Revenue that the following table sets out the estimated full year costs to the Exchequer from increasing the earned income tax credit of €550 as set out in Budget 2016 to the various levels as suggested by the Deputy, with the increase in the credit to taper out at income levels between €80,000 and €100,000. These costs also include the estimated yield to the Exchequer that would result in the tapering out of the existing €550 credit by five per cent per €1,000 for those who have incomes in excess of €100,000.

Earned Income Credit	€m
€800	23
€900	33
€1,000	43
€1,100	53
€1,200	64
€1,300	74
€1,400	84
€1,500	95
€1,650	105

### Insurance Industry

98. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance to engage in consultation with Insurance Ireland regarding the potential for car insurers to offer discounts to motorists who have had dashcams fitted in their cars. [13912/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** As Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I, nor the Central Bank of Ireland, may interfere in the provision of insurance products. The EU framework for insurance expressly prohibits Member States from adopting rules which require insurance companies to obtain prior approval of the pricing, or terms and conditions of an insurance product.

The provision of insurance cover and the price at which it is offered, including the granting of discounts, is a commercial matter for insurance companies and is based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept and adequate provisioning to meet those risks.

I would add that my Department is currently conducting a Review of Policy in the Insurance Sector in consultation with the Central Bank and Government Departments, Agencies and other stakeholders, including the insurance industry.

This Review will include an examination of the factors contributing to the cost and availability of insurance. Work on the Review will continue over the coming months.

### **Insurance Industry**

99. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a car insurance company discriminating on grounds of profession relating to charges for annual insurance cover. [13913/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** As Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. The ability of the Government to influence insurance pricing is limited as insurance companies are required under European law to price in accordance with risk and neither I, nor the Central Bank of Ireland, have the power to direct insurance companies on the pricing or the provision of insurance products.

The EU framework for insurance expressly prohibits Member States adopting rules which require the prior approval or systematic notification of certain matters, including general and special policy conditions and scales of premiums. Furthermore, the EU framework provides non-life insurers with the freedom to set premiums.

Insurance companies consider a number of risks when determining the premium for a proposed insurance policy, whether that is a general insurance policy such as motor or home insurance, or a life assurance policy. A premium is based on the actuarial calculation of risk.

Insurance Ireland has informed me that motor insurers make their own individual decisions on whether to offer cover and what terms to apply. They use a combination of rating factors in doing this, such as the age of the driver, the type of car, claims record, driving experience, number of drivers, how the car is used, etc. Insurers do not all use the same combination of rating factors, prices vary across the market and consumers are free to choose.

As stated earlier the ability of the Government to influence insurance pricing is limited but, that does not preclude the Government from introducing measures that may, in the longer term, lead to a better claims environment that would facilitate a reduction in claims costs.

My Department has embarked on a review of the insurance sector which is being undertaken in consultation with the Central Bank and other Departments and Agencies. The objective of the Review is to recommend measures to improve the functioning and regulation of the insurance sector.

The Review of Policy in the Insurance Sector will continue over the coming months and is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

Finally, in the event that a person is unable to obtain a quotation for motor insurance or feels that the premium proposed or the terms are so excessive that it amounts to a refusal to give them

motor insurance, they should contact Insurance Ireland (telephone 01 6761820) quoting the Declined Cases Agreement. Under this Agreement, the Declined Cases Committee of Insurance Ireland deals with cases of difficulty in obtaining motor insurance.

### **NAMA Portfolio**

100. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance the value of the assets the National Asset Management Agency owns and that are located outside Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13960/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The Deputy will be aware that NAMA does not own residential property. Rather NAMA has acquired loans and its role is that of a lender with claims over security for its loans, like a bank, rather than a property owner or lessor.

Information on the value and performance of NAMA loans is included in NAMA's Section 55 quarterly accounts, which are published on the NAMA website, [www.nama.ie](http://www.nama.ie). Detailed analysis of the remaining portfolio is carried out as part of an impairment process on a half-yearly basis and the value of the remaining portfolio which lay outside Ireland, as at end-June 2015, was €4.74bn.

I wish to advise the Deputy that NAMA's 2015 Annual Report and Accounts will be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas and published by NAMA on Wednesday, 8th June 2016. This will contain significant detail in relation to NAMA's activities and its remaining portfolio, including an analysis of the geographical breakdown, as at year end-2015.

### **Mortgage Book Sales**

101. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance if he will purchase the distressed residential and buy-to-let market mortgages from Ulster Bank; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13990/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I have no plans to purchase distressed loans from Ulster Bank or any other commercial bank.

The Deputy will be aware that the Consumer Protection (Regulation of Credit Servicing Firms) Act, 2015 was enacted on 8 July 2015. It was introduced to fill the consumer protection gap where loans were sold by the original lender to an unregulated firm. The 2015 Act introduced a regulatory regime for a new type of entity called a 'credit servicing firm'. Credit Servicing Firms are now subject to the provisions of Irish financial services law that apply to 'regulated financial service providers'. This ensures that relevant borrowers, whose loans are sold to third parties, maintain the same regulatory protections they had prior to the sale, including under the various statutory codes (such as the Consumer Protection Code, Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears, Code of Conduct for Business Lending to Small and Medium Enterprises and the Minimum Competency Code) issued by the Central Bank of Ireland and the Central Bank (Supervision and Enforcement) Act 2013 (Section 48) (Lending to Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises) Regulations 2015 which comes into operation on 1 July 2016.

The Code of Conduct for Mortgage Arrears provides protections for borrowers who endeavour to meet their commitments in relation to their mortgages and the 2015 Act ensures that these protections apply when a loan has been sold.

As the Deputy may also be aware, the Programme for a Partnership Government commits

to considering further appropriate actions in this area and on the broader issue of overindebtedness. I would encourage those borrowers who have not been able to engage with their lender to date to contact the Money Advice & Budgeting Service dedicated mortgage advice service (MABS Helpline - 0761 07 2000) for confidential, non-judgemental and free advice and practical assistance in negotiating with their lender a suitable long term debt resolution, thus avoiding repossession of their primary residence.

### **Schools Mental Health Strategies**

102. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to develop and issue a circular to primary schools in order to incorporate weekly discussions on the issue of mental health and well-being in the classroom; to encourage the roll-out of basic awareness strategies such as story-telling and question and answer sessions to promote a positive sense of health and well-being; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13996/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department is strongly supportive of the promotion of positive mental health awareness in both primary and post-primary schools as part of an overall healthy lifestyle for our young people. 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.

My Department issued a circular to all primary schools in February this year promoting and encouraging Healthy Lifestyles for their pupils. Schools and the wider education sector have a vital role to play in contributing to the Government's 'Healthy Ireland' agenda that is being led by the Department of Health and is supported by my Department. It is acknowledged that positive mental and psychological wellbeing are a key aspect of healthy lifestyles. Schools are contributing to the overall physical, mental health and wellbeing of our young people but this must be done in collaboration with their families and their community.

Creating a healthy lifestyle spans the curriculum in schools, whole-school ethos, quality of teaching, learning and assessment, pupil support, pastoral care and the provision of professional development for teachers. It also involves other supports such as educational psychological services and the interface with other agencies, both nationally and locally. Schools support these areas also through their implementation of their anti-bullying, substance misuse, attendance policies and through the delivery of the SPHE curriculum.

It is also important that work in this area commences when pupils are at an early age. To this end, Wellbeing Guidelines for Primary Schools were published by my Department in January 2015. These guidelines were developed, along with guidelines for post-primary schools, following a process of wide consultation, by a working group with representation from the Teacher Education Section/Inspectorate, SPHE Support Service, National Psychological Service (NEPS), Department of Health and the Health Service Executive/National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP).

The guidelines provide practical guidance to schools on how they can promote positive mental health and well-being in an integrated school-wide way. They also provide evidence-based advice on how to support young people who may be at risk of suicidal behaviour.

The Guidelines are for all members of the school community, boards of management and in-school management teams who play a central leadership role in positive mental health promotion. They are also useful for parents' associations, student councils, health and other personnel



who are seeking an understanding of how to work in and with schools.

Specific attention is drawn within the Guidelines to the identification of pupils with mental health difficulties, the support process and referral pathways available to schools to provide for their needs and where the difficulties result in absences from school support mechanisms are suggested to ease the pupils re-integration.

My Department, in collaboration with the Department of Health and the HSE, provides support to schools to implement this agenda. At Primary school level the HSE's Health Promotion Officers and my Department's NEPS service respectively support school staff delivery of programmes such as Zippy's Friends and the Friends for Life which promote children's resilience and coping skills which enable them better to manage anxiety.

### **Institutes of Technology Funding**

103. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to increase funding to Waterford Institute of Technology for upgrading and extending laboratory facilities; his views on the growth in employment prospects in the biopharma industry in the south east; if the region has continuously increased its intake to meet demand; if the potential to meet future increased demand is inhibited due to limited laboratory space; if better mapping between investment and regional demand will provide additional investment opportunities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13872/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Waterford Institute of Technology has not made any formal application for funding to my Department or the Higher Education Authority in respect of the facilities referred to by the Deputy. Any such funding request would be considered in the context of capital resources available for the higher education sector and having regard to competing demands.

The other questions raised by the Deputy are properly a matter for the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

### **Technological Universities**

104. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he is aware of the Central Statistics Office household quarterly survey, quarter 1 report which shows that unemployment in the south east is dangerously high at 12.5%; if prioritising the development of a technological university in the region is an urgent priority; the steps he will take to ensure the speedy provision of a technological university in the south east; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13873/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Programme for Partnership Government provides, inter alia, that the ultimate goal of the Government will be to deliver sustainable full employment by 2020. In this context, the Government is committed to the implementation of the Regional Action Plans for Jobs, with local input, to help spread growth to all areas.

The South East region is a good example of what can be achieved in creating sustainable employment growth through strong collaborative effort at local level. The economic crisis hit the South East's job numbers badly with the loss of 37,900 jobs from Q1 2008 to Q1 2011. However, since the launch of the Action Plan for Jobs in Q1 2012, the unemployment rate has

fallen from 20.1 to 12.5 per cent – a decrease of 38% in that timeframe, with 204,400 people now at work, an increase of 23,100 over the period.

The South East Action Plan for Jobs which was published in September 2015 covers the counties of Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford and will build on the significant progress made to date. The core objective of the Plan is to support an ambitious programme of enterprise growth and job creation in region over the medium and longer term capitalising on the strengths and opportunities of the region.

The role of the education system featured strongly in the consultations for the Action Plan for Jobs, in particular through the introduction of entrepreneurship modules and ensuring young people develop an understanding so they can take an informed step towards self-employment if desired. An Implementation Committee has been established to oversee implementation of the South East Plan, and a range of educational stakeholders will attend these meetings, including the Carlow and Waterford Institutes of Technology.

The new Education and Training Boards in Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford have a fresh mandate, and like the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are now focused on developing stronger links with their local enterprise base. 3rd and 4th Level education in the region is provided by Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT), Institute of Technology Carlow (IT Carlow) and Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT) Tipperary.

It is recognised that the Institutes of Technology have developed strategic research activities aligned with the strengths of regional and national priorities. Overall, stronger engagements between the respective Institutes of Technology and employers and enterprises in the region provides a real opportunity to ensure that the excellence of the graduate and teaching and research capability is understood by all in the region and that the higher and further education systems can respond to the changing skills needs of employers.

#### Regional Skills Forum:

In addition to this, the establishment of a new Regional Skills Forum in the region by my Department will ensure a focus on attaining ambitious targets improved educational attainment and skills provision in the region. This will see institutions working together in the region to enhance progression and transfer pathways and develop greater co-ordination of academic provision and engagement with regional employers.

#### Technological Universities:

Furthermore, the new Programme for Government outlines that this new Government will continue to support the creation of Technological Universities. It is envisaged that the development of a Technological University for the South East will act as a catalyst and stimulus of economic, social and cultural development for the region.

The development of Technological Universities is in line with the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 which provides a framework for the development of the higher education sector to 2030. With regard to the institute of technology sector, the Strategy recommended significant reforms to position the sector to meet national strategic objectives. In particular, the Strategy recommended consolidation within the sector and a pathway of evolution for those consolidated institutes of technology, to allow them to demonstrate significant progress against robust performance criteria and to apply to become technological universities.

The development of technological universities has the potential to deliver greater opportunity to students in these regions, to staff working in the institutions, and to the broader local economy and society.

I would also like to underline that this is much more than a rebranding exercise – the institutions concerned are required to achieve high standards across a range of areas before being designated as technological universities. These include standards relating to the qualifications of staff, the quality of research output, the proportion of students engaged in lifelong learning, and other relevant issues.

#### Regional Focus:

There will also be a specific focus on the particular contribution the university will make to the needs of the region in which it is located. The development of technological universities has the potential to deliver greater opportunity to students in these regions, to staff working in the institutions, and to the broader local economy and society.

#### Consortiums who have applied:

As part of the implementation of the Strategy, the Higher Education Authority in 2012 published a four-stage process and criteria for applicant groups of institutes of technology wishing to apply to become technological universities.

The designation process consists of four stages as follows:

- an expression of interest,
- the preparation of a plan to meet the criteria,
- an evaluation of the plan, and
- an application for designation.

There are currently four consortia engaged with the process to become designated as TUs. These are TU4Dublin (Dublin Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Tallaght, Institute of Technology Blanchardstown), Technological University for the South-East (TUSE – consisting of Waterford Institute of Technology and Institute of Technology Carlow), Munster Technological University (MTU – consisting of Cork Institute of Technology and Institute of Technology Tralee) and the Connacht Ulster Alliance (CUA – consisting of Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Sligo and Letterkenny Institute of Technology).

#### Status of Consortia:

At the end of 2014, two consortia successfully passed stage 3 of the four-stage process. These are the TU4Dublin consortium and the Munster Technological University consortium.

In early 2015 the Connacht-Ulster Alliance also expressed an interest in merging and in applying to become a technological university. This application was approved to proceed to the next stage. In line with the process for designation as a Technological University, Stage 2 of this process involves the preparation of a plan by the Connacht-Ulster Alliance, to meet the criteria for designation as a Technological University.

#### Technological University for the South-East (TUSE):

With regard to the Technological University for the South-East, consisting of Institute of Technology, Carlow (ITC) and Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT), following the publication of the Kelly report, a preliminary facilitation process which was underway since September 2015, has recently been completed and a Report of the process was received by my Department on 13 May 2016. There was strong engagement in the process by both parties. This facilitation process has been an important building block in terms of building trust between the parties and

in developing a strong working relationship between the Presidents and Chairs of both institutions. As part of this process, the Presidents of the two institutions, have jointly developed an initial work-plan to support the development of a joint TU proposal.

In addition to this both Institutions made a recent joint presentation and submission to the Higher Education Authority, seeking funding to underpin the next phase of engagement. This was part of the latest call issued by the Higher Education Authority regarding the restructuring of the higher education landscape. The call sought submissions for funding support in respect of the costs arising from mergers as part of the implementation of the National Strategy for Higher Education.

#### Position of Technological Universities Bill:

In relation to the position of the Technological Universities Bill, this Bill was at Report Stage at the time of dissolution of the previous Dáil in February 2016. I recognise that there were a significant number of matters raised in respect of the Bill at both Committee and Report Stage. It is my intention to now consult with all of the relevant stakeholders in relation to both the matters raised during the legislative process and the commitments contained in the Programme for Government.

Following the finalisation of this consultation process I will then advance the legislation having determined a position in relation to any matters raised as part of this consultation process.

### **School Staff**

105. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to ensure that a school (details supplied) retains its current teaching numbers for the 2016-17 academic year. [13899/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The staffing arrangements for primary schools for the 2016/17 school year are set out in Department Circular 0007/2016 which is available on the Department website.

The staffing circular also includes an appeals mechanism for schools to submit an appeal under certain criteria to an independent Appeals Board. Details of the appeal criteria are set out in the published staffing arrangements.

The school referred to by the Deputy submitted an appeal to the May 2016 meeting of the Primary Staffing Appeals Board. The school has been informed that its appeal has been upheld.

The Primary Staffing Appeals Board operates independently of the Department and its decision is final.

### **SOLAS Training and Education Programmes**

106. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on a matter regarding an organisation (details supplied) which has been accepting applications for places on Safe Pass tutor accreditation programmes since 2014, despite stating in 2014, 2015 and 2016 in response to inquiries that it had no plans to run such a programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13914/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** SOLAS have advised that it is a requirement that any candidates who wish to apply for inclusion on the Safe Pass Tutor accreditation programme, must meet with the specified criteria and be approved by the Stakeholder Committee, before being scheduled for tutor training. Places cannot be offered to candidates until they have been approved by the Stakeholder Committee.

Stakeholder Committee meetings took place in February, 2014 and again in October and December 2015. None of the applicants met with the criteria and as a result a Safe Pass tutor accreditation programme did not take place. SOLAS has advised that there has been no reduction in the provision of SOLAS Safe Pass courses, that provision is delivered on demand, and current capacity has been sufficient to do so.

SOLAS is currently accepting applications from suitably qualified candidates for Safe Pass Tutor training and any person or persons wishing to apply for this training may contact SOLAS to obtain an application form. The next meeting of the Stakeholder Committee will take place early next month and will inform the decision as to whether or not, there are sufficient numbers to schedule a tutor accreditation programme.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

107. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a new school building (details supplied). [13928/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The major building project for the school in question is at an advanced stage of architectural planning, Stage 2(b) - Detailed Design, which includes the applications for Planning Permission, Fire Certificate and Disability Access Certificate and the preparation of Tender Documents. All statutory approvals have been secured and the Design have been authorised to complete Stage 2b.

The design team will submit the stage 2(b) report to the Department when it is completed and the Department will revert to the school with regard to the further progression of the project following consideration of that report.

### **School Accommodation**

108. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will sanction a 12th classroom to facilitate a school's (details supplied) enrolment figures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13929/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the school to which he refers has been allocated funding under my Department's Additional Accommodation Scheme to provide an additional mainstream classroom and accommodation for an ASD class. The final approval letter issued on 17th May last.

Subsequently, my Department received an appeal from the school referred to, seeking approval for the provision of further classroom accommodation. The appeal is currently under consideration and a decision will be conveyed to the school authority as soon as this process is finalised.

### **Summer Works Scheme Applications**

109. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application by a school (details supplied) for funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13957/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the application submitted by the school under the Summer Works Scheme (SWS) 2016-2017 does not include for the additional accommodation needs referred to. It is, however, open to the school to submit an application under my Department's Emergency Works Scheme in respect of essential works required to facilitate a child with special needs. The appropriate application is available on my Department's website, [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

### **Special Educational Needs**

110. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the implementation of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004, including the date for its full implementation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13968/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** A number of sections of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 have been commenced, including those establishing the National Council for Special Education and those promoting an inclusive approach to the education of children.

The remaining sections of the EPSEN Act have yet to be commenced. Legal advice indicates that the EPSEN Act, as it is currently constituted, may not be implemented on a phased, or age cohort, basis.

The NCSE has published a Plan for the Implementation of the EPSEN Act. This report, which was published in 2006, made recommendations which suggested that additional investment over a period of years of up to €235m per annum, across the education and health sectors, would be required to fully implement the EPSEN Act.

My Department's opinion is that the level of investment required could be significantly greater than that envisaged in the NCSE report.

While awaiting the full implementation of the EPSEN Act, the NCSE has published a number of policy advice papers which make recommendations aimed at developing a better or more effective alternative to the current resource allocation model, and which aims to move the system towards ultimate implementation of the EPSEN Act.

These reports include the NCSE policy advice on Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Schools, published in 2013, and the Report of the Working Group on a Proposed New Model for Allocating Teaching Resources for pupils with Special Educational Needs, published in 2014.

The alternative model is currently being piloted in 47 schools and the effectiveness of the pilot is being reviewed. This review will allow us to take into account the learning experiences of schools, principals, pupils and the views of parents over the course of the pilot.

It is therefore intended to bring into effect many of the good ideas contained in the EPSEN Act, on a non-statutory basis initially, through policy developments across a range of areas, in conjunction with NCSE policy advice.

Under the Programme for a Partnership Government, I have also committed to consulting

with stakeholders to see how best to progress sections of the EPSEN Act that were introduced on a non-statutory basis.

### **Special Educational Needs Staff**

111. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a school (details supplied) will retain its current number of special needs assistants for the 2016-17 school year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13969/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I wish to advise the Deputy that recent years have seen an increase in the number of SNAs from 10,575 posts in 2011, to 12,040 to June 2016. In the same period the number of children accessing SNA support has grown from approximately 22,000 to some 30,000 by the end of 2015.

The increase in SNA numbers has been supported by a very significant increase in the Budget for SNAs, rising from €332 million in 2011 to €402 million by the end of 2015.

This is a higher level of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support than ever before, which ensures that children with special educational needs can continue to participate in education and be supported in a manner appropriate to their needs.

The Deputy will be aware that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), is responsible for allocating a quantum of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support for each school annually taking into account the assessed care needs of children qualifying for SNA support enrolled in the school. Where children have significant care needs whereby they may need additional support to be able to attend school, the NCSE may make an allocation of SNA support to the school to assist that child.

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 2016/17 school year by 29th February 2016.

The NCSE continues to accept applications in recognition that enrolments may not have been completed or where assessments were not completed. The NCSE will consider these applications and make further allocations to schools in respect of valid applications which have been received to September.

The NCSE is currently assessing demand for SNA support for the coming school year and will advise all schools of their allocations for SNA support for 2016/17, before the end of the current school year.

All schools have the names and contact details of their local SENO. Parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child's special educational needs, using the contact details available on [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

As the Deputy's question relates to the allocation of SNA support by the NCSE to a particular school, I have referred this question to the NCSE for their consideration and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

112. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when he will make a decision on the construction of a boundary wall between a school and a residential area, given health and safety requirements and that the necessary documents, costings and revised costings have been submitted; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13970/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Planning and Building Unit of my Department has carried out an initial review of the cost estimate provided for the replacement of the wall at the school in question.

On foot of this examination a number of issues require to be addressed by the Board of Management. A letter regarding these matters will issue in the next few days.

When the requested information has been provided, the matter will be considered further.

### **Teacher Redeployment**

113. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will review a case and provide panel rights to a person (details supplied); the options available to the person; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13989/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The core function of the redeployment arrangements is to facilitate the redeployment of all surplus permanent teachers to other schools that have vacancies. Thereafter, schools are required under the panel arrangements to fill permanent vacancies from supplementary panels comprised of eligible fixed-term (temporary/substitute) and part-time teachers.

The arrangements for panel access for fixed-term (temporary), substitute and part-time teachers to the Supplementary Redeployment Panel for the 2016/17 school year are set out in Circular 0058/2015 which is available on the Department website.

Applicants must meet all of the published criteria in order to gain access to the Supplementary Redeployment Panel.

The teacher referred to by the Deputy failed to meet the criteria and is therefore ineligible to be included on the Supplementary Redeployment Panel.

### **School Accommodation**

114. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he is aware of and will facilitate a request by a school (details supplied) for an increase in grants to facilitate extension works, buildings and facilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14008/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The school to which the Deputy refers was approved funding in 2015 under my Department's Additional Accommodation Scheme to provide one classroom, three resource rooms and a WC for assisted users.

The school recently applied for a grant uplift. My Officials are currently liaising with the school to ascertain how and why the application for additional funding arises. When all of the relevant information has been received from the school and reviewed the school will be informed of my Department's decision.



## Water Conservation Grant Eligibility

115. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to allow senior citizens who did not apply for the water conservation grant because they were not aware of it to apply for it now on discretionary grounds. [13855/16]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** 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. The 2015 grant scheme administration is now closed and I have no proposals to amend the regulations to further extend the deadline or re-open the 2015 scheme.

Under the ‘Confidence and Supply arrangement’ agreed with Fianna Fáil in the context of facilitating a minority government, the Government is committed to introducing and supporting legislation in the Oireachtas, within six weeks of its appointment, to suspend domestic water charges for a period of nine months from the end of the current bill cycle. This is to allow for the Oireachtas to decide on the enduring funding model for Irish Water. Under this arrangement, the Water Conservation Grant will be suspended for 2016.

Water Services legislation prohibits Irish Water from disconnecting a household from the public water supply.

## Water Charges

116. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the net cost and savings in abolishing water charges and the water conservation grant, including its administration costs and its associated impact on the fiscal space. [13892/16]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Abolishing domestic water charges would lead to an expected additional subvention requirement of up to €1.4 billion over period 2016-2021, subject to assumptions on payment levels, allowing for some reducing in customer service costs but without reflecting any costs of dismantling contracts. Some additional funding would also arise for the group water sector. Assuming the abolition of the Water Conservation Grant, savings of some €660 million would arise, again over the same period and including savings on administrative costs.

The effect on the fiscal space or budgetary room for manoeuvre as calculated under the Expenditure Benchmark is more complex to describe. The expenditure undertaken by Irish Water, which counts as general government expenditure, is already in the base level of expenditure. However, the abolishment of water charges would count as a discretionary revenue reduction for the year after the abolition occurred. The redeployment of the Water Conservation Grant as subvention to Irish Water would compensate to some degree.

## Motor Tax Rates

117. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the cost of abolishing the punitive excess charge where a vehicle is taxed for less than 12 months, that is, a vehicle being more expensive when charged for six months than for 12 months. [13893/16]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Motor tax is payable on an annual, half-yearly or quarterly basis.

The rates applicable for the half-yearly and quarterly options are 55.5% and 28.25% of the annual charge respectively. These relativities have remained generally consistent since the 1960s.

The current annual cost of the surcharge is being compiled and will be forwarded as soon as possible.

### **Electoral Reform**

118. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to review voting rights of British citizens living and paying tax here to allow them to vote in referenda; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13931/16]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** British citizens resident in the State may vote at Dáil, European Parliament and local elections if they are entered in the register of electors for a constituency in the State in which they ordinarily reside. Only Irish citizens are entitled to vote at referendums, in accordance with Article 47.3 of the Constitution.

### **Property Tax**

119. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will consider issuing directions to local authorities to provide a small portion of the local property tax to estates which have been taken in charge and have their own established residents associations, so as to facilitate them in maintaining open spaces, landscaping, grass cutting and other decorative works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13871/16]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Local authorities receive income from a variety of sources including grants from Central Government, Local Property Tax (LPT) proceeds, commercial rates and other locally-raised charges. It is a matter for each local authority to determine its own spending priorities, including funding towards the maintenance of open spaces in housing estates, in the context of the annual budgetary process having regard to both locally identified needs and available resources.

### **Wastewater Treatment**

120. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government how he will address the first ground of the Court of Justice of the European Union's judgment in case C-50/09 in terms of legislative provisions in the area of water discharge licensing, and to ensure full compliance with Articles 2 to 4, inclusive, of the environ-

mental impact assessment directive relating to planning and licensing decisions for wastewater treatment plants. [13906/16]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The European Commission has raised with my Department the issue of whether the 2007 Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations are in full compliance with Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive), on foot of the European Court of Justice C-50/09 judgment of 2012.

In its judgment in Case C-50/09, the Court found that Ireland had failed to transpose Article 3 of the EIA Directive and had failed to ensure that, where the planning authorities and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) both have decision-making powers concerning a project, there is complete fulfilment of the requirements of Articles 2 to 4 of the Directive. Following the judgment, legislative amendments were made to a range of consent regimes.

However, in 2015, the European Commission brought to my Department's attention that consideration should be given to whether the 2007 Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations also required similar amendment. My Department sought independent expert advice in this regard and, taking that advice into account, it is accepted that the 2007 Regulations will require amendment to ensure full compliance with the EIA Directive.

The expert advice has also recommended that some revisions to planning legislation may be required to ensure optimal coordination between planning authorities and the EPA. This recommendation is also accepted and consideration is now being given to identifying the most appropriate legislative vehicles to effect these changes in a timely manner.

## Waste Disposal

121. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if civic amenity sites of local authorities will charge by weight from 1 July 2016; if the impending legislation will allow a grace period of six months until January 2017 in respect of these sites, during which they will not be liable for fines, licence reviews, penalisation or any other forms of statutory or other disciplinary action; if and why he will consider such an arrangement for private waste collection providers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13976/16]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** There is currently no requirement on civic amenity sites, whether operated by local authorities or privately, to charge on a pay-by-weight basis for accepting waste. I intend introducing legislation shortly which will require civic amenity sites to charge on a per kilogramme pay-by-weight basis for accepting general household (also known as residual or black bag) waste from 1 February, 2017. The requirement to charge on a pay-by-weight basis will not apply to recyclable material at civic amenity sites.

Under the Waste Management (Collection Permit) Regulations 2007, as amended, there has been a requirement since 1 July 2015 for collectors to weigh household waste collected at kerbside, using approved weighing instruments and to make this information available to the householder. From 1 July 2016, there will be a requirement to charge on a pay-by-weight per kilogramme basis for collecting household waste.

It is not proposed to move the 1 July 2016 deadline with regard to the application of pay-by-weight in respect of the collection of household waste at kerbside, especially in light of the

12-month lead-in period referred to above.

### **Mortgage Book Sales**

122. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will consider purchasing distressed residential mortgages from banks, given the future implications for the families involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13987/16]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** In common with my colleague the Minister for Finance, who has responsibilities in this area, I have no plans to purchase distressed loans from commercial banks.

As Minister with responsibility for housing, I am sensitive to the interests of families faced with mortgage difficulties. Building on measures introduced by the last Government, the Programme for a Partnership Government commits to considering further appropriate actions in this area and on the broader issue of over indebtedness.

The Approved Housing Body (AHB) Mortgage to Rent Scheme was launched nationally in June 2012. It is a Government Initiative to help homeowners who are at risk of losing their homes due to mortgage arrears. The scheme is an option for people who have been exited from the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process (MARP) with their lender due to their mortgage being deemed unsustainable. It is now properly established as part of the overall suite of social housing options and an important part of the arrears resolution process.

The package of commitments on mortgage arrears announced by Government in May 2015 included a number of amendments to the Mortgage to Rent Scheme which will enable more properties to qualify, and make it more flexible and accessible to borrowers. Amendments made with effect from July 2015 include raising the valuation thresholds for properties, flexibility in relation to the size of properties, more efficient assessment of a borrower's eligibility for social housing support and flexibility to allow cases of marginal positive equity to avail of the scheme. Additional financial support has been made available by increasing the ceiling of support under the Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF) for MTR cases from 30% to 40%.

My Department continues to keep the operation of the Mortgage to Rent Scheme under review.

In addition, the Consumer Protection (Regulation of Credit Servicing Firms) Act, 2015 was enacted on 8 July 2015. It was introduced to fill the consumer protection gap where loans were sold by the original lender to an unregulated firm. The 2015 Act introduced a regulatory regime for a new type of entity called a 'credit servicing firm'. Credit Servicing Firms are now subject to the provisions of Irish financial services law that apply to 'regulated financial service providers'. This ensures that relevant borrowers, whose loans are sold to third parties, maintain the same regulatory protections they had prior to the sale, including under the various statutory codes (such as the Consumer Protection Code, Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears, Code of Conduct for Business Lending to Small and Medium Enterprises and the Minimum Competency Code) issued by the Central Bank of Ireland and the Central Bank (Supervision and Enforcement) Act 2013 (Section 48) (Lending to Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises) Regulations 2015 which comes into operation on 1 July 2016.

Further, the Code of Conduct for Mortgage Arrears provides protections for borrowers who endeavour to meet their commitments in relation to their mortgages and the 2015 Act ensures that these protections apply when a loan has been sold.

## Social Insurance Rates

123. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection the revenue that would be raised by introducing a new employers' rate of pay related social insurance of 12.75%, 13.5%, 14.5% and 15.75% on the portion of salary paid in excess of €100,000 per year. [13887/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The information requested by the Deputy is contained in the following table. These estimates are based on macro-economic indicators for 2016 only. The estimates do not take possible changes in employer or employee behaviour into account.

*Table: Yield from increased Class A Employer PRSI rates on income above €100,000 per annum*

Employer PRSI Rate	Yield – Class A
12.75%	€107 million
13.5%	€147 million
14.5%	€200 million
15.75%	€267 million

## Social Insurance

124. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Social Protection if adoptive mothers who gave up work under adoption rules and who subsequently had children of their own are entitled to claim credits for the period from the adoption to the birth of their own child (details supplied); if not, the reason; to examine the possibility of allowing these credits to be claimed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13851/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The primary purpose of the PRSI credited contributions or “credits” credit is to protect social welfare benefits and pensions of employees, by covering gaps in insurance where they are not in a position to pay PRSI, such as during periods of unemployment, illness etc.

Similar to other DSP schemes, credits can only be awarded provided certain qualifying conditions are met. To qualify for credits a worker must have paid at least one PRSI contribution while working and have had an attachment to the workforce in the last 2 tax years, as evidenced by having paid or credited PRSI contributions in that period. In general where a person has no PRSI paid or credited contributions for two full tax years, they cannot be awarded credits again until they return to work and pay PRSI employment contributions for at least 26 weeks.

Where these qualifying conditions are met, credits are awarded in respect of specific circumstances, including proven unemployment, notified incapacity to work receipt of specific social welfare payments (i.e. Maternity Benefit) or entitlement to certain statutory leave (i.e. Parental Leave).

Entitlement to credits for adoptive mothers depends on whether an individual has an underlying entitlement to credits, having satisfied the qualifying conditions, and is in receipt of one of the qualifying payments or fulfils the conditions such as those relating to proven unemployment or notified incapacity to work.

Adoptive mothers may also qualify for the Homemaker scheme. This scheme was introduced to make it easier for those who provide full-time care to qualify for State pension (con-

tributory). Once an individual qualifies for State pension (contributory), the rate of payment is determined by the average number of contributions (paid or credited) since entering social insurance to reaching pension age. Years spent caring on a full-time basis are disregarded when calculating the average. The scheme was introduced in 1994 and applies to period spent caring from that date.

### **Carer's Allowance Applications**

125. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13866/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Carer's Allowance (CA) is a social assistance payment made to persons who are providing full-time care and attention to a relevant person/persons and whose income falls below certain limits.

Since 2013, the person in question has been in receipt of CA in respect of one care recipient.

My department informs me that, to date, they have received no further application from the person in question in relation to the CA scheme.

Accordingly, I have arranged for an application form (CR1) to issue, which the person concerned should complete and return as soon as possible, in order that the Department may determine their entitlement to CA. If the person in question has already submitted an application in the past few days, there is no need to resubmit a new application and the Department will be in touch in relation to the application in due course.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Carer's Allowance Delays**

126. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Social Protection the steps he will take to expedite an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13870/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 23 March 2016. Unfortunately, there are currently delays in the processing of new applications. Additional resources have been provided to the CA section in order to improve the waiting times for new applications and they are working hard to make this happen.

Frequently, delays are outside the control of the Department and are caused by the customer failing to fully complete the claim form or failing to attach the supporting documentation that is requested on the application form.

This application will be processed as quickly as possible and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

In the meantime, if the means of the person concerned are insufficient to meet her needs she should apply for a means-tested supplementary welfare allowance from her local community welfare service.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Activation Projects**

127. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Social Protection the findings from the evaluation of the disability activation project that operated under the previous European Social Fund operational programme; if these projects will be resourced under the comprehensive strategy for people with disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13877/16]

128. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of meetings of the interdepartmental group held to examine the disability activation project since its establishment in October 2015; the Departments that attended and inputted; the outcome; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13878/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 127 and 128 together.

The evaluation of the Disability Activation (DACT) project, conducted by Indecon International Economic Consultants on behalf of the department, found that although the projects had a number of innovative features and provided positive learning and development experiences, as well as health and social inclusion benefits for participants, the projects showed weak outcomes as a labour market activation measure. The evaluation also determined that the activities pursued under the projects had a greater impact as ‘pre-activation’ programmes, designed to bring participants with a disability nearer to the labour market, rather than being geared specifically towards achieving defined labour market activation/employment outcomes. The report of the evaluation is available on the department’s website: <https://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Other-Publications-.aspx>

The interdepartmental working group set up to examine the findings of the report has met on two occasions and a third meeting is currently being planned. Membership of the working group comprises representatives of departments that have commitments under the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for people with disabilities. This strategy provides for learning from the projects to be used to inform policy development. Officials from the Departments of Education and Skills, Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Health and Social Protection as well as representatives from the National Disability Authority have attended and inputted into the deliberations of the group.

This working group has been tasked with identifying the next steps in the context of future Disability Activation activities under the new ESF programme, Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL), 2014-2020. This new ESF programme provides €10 million in funding for future disability activation activities.

While this group has not yet concluded its work, I am satisfied that it will provide a practical means for advancing the positive aspects of the work identified in the DACT evaluation.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Departmental Strategies**

129. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Social Protection his progress, in conjunction with other Departments and State agencies, in implementing the comprehensive employment strategy for persons with disabilities; the resources he will allocate to enable its im-

plementation; and the timeframe for this and for adequately resourcing it. [13879/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The Comprehensive Employment Strategy (CES) for people with disabilities was published in October 2015. It sets out a ten-year approach to ensuring that people with disabilities who can and want to work are supported and enabled to do so.

The CES sets out a range of actions across a number of departments. My Department has a number of commitments under the CES and these include the following: expanding the Intreo service as a gateway to employment activation on a phased basis to cater for people with a disability; enhancing engagement with people with disabilities (drawing on profiling analysis etc.); devising early intervention strategies to address drift into long-term ill-health; leading and supporting an interdepartmental group on Making Work Pay and raising awareness among employers of the supports available to facilitate the employment of people with a disability or the retention of employees who acquire a disability.

Overall, I am satisfied that my Department is making progress in meeting its commitment under the first phase of the CES as is evident by progress across a number of areas:

- My Department is progressively rolling out its full activation support service to people with disabilities who wish to avail of the service on a voluntary basis. The first phase of this roll-out commenced in 2015 with the service being provided in ten Intreo Centres. The service is now available in 58 Intreo centres and over 60 Employment Support Officers (Case Officers) have received disability specific training supported by the National Disability Authority and Epilepsy Ireland.

- In order to better inform its approach to the design of supports and interventions to enable participation in the labour force in accordance with capacity and on a voluntary basis, my Department has undertaken a survey of persons in receipt of disability allowance. The results of this exercise are currently being reviewed in association with the disability sector before publication.

- My Department has established an interdepartmental expert group, with an independent chair to examine the complex interaction between the benefits system, including the medical card, and the net income gains in employment. The interdepartmental group will also identify any significant disincentives for people with disabilities in taking up or returning to work. The interdepartmental group will report to Government by end 2016.

- The role of employers is important and my Department seeks to raise their awareness of the range of employment supports available to them from the DSP and in promoting the services available to employers to employ a person with a disability or to support an employee who has acquired a disability. For instance, information on the wage subsidy scheme (WSS), the reasonable accommodation fund for the employment of people with disabilities, the disability awareness training scheme and other employer supports is provided in the Employer Information Pack, through employer roadshows and jobs fairs and on the DSP website.

- The EmployAbility service is a national employment service dedicated to improving employment outcomes for people with a disability who are seeking employment. Budget 2016 provides €9.6m to run the service. The service currently comprises 23 limited companies each with a specific geographical remit and fully funded by my Department. A recent evaluation of the EmployAbility service is being considered by my Department prior to meeting with relevant stakeholders.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.



### Labour Activation Projects

130. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of labour activation participants in County Waterford in each of the years 2013 to 2016 to date, by scheme, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13894/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The information requested by the Deputy is detailed by scheme in the following tabular statement for years 2013 to 2015.

#### County breakdown of activation participants for Waterford

-	Community Employment	Rural Social Scheme	Tús	Gate-way	Back To Work Allowance Self-employed	Back to Work Allowance Employee	Job-Bridge	Back to Education Allowance	Partial Capacity Benefit	Short-Term Enterprise Allowance	Part-Time Job Incentive(1)	Totals
2013	766	11	295	0	344	0	191	972	34	9	12	2634
2014	875	12	287	0	369	0	266	976	40	27	22	2,874
2015	868	11	320	73	386	0	153	659	41	6	26	2,543

#### Social Welfare Benefits Data

131. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 132 of 26 May 2016, the number of pending applications for each social protection claim within his Department. [13895/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The information requested by the Deputy is detailed in the following tabular statement.

Number of pending applications – 30 April 2016

Scheme	Pending applications
Jobseeker's Benefit	2,053
Jobseeker's Allowance	6,662
One-Parent Family Payment	1,119
State Pension Contributory (Domestic)	4,396
State Pension Transition (Domestic)	16
Widow(er)'s Contributory Pension	343
Widowed or Surviving Civil Partner Grant	15
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	2,239
Household Benefits	2,652
Free Travel	33
Domiciliary Care Allowance	1,876
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	3,499
Child Benefit (Domestic & Formerly Resident Abroad)	1,081
Child Benefit (EU Regulation)	1,746
Treatment Benefit	15,544
Maternity Benefit	4,144
Family Income Supplement (New claims)	2,456

Scheme	Pending applications
Family Income Supplement (Renewals)	1,252
Carer's Allowance	6,361
Disability Allowance	5,455
Invalidity Pension	2,048
Illness Benefit	3,000
Occupational Injury Benefit	186

### Carer's Allowance Applications

132. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will be made in relation to an application made in February 2016 by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13897/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I confirm that my department is in receipt of an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned. Unfortunately, there are currently delays in the processing of new applications. Additional resources have been provided to the CA section in order to improve the waiting times for new applications and they are working hard to make this happen.

Frequently, delays are outside the control of the Department and are caused by the customer failing to fully complete the claim form or failing to attach the supporting documentation that is requested on the application form.

This application will be processed as quickly as possible and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome. In the meantime the person concerned is in receipt of a weekly social welfare support.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Carer's Allowance Applications

133. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13919/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 29 April 2016. Unfortunately, there are currently delays in the processing of new applications. Additional resources have been provided to the CA section in order to improve the waiting times for new applications and they are working hard to make this happen.

This application will be processed as quickly as possible and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome. In the meantime, the person concerned is in receipt of a weekly social welfare support.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Carer's Allowance Applications

134. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13920/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I confirm that the department received an application for Carer's Allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 10 November 2015 in respect of two care recipients. It is a condition for receipt of a CA that the person being cared for must have a disability whose effect is that they require full-time care and attention.

This is defined as requiring from another person, continual supervision and frequent assistance throughout the day in connection with normal bodily functions or continuous supervision in order to avoid danger to him or herself and likely to require that level of care for at least twelve months.

The evidence submitted in support of this application was examined and the deciding officer decided that this evidence did not indicate that the requirement for full-time care was satisfied in respect of either care recipient and CA was refused.

The person concerned was notified on 16 March 2016 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal. The person concerned has requested a review and submitted additional evidence in support of her application. The review is currently being processed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Northern Ireland

135. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the implementation of the Stormont House Agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13105/16]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Full and timely implementation of the Stormont House Agreement 2014, and indeed the Fresh Start Agreement of 2015, is a key focus for the Government, and this is reflected in the Programme for Government.

A quarterly review process established under the Stormont House Agreement, and now also taking account of commitments under the Fresh Start Agreement, tracks progress on the implementation of these agreements. These meetings are led by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and I, along with the political parties in Northern Ireland.

The last such review meeting was held on 14 January 2016 and, following the completion of the electoral cycle in Northern Ireland, the next meeting is currently being scheduled.

Implementation of a number of aspects of the Stormont House Agreement have proceeded over the last two years. On budgetary issues, the Fresh Start Agreement facilitated a comprehensive resolution which took in a number of elements set out in the Stormont House Agreement. In addition the recently-elected Assembly and newly-formed Executive are operating on the basis of the institutional reforms provided for under the Stormont House Agreement, including a formal opposition. I understand that preparatory work has been advanced by the Executive on the Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition and I look forward to it being established at an early stage.

The establishment of the institutional framework on the past agreed at Stormont House has yet to be implemented. Significant progress was made on this in the all-party talks last autumn that produced the Fresh Start Agreement, although ultimately final agreement could not be reached on legacy issues, a situation which I found extremely disappointing.

Over the last number of months, I tasked my officials with holding consultations with a range of victims' groups from across the affected communities, to hear their perspectives on how best to establish legacy institutions and to listen to their views on possible solutions to outstanding issues. These consultations proved very valuable and will inform our approach to seeking an agreement on addressing the legacy issues.

Following the Assembly elections in Northern Ireland in May, I have been in a position to engage further on this important issue, including during visits to Belfast and Derry over the last two weeks, where I had discussions about how we might reach a final political agreement on the detail of the establishment of these institutions.

I will be actively engaging with the political parties in Northern Ireland and with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in the weeks ahead with a view to securing an agreement on dealing with the legacy of the past which is so vital both for individual victims and survivors and for society as a whole.

### **Military Aircraft Landings**

136. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade why a Boeing C-32B aircraft of the air force of the United States of America special forces, registration number 02-4452, was in Shannon Airport, County Clare, on 25 May 2016; if he granted permission for it to land; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13966/16]

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

Permission must be sought in advance for landings by all foreign military aircraft, including US aircraft and, if granted, is subject to strict conditions. These include stipulations that the aircraft must be unarmed, carry no arms, ammunition or explosives and must not engage in intelligence gathering, and that the flights in question must not form part of military exercises or operations.

My Department approved a request to permit a US military C-32B aircraft to land at Shannon Airport on 25 May 2016 for re-fuelling, subject to the strict conditions set out above.

### **Military Aircraft Landings**

137. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade why a C-21A aircraft of the air force of the United States of America, registration 84-0072, was in Shannon Airport, County Clare, on 25 May 2016; if he granted permission for it to land; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13967/16]

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

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Permission must be sought in advance for landings by all foreign military aircraft, including US aircraft and, if granted, is subject to strict conditions. These include stipulations that the aircraft must be unarmed, carry no arms, ammunition or explosives and must not engage in intelligence gathering, and that the flights in question must not form part of military exercises or operations.

My Department approved a request to permit a US military C-21A aircraft to land at Shannon Airport on 24 May 2016 for the purpose of crew rest, subject to the strict conditions set out above.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

138. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the cost to the State of the visit by Charles Windsor to County Donegal this week, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13971/16]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The recent visit to Ireland by the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall served to increase the international profile of Donegal and the North-West as a whole in terms of trade and tourism, while showcasing 21st century cross-border and British-Irish co-operation in the fields of education, science, business and environmental conservation. Particularly welcome was the emphasis on partnerships between counties Donegal and Derry, with representatives of the Derry and Strabane Council present at the civic reception. I know directly from my own engagement with the Derry Chamber of Commerce on the evening before the visit to Donegal how important the preservation and development of these links is to the region as a whole.

We are finalising the costs that will be charged to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. These costs will cover items such as transport, official photography and the expenses associated with the presence in Donegal of officials of my Department (accommodation, overtime and subsistence). Once this material has been checked and paid, I will be happy to provide to the Deputy this information in tabular form.

### **Human Rights**

139. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if the permanent mission of Ireland to the United Nations at Geneva in Switzerland has received communication from the United Nations special rapporteur on the human right to water and sanitation, and from the United Nations special rapporteur on the human right to adequate housing and on the access to sanitation and housing in County Cork; if he will reply to the special rapporteurs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13973/16]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade receives correspondence from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on a regular basis. Where such correspondence relates to domestic policies, Departments with lead responsibility for the relevant policy issues are asked to provide input for the reply to the United Nations.

We have received correspondence from the UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living and on the rights to non-discrimination in this context, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation seeking the Government's position on information they had received in relation

to homelessness and water and sanitation services in Cork city.

I wish to confirm that this matter has been addressed and that a comprehensive response will be forwarded to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on this matter this week.

I will be happy to provide a copy of this response to the Deputy.

### **Public Sector Pay**

140. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his departmental officials will have any role in formulating the public sector pay commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13109/16]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I would refer the Deputy to my answer of 19 May (Parliamentary Question No. 153), which sets out the Government's position.

### **Flood Relief Schemes**

141. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of ongoing maintenance of flood relief works on the Tolka river in Dunboyne, County Meath. [13935/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Seán Canney):** The River Tolka flood alleviation scheme was carried out under local authority powers and not under the powers of the Commissioners of Public Works under the Arterial Drainage Acts 1945 and 1995. Responsibility for the maintenance of this scheme therefore rests with Meath County Council.

### **Flood Risk Assessments**

142. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of a number of reports commissioned on flooding in County Donegal following the completion of the public consultations (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13936/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Seán Canney):** The draft Flood Risk Management Plans being produced under the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme will be published from mid-2016 for public consultation. The Preliminary Options reports are currently in draft format and are under review following the most recent round of public consultation events. The Final Preliminary Options Reports will be published at the same time as the draft Plans as reference documents.

In relation to assessment of flood risk in Raphoe AFA (Area for Further Assessment), this is being undertaken independently from the CFRAM Programme. The flood risk management options report for Raphoe is currently being finalised.

### **Flood Risk Assessments**

143. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the time-frame for implementing a catchment flood risk assessment and management report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13939/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Seán Canney):** Good progress is being made on the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme, which is being undertaken by engineering consultants on behalf of the Office of Public Works (OPW) working in partnership with the local authorities. The Programme involves the production of predictive flood mapping for each Area for Further Assessment (AFA), the development of preliminary flood risk management options and the production of flood risk management plans.

The draft flood mapping is now being finalised following completion of the national statutory public consultation on 23 December, 2015. Work on the development of preliminary options to address flood risk is underway. Following finalisation of the mapping and the identification of 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. The draft Plans are scheduled to be made available for public consultation from mid-2016. Following the public consultation process the finalised Plans will include a prioritised list of measures, both structural and non-structural, to address flood risk in an environmentally sustainable and cost effective manner.

The Government announced increased levels of investment in the area of flood relief, as part of the overall Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021, which will allow for consideration of measures arising from the Flood Risk Management Plans.

### **Drainage Schemes Status**

144. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the case of a person (details supplied) who is experiencing flooding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13959/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Seán Canney):** The channel in question is part of the River Feale Catchment Drainage Scheme which was carried out by the Office of Public Works (OPW) under the Arterial Drainage Act, 1945. The OPW continues to have a statutory responsibility for the maintenance of this scheme.

Each year the OPW carries out work to approximately 2,000 km of channels and some 200 structures around the country as part of its ongoing and rolling arterial drainage maintenance programme. The timing of work on individual projects is determined having regard to the needs of regular maintenance and the prioritisation of urgent jobs. As already indicated to the individual concerned by OPW staff, the replacement of this sluice is included on the 2016 work programme for the River Feale CDS.

### **Special Areas of Conservation**

145. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht to provide a map of the special areas of conservation in County Tipperary; the restrictions on land designated as such and the compensation available to landowners whose land is designated as such; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13857/16]

146. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the restrictions on agricultural land in County Tipperary, other than restrictions under special areas of conservation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13858/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 145 and 146 together.

Ireland, like all EU Member States, is bound by the requirements of the EU Habitats and Birds Directives. These Directives aim to ensure the protection of habitats and species which have been selected for conservation. My Department works with farmers, other landowners and users, and national and local authorities, trying to achieve the best balance possible between farming and land-use on the one hand, and requirements for conserving nature in these selected areas, on the other.

There are 37 areas in County Tipperary selected for designation as special areas of conservation, special protection areas or natural heritage areas, as set out in the following table:

Site Code	Site Name
000216	River Shannon Callows SAC
000585	Sharavogue Bog SAC
000641	Ballyduff/Clonfinane Bog SAC
000646	Galtee Mountains SAC
000647	Kilcarren-Firville Bog SAC
000930	Clare Glen SAC
000934	Kilduff, Devilsbit Mountain SAC
000939	Silvermine Mountains SAC
001197	Keeper Hill SAC
001683	Liskeenan Fen SAC
001847	Philipston Marsh SAC
002124	Bolingbrook Hill SAC
002125	Anglesey Road SAC
002137	Lower River Suir SAC
002162	River Barrow and River Nore SAC
002165	Lower River Shannon SAC
002170	Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC
002241	Lough Derg, North-east Shore SAC
002257	Moanour Mountain SAC
002258	Silvermines Mountains West SAC
002353	Redwood Bog SAC
004058	Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA
004086	River Little Brosna Callows SPA
004096	Middle Shannon Callows SPA
004165	Slievefelim to Silvermines Mountains SPA
000564	River Little Brosna Callows NHA
000640	Arragh More Bog NHA
000642	Ballymacegan Bog NHA
000648	Killeen Bog NHA
000652	Monaincha Bog/Ballaghmore Bog NHA



Site Code	Site Name
000890	Cangort Bog NHA
000937	Scohaboy Bog NHA
001684	Lorrha Bog NHA
001853	Nore Valley Bogs NHA
002385	Mauherslieve Bog NHA
002388	Slievenamon Bog NHA
002450	Bleanbeg Bog NHA

Areas selected for designation can overlap and many cross county boundaries. Further information on all these sites is available on the website [www.npws.ie/protectedsites](http://www.npws.ie/protectedsites) and the boundaries of each site can be viewed on the website also.

However, if the Deputy wishes, I can arrange for a site pack for each site (or any specific sites identified) to be sent to him. These site packs include a map of each site, the particular requirements for each site and details on compensation provisions.

In order to protect the ecology of such sites, certain activities within protected sites may only be undertaken with my prior consent, as Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, or with the consent of another appropriate public authority. There is no blanket prohibition on undertaking these activities but carrying out any such activity without obtaining prior consent is an offence. The activities can vary from site to site as they relate to the particular species or habitat for which the site has been selected.

However, there is no requirement to obtain my consent as Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if:

- (a) the activity is licensed by or subject to the permission of another public authority; or
- (b) the activity is specified as permitted in a farm or land management plan (subject to compliance with any conditions set out therein).

In practice, anyone wishing to carry out any of the activities listed should contact my Department's National Parks and Wildlife Service prior to carrying out such work to establish what requirements may apply.

### **Arts Funding**

147. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she is satisfied that Ireland's investment in the arts is at the bottom of the European table; and the steps she will take to resolve this problem. [13904/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Programme for a Partnership Government contains a very important commitment to work to progressively increase funding to the arts, including the Arts Council and the Irish Film Board, as the economy continues to improve. I can assure the Deputy that I will be engaging with my colleagues in Government and with the Oireachtas to seek to advance this commitment in the context of the forthcoming estimates and budgetary processes.

The issue referred to in the Deputy's question arises from a Council of Europe research project called *Compendium - Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe* which includes figures

on expenditure on culture across Europe. I understand that many European countries are not included in the figures, including ten EU member states. The data for the Compendium project are provided by independent researchers and it is not a standardised system for collection of statistics.

I further understand that the Compendium itself warns that data provided by the researchers are not comparable across countries because each researcher includes different elements in the definition of culture and these elements are reflected in the figures for public expenditure. Figures can also include some, or all, of national, regional or local expenditure.

The issue of a definition of culture and of capturing public expenditure on culture is one which was discussed in the public consultation process that was held for the purpose of developing Ireland's first national cultural policy, *Culture 2025*. This will be reflected in the draft policy document which I intend to submit to Government for consideration in the coming weeks.

Expenditure on the arts in Ireland comes from multiple sources, both public and private. I understand that the CSO does not produce national statistics that capture the totality of this expenditure as a percentage of GDP. I do consider, however, that further research on this issue is warranted in the context of *Culture 2025*.

### **Arts Promotion**

148. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the steps she will take to increase employment in the arts and culture sectors. [13905/16]

152. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she encourages the development and promotion of the arts, in particular the maximisation of employment opportunities arising therefrom; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14003/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 148 and 152 together.

Employment in the arts and cultural sectors encompasses a wide range of activities, from theatre and music to tourism. It may also embody the industrial creative sectors, including audio-visual production. My primary role is to support artists and the creative industries in Ireland using the mechanisms available to me across Government on common initiatives such as the Action Plan for Jobs.

In relation to assisting young people finding employment in the Arts, I believe the most appropriate way to do this is to encourage the expansion of arts and cultural activity. Increased Government funding will assist, such as the supports provided by the Arts Council and my Department through Culture Ireland, as well as increased investment by other public bodies such as local authorities, in addition to the increased investment generally which arises from a healthy sustainable economy. Furthermore, the commitment to deliver Ireland's first national cultural policy *Culture 2025* offers an opportunity to consider how arts and culture can be embedded right across Government.

### **Waterways Issues**

149. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if

she has reached agreement with traditional canal dwellers and canal recreational users regarding draft proposals to increase the costs to traditional users, either directly or through Waterways Ireland; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14000/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Provisions to amend the Canals Act 1986 so as to allow for the subsequent making of bye-laws to regulate boating on the canals and to manage the use of the canals are contained in The Heritage Bill 2016, which passed its 2nd Stage reading in Seanad Éireann on 20 January 2016. As the Deputy will appreciate, the 1988 Canal Bye-Laws have been in force for some 27 years and need to be revised to reflect changes in the use of the canals over the intervening years. The proposed changes would allow Waterways Ireland to make new bye-laws to proactively manage the Royal and Grand Canals, as well as the Barrow Navigation.

I have sought the restoration of the Heritage Bill 2016 to the legislative programme through the Offices of the Government Chief Whip and the Leader of the Seanad. Deputies and Senators will have the opportunity to consider the implications of this Bill as it passes through the various stages of enactment. In regard to the making of bye-laws subsequent to the enactment of the Heritage Bill, I would be pleased to afford interested Deputies and Senators an opportunity to discuss the proposals with me prior to making a final decision on the introduction of the bye-laws.

### **Turf Cutting**

150. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she has had discussions with traditional turf cutters to resolve difficulties in implementing special areas of conservation and national heritage areas; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14001/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** As set out in the Programme for a Partnership Government, the Government recognises that domestic turf cutters have a traditional right to cut turf and that this right is balanced with the conservation objectives and legal obligations on the State.

Significant efforts have been made by the State to resolve the issue of the protection of Ireland's raised bog special areas of conservation (SACs) within the framework of the EU Habitats Directive. This has included intense and on-going engagement with turf cutting interests, the farming community, non-governmental organisations and with the European Commission. In addition, a long-term compensation scheme has been introduced to compensate turf cutters for their loss arising from the cessation.

The draft National Raised Bog SAC Management Plan was published in January 2014. It sets out how the raised bog SACs are to be managed into the future and how the needs of turf cutters are to be addressed. It is expected that this Plan will be finalised over the coming period and, subject to the approval of the Government, will be published thereafter.

The Review of Raised Bog Natural Heritage Area (NHA) Network, published in January 2014, has concluded that Ireland could more effectively achieve conservation of threatened raised bog habitat through focused protection and restoration of a reconfigured network. This will entail the phasing out of turf cutting on certain NHAs by 1 January 2017 and the partial or complete de-designation of certain NHAs. The Programme for Government includes a commitment to publish new legislation to de-designate the NHAs in question within the first 100 days of Government and to reviewing the timetable for the implementation of actions relating

to NHAs in consultation with the EU.

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

### **Film Industry**

151. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she internationally encourages the use of Ireland as a film location, given the beneficial economic implications; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14002/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Irish Film Board is the national development agency for Irish filmmaking and the Irish film, television and animation industry. The Board supports and promotes the Irish screen industries at major international markets and festivals, promotes inward investment, the use of Ireland as a location for international production and provides support for companies filming in Ireland. The Film Board also liaises with IDA Ireland and Tourism Ireland in terms of maximising joint opportunities for promotion of Ireland as a location for film productions. Examples of this could be seen during Ireland's success at the Oscars this year and the promotional activity around the shooting of Star Wars in Ireland.

The Programme for a Partnership Government contains a commitment to work with the Irish Film Board to ensure that Ireland is maximised as a location for international film production. The Programme also contains a very important commitment to work to progressively increase funding to the arts, including the Arts Council and the Irish Film Board, as the economy continues to improve.

I am pleased that I have already been able to provide some additional support to the Film Board this year, with additional current funding of €500,000. This increased investment will help to maximise the benefits brought about by the Government's enhancement of the Section 481 film tax credit system, including the decision to increase the cap for eligible expenditure on film projects to €70 million, as announced as part of Budget 2016.

*Question No. 152 answered with Question No. 148.*

### **Heritage Promotion**

153. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she has had discussions with other Departments or interest groups, in particular the Department of Education and Skills, on creating greater awareness of our national heritage and culture in primary and secondary schools; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14004/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** While the provision for arts in the education system and the content of the school curriculum is primarily a matter for the Department of Education and Skills, I am firmly committed to continuing the work of the ongoing partnership between that Department, my own Department and the Arts Council, in line with the Arts in Education Charter. In this regard, I am pleased that the Programme for a Partnership Government commits to the continued implementation of the Arts in Education Charter. My Department and the Heritage Council also provide relevant supports

for use in our schools.

The development of Ireland's first national culture policy - Culture 2025 - will also be relevant in terms of acknowledging the importance of supporting cultural engagement across wider policy areas. The Programme for a Partnership Government commits to the publication of Culture 2025 as a priority and I intend to submit the draft policy to Government for consideration in the coming weeks. As I have stated previously, this first such policy will be a living document and will form the basis of an on-going dialogue with all relevant sectors, including the education sector.

I should also say that the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme saw unprecedented engagement with our history in schools and colleges throughout the country. This engagement was supported by my Department in conjunction with the Department of Education and Skills and the Defence Forces.

### **Arts Funding**

154. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if the arts sector attracts support from philanthropists; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14005/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Private support for the arts is an important funding source and the Government continues to support this through tax incentives and other initiatives. The Programme for a Partnership Government contains a commitment to encourage strong, mutually beneficial links between the business community and the arts community to assist arts organisations to capitalise on sponsorship opportunities and to develop business partnerships and fundraising skills. In this regard, I recognise the important work carried out by Business to Arts for which my Department provides a small amount of assistance.

In addition, the Arts Council operates the RAISE programme, which seeks to enhance fundraising skills in arts organisations with a view to diversifying the sector's sources of funding. It is designed to assist the sector in securing philanthropic contributions to the arts in Ireland.

My Department also operates small capital grant schemes, which requires co-funding from private or philanthropic sources.

In terms of other capital investment requiring co-funding, I have announced a new €9 million investment scheme for arts and cultural centres to run over the next three years, focussed on upgrading the existing stock of such centres around the country. The funding, which is being made available as part of the Capital Investment Framework 2016-2021, will be dependent on matching funding being secured by project promoters and will therefore provide an opportunity for philanthropists to involve themselves in the arts.

### **Heritage Sites**

155. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of historical, heritage and protected sites and buildings she deems to be at risk, for whatever reason; the action she proposes to address this; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14006/16]

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

my Department often receives information relating to existing or potential risks to heritage sites or buildings, deemed to be at risk, from local authorities, the Heritage Council, heritage-based NGOs and members of the public, a single set of comprehensive statistics is not available in respect of the number and location of heritage sites or buildings deemed to be at risk throughout the country.

Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, provides for the protection of the architectural heritage. The Act gives primary responsibility to planning authorities to identify and protect the architectural heritage by including relevant structures on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS). Inclusion on the RPS places a duty of care on the owners and occupiers of protected structures and also gives planning authorities powers to deal with development proposals affecting them and to seek to safeguard their future.

Under Section 53 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000, as amended, I may make recommendations to a planning authority concerning the inclusion in its RPS of structures which I consider would merit inclusion and the attendant planning restrictions which would apply to protect the structures' special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. This process is administered by my Department's National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) programme.

There are a number of ways in which my Department acts in respect of possible heritage sites/buildings deemed to be at risk. One of these is the receipt of applications for funding for the repair, conservation, preservation or safeguarding of protected structures, sites or monuments. Financial support is being provided by my Department through a number of structured schemes for the conservation and protection of heritage buildings. My Department itself operates a Structures at Risk Fund to enable conservation works to heritage structures, in both private and public ownership, that are protected under the Planning and Development Acts and are deemed to be at significant risk of deterioration. This fund is administered through the local authorities and seeks to encourage the regeneration and reuse of heritage properties and to help to secure the preservation of protected structures which might otherwise be lost. Applications for this scheme have now closed for 2016, and recommended projects are currently being finalised. Since 2011, over 130 structures have been safeguarded for the future as a result of the Structures at Risk Fund.

In 2015 I launched a new €2 million scheme - the Built Heritage Investment Scheme - for the repair and conservation of protected structures. This scheme will operate in 2016, via the local authorities, on the same model as the very successful Built Heritage Jobs Leverage Scheme, which ran in 2014. It is expected to support a significant number of projects across the country and to create employment in the conservation and construction industries, while helping to regenerate urban and rural areas. The scheme for this year is now fully allocated.

The Heritage Council, which my Department funds, also provides grants for the protection and preservation of the built heritage. For 2016, the Council is administering a community based heritage grants scheme available for projects that contributed to particular heritage themes. Further details can be found at [www.heritagecouncil.ie](http://www.heritagecouncil.ie).

My Department has a number of measures at its disposal to facilitate the restoration of major historical or cultural sites. I am the owner or guardian under the National Monuments Acts of approximately 1,000 national monuments located at approximately 750 sites and in such cases there is a statutory duty to maintain the national monument. Such maintenance is undertaken by the Office of Public Works. Local authorities are responsible under the National Monuments Acts for maintaining the national monuments of which they are owners or guardians. A wide range of other monuments (in the order of 130,000) are currently subject to protection under

other provisions of the National Monuments Acts but my Department and the Office of Public Works do not have a direct role in their maintenance except where, as already noted, a monument is a national monument of which I am owner or guardian.

My Department is also providing €350,000 of funding to the Office of Public Works (OPW) in 2016 to assist in the conservation and presentation of historic buildings and national monuments in State ownership. OPW undertakes the care and maintenance of national monuments in my ownership or guardianship (of which there are approximately 750). My Department's National Monuments Service works in close collaboration with the OPW on survey, excavation and research work to optimise the protection, management, interpretation and presentation of national monuments in State care.

### Arts Funding

156. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she supports community-based arts and heritage groups; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14007/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The *Programme for a Partnership Government* contains a very important commitment to work to progressively increase funding to the arts, including the Arts Council, as the economy continues to improve. The Arts Council in turn supports the work of local authorities in promoting the arts at local and community level. My Department also provides capital grants to assist in providing and maintaining cultural venues.

The *Programme for a Partnership Government* also includes a number of commitments which are relevant in terms of community-based arts and heritage groups, including:

- Encouraging local authorities to strengthen the role of arts and heritage officers by building stronger links with local development groups.
- The introduction of a new capital grants scheme to provide upgrades to existing regional arts and cultural centres around the country. Further encouraging strong mutually beneficial links between the business community and arts organisations.
- Supporting a built heritage investment scheme on an annual basis to support the conservation of heritage structures and the regeneration of urban and rural areas.

### Abuse in Hospitals

157. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health if he is aware of the historical allegations of physical and sexual abuse at a hospital (details supplied), particularly those raised by Templemore Forgotten Victims, and a person (details supplied); his plans to appoint a panel to investigate these allegations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13911/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee):** I am not aware of any recent contact with or correspondence to my Department from the person concerned.

However, I understand that correspondence was received by the then Minister for Health and Children back in 2012 regarding this person and others who had concerns about their general treatment in psychiatric hospitals in the past.

I understand that the person was advised of the response received by the HSE in relation to her specific case at that time and that she was also advised that if she considered that a criminal offence was committed against her while she was a patient, then it is open to her to make a complaint to An Garda Síochána for investigation, should she wish to do so.

On the more general point, I should also add that the involuntary admission of persons to a psychiatric hospital or unit in the 1950s and 1960s was governed by the 1945 Mental Treatment Act. The 1945 Act allowed for the admission and detention without their consent, of a person as a ‘temporary patient’ or a ‘person of unsound mind’ following an application received and accompanied by a medical certificate, signed by a doctor and on foot of a reception order signed by a consultant psychiatrist.

I would acknowledge that there were no specific provisions in the 1945 Act for an automatic right of appeal to an independent judicial body against a person’s involuntary detention in a psychiatric hospital. However, the Act did provide patients with the right to write a letter to the Minister for Health, the Inspector of Mental Hospitals or the President of the High Court. It also required the Inspector of Mental Hospitals, in the course of his inspections, to visit any patient “the propriety of whose detention he had reason to doubt”.

The Deputy will be aware that the Mental Health Act 2001 significantly modernised procedures relating to involuntary admission by establishing for the first time independent Mental Health Tribunals which review, and affirm or revoke detention orders. Patients now have the right to be heard and to be legally represented at the Tribunal.

In addition, following the publication in 2015 of the Expert Group Review of the Mental Health Act 2001, work is underway at official level on the preparation of the General Scheme of a Bill to revise the 2001 Act on the basis of the recommendations of the Expert Group. An initial draft of the Bill is likely to be completed by year end.

### **Pension Provisions**

158. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health his views that the staff of the Central Remedial Clinic have been advised that their pension plan has been dissolved, putting those who are on the older private pension plan in a very difficult situation as they were never changed over to the public service pension plan; how he will resolve this situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13940/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Central Remedial Clinic (CRC) is funded by the Health Service Executive under Section 38 of the Health Act 2004 and employs in the region of 287 employees. It is understood that 47 employees are members of the funded pension scheme in question.

Following receipt of information from the CRC in relation to the wind up of the scheme the CRC was requested, as a matter of urgency, to seek a viable alternative proposal in conjunction with the HSE. This proposal will then be submitted for approval to my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The latter is responsible for Government policy in relation to public service pensions. Pension schemes and pension terms for public servants generally require the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

The CRC has indicated that it will submit detailed proposals to the HSE shortly in relation to this matter.



## National Drugs Strategy Implementation

159. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health why he appointed a Minister with responsibility for drugs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13107/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** It is a matter for the Taoiseach in the first instance to determine the approach to the allocation of portfolios to Ministers of State. Government has, in line with Programme for Government commitments, put a stronger emphasis on important policy areas, and particularly on the Department of Health, to which four Ministers of State are attached to work to deliver real improvements in this vital public service.

The National Drugs Strategy 2009-2016 is a cross-cutting area of public policy and service delivery which requires a coordinated response to tackling the drugs problem. The Minister for Health has overall responsibility for the National Drugs Strategy at Government level. I am delighted to have been afforded the opportunity to undertake the vital role of Minister of State with responsibility for the National Drugs Strategy. I am fully committed to the drugs brief, and am eager to tackle the issues in the area in as comprehensive a way as possible.

### Hospital Procedures

160. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when he will provide an operation for a person (details supplied); the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13841/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** 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 HSE, 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 Appointments Status

161. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13842/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** 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 HSE, 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.

### Cancer Screening Programmes

162. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the number of women Breast-Check screened in quarter 4 of 2015 and quarter 1 of 2016, by age 65, 66, 67, 68 and 69, by local authority, in tabular form. [13843/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The implementation of the age extension of BreastCheck to 65-69 year olds commenced in Quarter 4 of 2015. The age extension is being implemented on an incremental basis, starting mainly with those aged 65, in line with the capacity of the system to manage the additional screening and follow up workload.

A total of 411 women were screened in Quarter 4 of 2015 and a further 3,935 were screened in Quarter 1 of 2016. By 2021 all women in the 50-69 year age group will be able to avail of the programme. The additional eligible population is approximately 100,000 and, when fully implemented, 540,000 women will be included in the BreastCheck Programme.

A breakdown of those screened by age and location is in the following table.

#### Quarter 4 2015

Region	Age 65	Age 66	Age 67	Age 68	Age 69	Total 65-69
South: Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary South & Waterford.	102	2	0	0	0	104
East: Dublin City and County, Cavan, Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Longford, Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Offaly, Westmeath, Wexford and Wicklow	162	20	1	0	0	183
West: Clare, Donegal, Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo and Tipperary North	101	22	0	1	0	124
Total	365	44	1	1	0	411

**Quarter 1 2016**

Region	Age 65	Age 66	Age 67	Age 68	Age 69	Total 65-69
South: Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary South and Waterford.	914	56	1	1	0	972
East: Dub- lin City and Coun- ty, Cavan, Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Longford, Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Offaly, West- meath, Wexford and Wick- low	2,002	64	3	0	0	2,069
West: Clare, Donegal, Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscom- mon, Sligo and Tip- perary North	868	25	0	0	1	894
<b>Total</b>	<b>3784</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3935</b>

**Medicinal Products Supply**

163. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if the Health Service Executive clinically evaluated the impact of discontinuing access to Camcolit for medical card holders or through community drug schemes and, if so, whether he will publish the evaluation. [13844/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicinal products under the community drug schemes, in accordance with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013.

The HSE has found it necessary to discontinue reimbursing Camcolit under the General Medical Services (medical card) and community schemes, following a request for a very substantial price increase by the marketing authorisation holder for the product.

The HSE's Medicines Management Programme and its Mental Health Directorate are satisfied that patients can be transferred safely to an alternative lithium carbonate product, and the HSE has issued guidance to prescribers and pharmacists on the safe transfer of patients. This guidance was reviewed by clinical pharmacists working in mental health services in the HSE, St John of God's Hospital, and St Patrick's Hospital.

The guidance document will be published on the HSE website in due course.

### **Home Help Service Provision**

164. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health if he will reinstate home help hours for a person (details supplied); why the hours were reduced, given that the hours has been increased in the same week due to new serious medical issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13845/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee):** 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.

### **Nursing Homes Support Scheme Review**

165. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health to set out the status of the work of the interdepartmental group reviewing the fair deal, the nursing homes support scheme; when he will publish it; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13847/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee):** When the Nursing Homes Support Scheme commenced in 2009, a commitment was made that it would be reviewed after three years. The Report of the Review was published in July 2015. The Review included a general examination of the operation of the Scheme, as well as the balance between residential care and care in the community. A number of key issues have been identified for more detailed consideration across Departments and Agencies.

In this regard, an Interdepartmental/Agency Working Group was established to progress the recommendations contained in the Review. These recommendations include the implementation of administrative reforms to the Scheme, and a review by the National Treatment Purchase Fund of the pricing system for private long-term residential care facilities. The Working Group is chaired by the Department of Health and includes representatives from the Department of the Taoiseach, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the HSE, the Revenue Commissioners and, when required, the National Treatment Purchase Fund.

Significant progress has already been made in relation to the implementation of recommendations relating to the administrative reforms to the Scheme. The Working Group has held three meetings to date, with a further meeting scheduled to take place in the coming weeks. The Group is due to make a preliminary report on its progress to the Cabinet Committee on Health in June 2016.

## Medical Card Applications

166. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health to set out the status of an application by persons (details supplied) under the medical card scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13859/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** 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 recently 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 Provision

167. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health to outline the treatment services in place to address comorbidity of substance misuse and mental health issues. [13860/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee):** The major responsibility for care of people with addiction lies outside the mental health system. These services have their own funding structure within Primary and Continuing Community Care (PCCC) in the HSE. The responsibility of community mental health services is to respond to the needs of people with both problems of addiction and serious mental health disorders.

Acute presentations by service users with co-morbid mental health and addiction problems will be mostly seen by General Adult Community Mental Health Teams, who offer both addiction counselling expertise and mental health intervention as part of an integrated care plan. These teams are also responsible for linking these service users to community-based recovery and support programmes as part of facilitating full community re-integration.

The standard practice for patients presenting to Emergency Departments with mental health issues who have also misused substances is that the mental health assessment would be postponed until the individual is no longer intoxicated and is medically fit to engage in the assessment process. In the interim, the patient remains under the care of the Hospital Emergency Department Team.

The HSE Mental Health Directorate has plans to implement a new 'Dual Diagnosis' clinical programme in 2016 addressing those service users with Mental Health difficulties and Substance Misuse. The overarching aim of the national programmes is to standardise quality evidence based practice across the Mental Health Services. The Programmes bring together clinical disciplines and enable them to share innovative solutions to deliver greater benefits to every user of HSE services. The Programmes are based on three main objectives:

1. To improve the quality of care we deliver to all users of HSE services;
2. To improve access to all services; and
3. To improve cost effectiveness.

## **Drugs-related Deaths**

168. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health if he has reviewed the report of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction on preventing opioid deaths with take-home naloxone; his views on its findings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13861/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** I am aware of the report of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction on preventing opioid deaths with take-home naloxone. The report examines the case for distributing Naloxone, which is an antidote used to reverse the effects of opioid drugs like heroin, morphine and methadone if someone overdoses.

In May 2015, the HSE undertook a demonstration project to assess and evaluate the suitability and impact of using a pre-filled Naloxone injection which is designed for non-medical administration in Ireland. The HSE made naloxone available for prescription and supply to opioid drug users under an initiative aimed at reducing drug-related deaths and near-fatal drug overdoses. There are four locations participating in the project including Dublin, Limerick, Cork and Waterford. The Irish Prison service is also participating. The overall objective of the project was to make naloxone more widely available for opioid drug users.

The project involved 600 opiate users receiving take-home naloxone on prescription. It also included those recently released from custody who have been identified as at high risk of opioid overdose. These drug users and those close to them have been trained on how to administer naloxone and to recognise the signs of an overdose.

The HSE has advised that an evaluation of the demonstration project is due to be completed shortly and a national implementation plan is currently being developed.

## **Addiction Treatment Services**

169. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health to set down the amount spent on training to administer naloxone kits in each of the years 2012 to 2016 to date; the number of premises that are allowed use them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13862/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** 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.

## **General Medical Services Scheme**

170. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if he is aware of a claim that some general practitioners are charging medical card holders for sick certificates; if this is permissible and on what grounds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13863/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the General Medical Services (GMS) contract, a general practitioner (GP) is expected to provide his/her patients who hold a medical card or GP visit card with all proper and necessary treatment of a kind generally undertaken by

a GP.

Under the contract the GP is required to furnish to a person whom he/she has examined, and for whom he/she is obliged to provide services, a certificate in relation to any illness noticed during the examination which is reasonably required by the patient.

The contract between the HSE and the GP under the GMS Scheme stipulates that fees are not paid to GPs by the HSE in respect of certain medical certificates which may be required, for example, “under the Social Welfare Acts or for the purposes of insurance or assurance policies or for the issue of driving licences”.

### **Drugs Payment Scheme**

171. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the average timeframe for reimbursing medical costs under the drugs payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13864/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drugs 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.

### **HSE Investigations**

172. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the information and supports the Health Service Executive is providing to a person (details supplied); how it is addressing issues arising from two of its related inquiries; if he will publish these reports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13865/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The inquiries referred to by the Deputy relate to allegations of abuse in a foster home in the South-East which are the subject of an ongoing criminal investigation by the Gardaí.

In view of the serious issues raised regarding the standard of care provided by the foster family, the HSE commissioned an inquiry into the matter, undertaken by Conal Devine and Associates. The inquiry concluded in 2012 but for legal reasons the full report was not published. Subsequent to that, the HSE commissioned Resilience Ireland to undertake a review/look-back exercise into other foster care placements with the family concerned. This review was completed in early 2015. Due to its ongoing inquiries, the Gardaí wrote to the HSE asking them not to publish the Devine report or the Resilience Ireland report while the matter was under investigation.

However the HSE has emphasised that it has not waited for the publication of the Devine report to act on its recommendations, and that it has put in place a number of changes to take account of the service and management deficiencies identified. This includes the publication, in December 2014, of its national policy: *Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse-National Policy and Procedures*. The matter was raised by the Committee on Public Accounts in 2015 in the context of the procurement process for the two reports and the extended period of time during which it has not been possible to publish them. In response to these concerns

Minister of State Kathleen Lynch appointed Conor Dignam S.C. to undertake a review of these matters, taking account of the ongoing Garda investigation.

In view of the seriousness of the issues raised and the need to establish the facts, on 2 February last the previous Government approved, in principle, the establishment of a statutory Commission of Investigation into the care of individuals in the foster home in question. The approval is subject to the agreement of Terms of Reference for the Commission by the Government and approval of the Oireachtas, with the Terms of Reference to be informed by the review being undertaken by Mr. Dignam.

As the remainder of the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

173. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Health how he will ensure a person (details supplied) is admitted to a hospital (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13867/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** 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 HSE, 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 Staff

174. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Health his proposals to enable persons employed by the Health Service Executive at clerical officer and other grades to continue employment beyond 65 years of age if they so desire; if he is considering amending the statutory framework to allow persons who express this desire to do so, particularly in the context of other changes in recent years in the welfare area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13868/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Public Service Superannuation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2004 among other things removed the compulsory age for certain categories of new entrants to the public service who joined on or after 1 April 2004. These employees are generally referred to as "new entrants" and under the Act new entrants are not



required to retire on age grounds.

Those public servants that were serving in the public service prior to 1 April 2004 are generally referred to as “non new entrants” who are in the main required to retire at the age of 65 years.

The Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme) and other Provisions Act 2012, provides that members of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme, which commenced for new entrants to the public service on or after 1 January 2013, may retire from State Pension Age (currently 66 rising to 68 in 2028).

A Private Members Bill, The Longer Healthy Living Bill 2015, passed Second Stage in the Seanad on the 30 September 2015. The Bill aims to ensure that all those who are employees of the Department of Health, and all those who are employed by bodies directly funded by the Department of Health, may, if they wish, postpone their retirement where they would otherwise have been forced to retire at a particular age that is stipulated in their employment contract, subject to their continuing capacity to fulfil the duties of their employment in a safe fashion. Consideration of the issue of retirement age will therefore arise as The Longer Healthy Living Bill 2015 progresses through the legislative process.

### **Disability Support Services Provision**

175. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when he will transfer a person (details supplied) to the National Rehabilitation Unit in Dún Laoghaire; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13941/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

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.

### **Disability Support Services Provision**

176. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health to examine and review the case of a person (details supplied) and to expedite the nursing hours which have been granted. [13942/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for

people with disabilities.

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.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

177. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he will increase the funding to the National Rehabilitation Hospital to facilitate an increase in the therapies provided which have been curtailed due to lack of funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13943/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The Government announced a major development of the National Rehabilitation Hospital with a commitment of around €40 million. The new development will deliver a 120 bed ward capacity, including support therapies, paediatric and acquired brain injury wards, a hydrotherapy unit and a sports hall.

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 a more detailed 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.

### **Hospitals Discharges**

178. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons up to 65 years of age who have an acquired brain injury including stroke who are residing in publicly funded hospitals; and the number of these persons who are regarded as delayed discharges, by public hospital, in tabular form. [13944/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** 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**

179. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the number of public patients, men, women and children with type 1 diabetes, attending the Cork hospitals of the south and south-west hospital group who are awaiting insulin pump therapy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13945/16]

180. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the average waiting time in the Cork hospitals of the south and south-west hospital group for insulin pump therapy, by hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13946/16]

182. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the waiting time and the number of persons on the waiting list to see an endocrinologist for type 1 or type 2 diabetes in the Cork hospitals of the south and south-west hospital group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13948/16]

183. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the number of cardiac patients attending the Cork hospitals of the south and south-west hospital group who are diabetics and awaiting an appointment with an endocrinologist; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13949/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 179, 180, 182 and 183 together.

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.

### **Health Services**

181. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the number of carbohydrate counting courses for type 1 diabetics the Health Service Service Executive will organise in County Cork in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13947/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy):** As the Deputy's question relates to a service matter, 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.

*Questions Nos. 182 and 183 answered with Question No. 179.*

### **Health Services Staff Recruitment**

184. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health his projections of the impact of the recently introduced health service recruitment bar on increased waiting list times for the care of type 1 and type 2 diabetes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13950/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Arising from Budget 2015, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform announced an easing of restrictions on the employment of additional staff. Submission of a Pay and Numbers Strategy, outlining planned staffing levels and pay/pensions expenditure was required to obtain sanction for the lifting of the moratorium and Employment Control Framework arrangements.

The HSE are currently working with my Department on the preparation of their 2016 Pay and Numbers Strategy. This has involved the development of 'bottom up' workforce plans at hospital and community service level. While these plans are being developed, interim recruit-

ment measures have been put in place by the HSE, which require that pay budgets are complied with.

These measures do not impact on a hospital's ability to recruit where funding exists to facilitate that recruitment; for example in the case of replacement posts or where funding has been allocated for particular roles under the HSE service plan. Recruitment can also take place in areas of critical care and emergency services.

Improving waiting times for scheduled care for patients is a key priority for the Minister of Health and for Government. In 2015, the HSE was provided with additional funding to ensure that maximum waiting times of 18 months by 30 June 2015 and 15 months by year end would be achieved for inpatient and day case treatment and outpatient appointments. By maximising capacity across public and voluntary hospitals, as well as outsourcing activity where the capacity was unavailable to meet patient needs, HSE figures for end Dec 2015 showed 95% achievement for In-patient and Day Case waiting lists and 93% for outpatient waiting lists, against the 15 months maximum wait times.

At the end of April there were around 400,000 patients on the outpatient waiting list and 74,000 on the inpatient/day case list. Over 60% of patients on waiting lists wait less than 6 months for their required care and 94% are waiting less than the maximum waiting time of 15 months. The fact that the majority of people on waiting lists (over 60%) are waiting less than 6 months indicates that there is a consistent high demand for healthcare.

My Department will continue to work with the HSE to ensure that the service needs and waiting times in this area will be addressed, having regard to the overall level of resources available to the HSE.

### **Health Services Staff Recruitment**

185. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health how long the Health Service Executive's recruitment bar will last; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13951/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Arising from Budget 2015, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform announced an easing of restrictions on the employment of additional staff. Submission of a Pay and Numbers Strategy, outlining planned staffing levels and pay/pensions expenditure was required to obtain sanction for the lifting of the moratorium and Employment Control Framework arrangements.

This change allows for greater autonomy to be delegated to Departments and Agencies to manage their own staffing levels within allocated pay frameworks. It also provides for further recruitment flexibility, for example where it is determined that offering permanent contracts can achieve more economical service delivery than agency usage.

The HSE are currently working with my Department on the preparation of their 2016 Pay and Numbers Strategy. This has involved the development of 'bottom up' workforce plans at hospital and community service level. While these plans are being developed, interim recruitment measures have been put in place by the HSE, which require that pay budgets are complied with.

These measures do not impact on a hospital's ability to recruit where funding exists to facilitate that recruitment; for example in the case of replacement posts or where funding has been allocated for particular roles under the HSE service plan. Recruitment can also take place in areas of critical care and emergency services.

## Hospital Appointments Delays

186. **Deputy Hildegarde Naughton** asked the Minister for Health the reason it took three months for a person (details supplied) to receive a notification of an appointment to see a consultant dermatologist; the reason that person will not be seen until August 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13952/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** 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 the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

## Vaccination Programme

187. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if he is concerned that the bacillus Calmette-Guérin injection will not be available until 2017; his efforts to source the drug outside the European Union; if the Health Service Executive will reverse the policy of no longer adding new babies to waiting lists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13953/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** There is currently a worldwide shortage of BCG vaccine. In 2015 the United Nations Children's Funds (UNICEF) estimated a worldwide shortage of 65 million doses of BCG. The vaccine has not been available in Ireland since the end of April 2015. Consequently, BCG vaccination clinics in HSE Clinics and Maternity hospitals have been postponed until new stock arrives.

There is only one licensed supplier of BCG vaccine to Ireland and to other countries within the EU. Since this problem became apparent, the HSE National Immunisation Office has been in regular contact with the manufacturer of BCG vaccine to ascertain when the vaccine might be available. The HSE has also asked the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA), which licenses and regulates all human medicines in Ireland, to source an alternate supplier of the BCG vaccine. Efforts have been made to find a company who can provide the vaccine for use in Ireland which satisfies all the HPRA requirements on safety and efficacy. To date no suitable alternative BCG product has been found. Therefore the HSE has been unable to procure the BCG vaccine from any other source and still awaits the product from the HPRA licensed supplier of the vaccine.

The supplier has indicated that supplies of the vaccine are not expected to be delivered into Ireland until early 2017. When there is confirmation of the date of new supply a decision will be made, guided by the recommendations of the National Immunisation Advisory Committee, on who should be prioritised to receive the vaccine.

## Hospitals Capital Programme

188. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Health the status of the future of Kilcreene orthopaedic hospital in Kilkenny, particularly the works converting St. Patrick's ward to office space; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13954/16]

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

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

189. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if and when he will issue a much required medical device to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13955/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has 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.

### **Medicinal Products Prices**

190. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the savings from a reduction in the cost of branded medicines to the average European Union level; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13961/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** It is not feasible to provide a robust estimate of savings from a reduction in the price of branded medicines to the average European Union level, as the price of each branded medicine would need to be assessed and compared with pricing data from all of the other member states. In addition, I would draw the Deputy's attention to the Joint Committee on Health and Children Report on the Cost of Prescription Drugs in Ireland published in October 2015 and in particular their view that consideration should be given as to whether the average price is the most cost-effective option in setting drug prices in Ireland.

### **Long-Term Illness Scheme Coverage**

191. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Health to include the chronic long-term illnesses Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis on the list of illnesses covered by the long-term illness scheme established under the 1970 Health Act; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14009/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Long Term Illness (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, which 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.

Under the Drugs Payment Scheme, no individual or family pays more than €144 per calendar month towards the cost of approved prescribed medicines. The scheme significantly reduces the cost burden for families and individuals incurring ongoing expenditure on medicines.

Under the provisions of the Health Acts, medical cards are provided to persons who are unable, without undue hardship, to arrange health 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.

## Human Rights

192. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Health the opportunities he had to raise the rights of the victims of symphysiotomy during the United Nations Human Rights Council. [10143/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is an interactive process that allows UN member states the opportunity to question the state being reviewed on its human rights record and make recommendations in that regard. At the UPR meeting in Geneva in May, member state delegations did not raise the issue of symphysiotomy. The Tánaiste did not therefore speak on this issue.

Ireland provided an update to the UN on the Surgical Symphysiotomy Payment Scheme as part of its national report earlier in the UPR process. The national report was submitted in February 2016 ahead of the review itself in May and is available at the following website address:

[http://www.upr.ie/Website/UPR/uprweb.nsf/page/DOJL-A97JFV1512120-en/\\$file/National%20Report%20IE%20Cycle%202.pdf](http://www.upr.ie/Website/UPR/uprweb.nsf/page/DOJL-A97JFV1512120-en/$file/National%20Report%20IE%20Cycle%202.pdf).

## Agriculture Schemes

193. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when he will open applications under the new sheep scheme; when he will issue the first payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13852/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The sheep sector is an important component of our agriculture economy and the third largest farming sector in Ireland with over 34,000 producers and an output value of over €230 million in 2015. It is for this reason that the Programme for Government includes a commitment to provide €25 million for a new scheme in support of the sheep sector.

My Department is consulting with farm organisations and stakeholders and once discussions are concluded, the scheme will be included in the upcoming amendment to the Rural Development Programme, which is due in late June. It would be my hope that, subject to agreement by the European Commission and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the scheme will be opened to applications in 2017.

I should also note that my Department is committed to developing the sheep sector through the FoodWise 2025 strategy. Sheep farmers are able to avail of supports in the form of GLAS, ANC and TAMS, as well as improving their efficiency and profitability through membership of the Knowledge Transfer scheme which builds upon the successful discussion group format.

### **Basic Payment Scheme Applications**

194. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for farm payments. [13853/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named received payment under the Basic Payment Scheme on 11 March 2016. She also submitted a Private Contract Clause application to my Department seeking the transfer of land and entitlements by lease as transferor. The person named was notified in writing on 18 April 2016 that as the transferee under this application already held the allocation right and value, there was no requirement to have submitted the Private Contract Clause. The application has now been processed on this basis and a supplementary payment for outstanding monies under the Basic Payment Scheme will issue to the person named shortly.

### **Basic Payment Scheme Applications**

195. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the basic payment scheme. [13854/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named submitted a 2015 Private Contract Clause application to my Department seeking the transfer of land and entitlements by sale as transferee. This application was rejected on the basis that the transferor did not submit a 2015 Basic Payment Scheme application on which s/he declares at least one hectare of eligible land.

The transferor in this case subsequently submitted a late 2015 Basic Payment Scheme application to my Department for consideration under appeal. This late application has been accepted and the Private Contract Clause application can now be processed. An official from my Department will contact the person named directly with an update on his application, including a likely date for payment.

### **Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments**

196. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine why a person (details supplied) has not received payment under the disadvantaged areas scheme for 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13898/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** An application under the 2015 Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) Scheme was received in my Department from the person named on 30 March 2015.

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



## Agriculture Scheme Payments

197. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to re-examine the case of a person (details supplied) regarding a rare breeds payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13921/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Farmers selecting the Rare Breed action in GLAS were required to upload evidence of membership of the relevant Breed Society as part of the application process. The relevant acceptable bodies were published in the GLAS Specification document and officials from my Department did not advise that documentation from Horse Sport Ireland was not necessary.

All applicants were required to engage a professional advisor to prepare and submit their application and any required supporting documentation. A letter from the Irish Draught Horse Society was submitted in this case but was not acceptable as that body is not the recognised body as published in the GLAS scheme specification. Horse Sport Ireland section of the Irish Horse Board is the keeper of the Stud Book and the recognised body for the Irish Draught Horse. As no documentation from this body was submitted with the application the rare breed action was not approved.

The applicant in this case is entitled to request a review of the original decision to the GLAS Section of my Department and supply additional relevant information to support such a request.

### Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme

198. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the targeted agricultural modernisation scheme 2; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13922/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The applicant in question has applied for a tank, silage pit and housing under the Animal Welfare, Safety and Nutrient Storage Scheme in Tranche 2 of TAMS II. The administrative checks have been completed. All of the applications received in a given tranche have to be examined before the ranking and selection process takes place. Approvals will commence when this process is completed.

### Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme

199. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of applications; the number of these he has approved; the number of participants who have received payments; the number of payments that have not yet issued and when he will issue the outstanding payments under the targeted agricultural modernisation scheme 2 in 2016 by county, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13923/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Details of the applications in 2016 received across the various TAMS schemes are in the following table. The remaining information will be forwarded to the Deputy when available.

	AWNSS	DES	LESS	Organic	PPIS	YFCIS
Carlow	13	25	0	1	0	5

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	AWNSS	DES	LESS	Organic	PPIS	YFCIS
Cavan	71	32	23	23	11	17
Clare	74	38	11	10	0	19
Cork	231	353	84	17	9	57
Donegal	73	18	15	6	1	24
Dublin	2	6	0	4	0	0
Galway	102	60	55	19	0	57
Kerry	135	167	22	11	2	40
Kildare	12	24	2	9	1	8
Kilkenny	86	93	22	3	3	27
Laois	32	39	10	17	0	10
Leitrim	19	2	5	26	0	13
Limerick	72	97	12	18	8	20
Longford	20	7	11	7	1	8
Louth	5	23	8	1	2	6
Mayo	45	21	8	6	0	44
Meath	45	52	9	3	1	14
Monaghan	70	55	14	9	43	11
Offaly	17	31	9	17	0	12
Roscommon	65	5	16	39	0	20
Sligo	26	4	12	8	0	20
Tipperary	119	209	41	22	1	36
Waterford	48	70	16	5	5	21
Westmeath	35	30	16	12	1	11
Wexford	52	97	14	2	3	25
Wicklow	18	21	3	8	0	10
TOTAL	1487	1579	438	303	92	535

**Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Data**

200. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number applications submitted; the number of these which were ineligible; and the number which he has not yet paid under the areas of natural constraint scheme in 2015, by county, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13924/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** A total of 103,763 applications were received under the 2015 Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme, of which 96,002 applications have been paid to date. Of those applications outstanding, many are currently not meeting the eligibility requirements and therefore will not become eligible for payment.

County	Applied	Paid	Numbers outstanding and/or ineligible
Carlow	763	701	62
Cavan	4897	4644	253
Clare	6171	5846	325
Cork	7227	6709	518

County	Applied	Paid	Numbers outstanding and/or ineligible
Donegal	8782	7904	878
Dublin	152	126	26
Galway	12447	11418	1029
Kerry	7807	7263	544
Kildare	531	479	52
Kilkenny	1789	1632	157
Laois	1736	1598	138
Leitrim	3534	3295	239
Limerick	2977	2768	209
Longford	2405	2257	148
Louth	806	712	94
Mayo	11840	10956	884
Meath	1361	1259	102
Monaghan	4141	3899	242
Offaly	2441	2263	178
Roscommon	5798	5404	394
Sligo	4079	3800	279
Tipperary	4569	4244	325
Waterford	1451	1327	124
Westmeath	2702	2522	180
Wexford	1512	1323	189
Wicklow	1845	1653	192

### Live Exports

201. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he is taking to deal with the sharp decline in live cattle exports in 2016; the new markets that will be opened in 2016 for Irish farmers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13925/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Live exports serve a vital purpose as a means of satisfying market demand for live animals and providing alternative market outlets for Irish cattle farmers. I have always attached major importance to the live cattle export trade, and my Department, along with Bord Bia, has been extremely proactive in both encouraging and facilitating shipments abroad and the cross-border live trade to Northern Ireland.

Last year saw high levels of exports of cattle to both Britain and Northern Ireland, largely driven by favourable currency rates which made cattle from this country more competitive in those markets. However, as a result of a closer Euro V Sterling exchange rate, exports to the UK this year are lower by approximately 50%. Exports to Italy are up by almost 20% and exports to Spain have grown by 11%.

Beyond this market, animal health restrictions and geopolitical instability have impeded previously large-scale exports to Belgium and North Africa respectively. The markets currently open to live cattle from Ireland include Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Serbia and Algeria, in addition to the other twenty-seven Member States of the European Union. The exploitation of market outlets, once opened is a commercial matter for the live export sector, and

is affected by the usual variables, including the relative cost of beef on the domestic and international markets, currency exchange rates, transport costs and other factors. I will continue to ensure that Irish meat and livestock producers have the option of exporting to as many global markets as possible. In this regard my Department has agreed health certificates for the export of live cattle to Egypt, Serbia and Algeria in 2016 and is currently investigating the possibilities of bilateral health certificates for the export of cattle to Kazakhstan, Montenegro, and Turkey as well as breeding cattle to Morocco. In this regard my Department recently hosted a veterinary inspection by the Turkish authorities and is awaiting a report from that exercise.

### **Fisheries Offences**

202. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when he will amend S.I. No. 125 of 2016, given that the Attorney General has been requested to review it and to ensure that no penalty points are applied to owners' licences until after they have been found guilty in the courts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13926/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Deputy will be aware that S.I. No. 125 of 2016 - European Union (Common Fisheries Policy) (Point System) Regulations 2016 adopts the requirements of Article 92 of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009 and Title VII of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No. 404/2011 of 8 April 2011. In accordance with the regulations, this S.I. establishes a point system, which applies to the Licence Holder of a sea-fishing boat when a serious infringement of the Common Fisheries Policy is detected within the Exclusive Fishery Limits of the State or for an Irish vessel, wherever it may be.

I have been considering all of the concerns raised by Deputies and by the fishing industry in relation to the implementation of the EU points system for serious infringements of the Common Fisheries Policy. Indeed, this issue was discussed at a meeting I had with representatives of the fishing industry this morning.

Upon taking office I requested that the Attorney General consider whether there is a way that the assignment of EU points for licence holders can await the completion of the prosecution process, while at the same time ensuring that Ireland is fully in compliance with its obligations under EU law.

Further to the Programme for Government commitment pertaining to the assignment of penalty points, I quickly sought advice from the Attorney General as prescribed in the document. Having now received this advice, I am satisfied to move on the introduction of a system for the sequential application of EU points in conjunction with the prosecution process, thus fulfilling the ambition outlined in the Partnership Programme.

I should advise the Deputy that this move is subject to addressing some important legal and administrative issues in order to ensure compliance with EU law. I have listened to the concerns of industry and intend to report back to An Oireachtas as soon as I have finalised a way forward in the context of dealing with legal and administrative matters that are arising. However I am confident that these matters can be dealt with in a collaborative and constructive manner with all stakeholders.

### **Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

203. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he is taking to ensure that Ireland's grass-based agriculture, boglands and forestry are taken into account as carbon sequesters in the upcoming discussions at European level for European Union 2030 emission targets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13927/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Ireland has adopted a whole of Government approach to developing climate policy. We have been engaged in intensive discussions with the European Commission for some time now highlighting the importance of ensuring a coherent approach to the twin challenges of food security and climate change.

As part of our ongoing engagement at EU level, my colleague Minister Naughten and I met recently with Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete, European Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy to discuss proposals on the EU's Effort Sharing Decision and on Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF).

The meeting provided me with the opportunity to restate the commitment of the Irish agriculture sector to improving efficiency and driving down emissions, and to re-emphasise the importance of reflecting the 2014 European Council Conclusions in the proposed effort sharing decision – particularly, in terms of their recognition of the low mitigation potential of the sector and their reference to the inclusion of afforestation and LULUCF as part of future climate and energy policy.

Afforestation, the creation of new forest, is included as a specific mitigation measure in paragraph 2.14 of the Council Conclusions. This is important for Ireland as afforestation is the main cost-effective land-based climate mitigation tool available to us. Climate change mitigation by forests, forest fuels and wood products is one of the principal drivers of the policy to expand forest cover out to mid century. Annual estimates of the current level of uptake of carbon dioxide by forests are provided by my Department to the Environmental Protection Agency. Projected levels of uptake in forests and storage in solid wood products out to 2020 have been provided to the European Commission under Decision 529/2013 on land use, land-use change and forestry.

We will continue to work closely with the Commission prior to the launch of proposals for an effort sharing decision, which are expected later this summer.

It should also be noted that Ireland is one of a small number of EU countries to have elected to report on cropland and grazing land management activities under the Kyoto Protocol (KP). This would allow Ireland to take advantage of any sequestration benefits that may be allowed in the future from these activities.

### **GLAS Appeals**

204. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied) of a decision on a farm payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13956/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** An application for Tranche 2 of the GLAS Scheme was received in this case on the dedicated GLAS online system on the 29 November 2015.

The pre-approval validation checks on the application of the person named, found that the

Low Input Permanent Pasture (part parcel) and Traditional Hay Meadow (part parcel) actions were not in accordance with scheme specifications and were therefore not approved as part of the application.

The application was ranked as a Tier 3 application, scoring 7.50 which was below the minimum required pass mark of 16.50 and it was therefore unsuccessful for admission to the scheme. A letter issued to the person named on the 10 March 2016 notifying them of this decision and giving an option of appeal to GLAS Section. To date, my Department has no record of receiving an appeal in this case.

### **Young Farmers Scheme**

205. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 523 of 24 May 2016, when payment will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13994/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named submitted an application under the 2015 Young Farmers Scheme to my Department. Under EU Regulations governing the scheme administrative and on farm checks must be completed before applications are cleared for payment. All such checks are now complete, the application has been finalised and payment is due to issue shortly to the person named.

### **Basic Payment Scheme Payments**

206. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue to a person (details supplied) under the basic farm payment scheme for each of the years 2013 to 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13995/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Following a recent review of the Single Farm Payment applications of the person named for the years 2013 and 2014, I can confirm that processing has now been completed and payment will issue shortly.

The 2015 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) application is currently under review in light of the finalisation of the allocation of entitlements under BPS and an official from my Department will be in direct contact with the person named to clarify the position.

### **Broadband Service Speeds**

207. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when Granaghan Beg, Newmarket-on-Fergus, County Clare, will have fibre optic cable for broadband service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13937/16]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to deliver high speed services to every city, town, village and individual premises in Ireland. The Programme for a Partnership Government commits to the delivery of the NBP as a matter of priority. This is being achieved through private investment by commercial telecommunications companies and through a State intervention in areas where commercial investment is not forthcoming.

The High Speed Broadband Map 2020, which is available at [www.broadband.gov.ie](http://www.broadband.gov.ie) shows

the extent of the State Intervention area, which is the subject of procurement. The areas marked BLUE represent those areas where commercial providers are either currently delivering or have plans to deliver high speed broadband services. The Department continues to monitor the commercial deployment plans in the BLUE area where commercial operators have committed to providing services, to ensure that those services are delivered. The areas marked AMBER on the High Speed Broadband Map represent the target areas for the State Intervention and includes the townland of Granaghan Beg, County Clare. Members of the public can view whether their premises are in the BLUE or AMBER area by accessing the High Speed Broadband Map and entering their Eircode. The map provides information on a county by county basis with a breakdown of coverage across the townlands in every county.

Over 750,000 premises are the focus of the procurement process, which formally commenced in December 2015 with the publication of the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire ('PQQ') and Project Information Memorandum. Five responses were received from prospective bidders to this stage of the competitive procurement process by the deadline of 31 March 2016. The five responses are being assessed in line with the criteria set down by the Department with a view to shortlist of qualified bidders proceeding to the next stage of procurement.

The second stage in the procurement process will be a formal invitation to Participate in Dialogue (ITPD) to shortlisted bidders. I expect that my Department will move to this stage in the next month. The third stage of the procurement process involves the issue of final tender documentation which follows the dialogue process. Following the submission of final tenders by bidders, a winning bidder(s) will be selected for the contract which will comprise one or two lots as set out in the NBP Intervention Strategy. The Department will then enter into formal contract negotiations with the winning bidder(s). It is expected that contract(s) will be awarded by June 2017.

In preparation for the procurement stage of the process my Department investigated how different technical solutions could be used to deliver high speed broadband. In line with EU State Aid rules, the process must be "technology neutral" and it is not therefore possible to specify what technology should be used to build the network. As part of the procurement process bidders will be asked to propose solutions which meet the NBP service requirements. It is recognised however, that a significant fibre build will be required, regardless of what technology is used to provide services to individual premises. Once the successful bidder or bidders is chosen the technology to be deployed will be made clear.

As part of the competitive process, the Department will engage with winning bidder(s) on the best rollout strategy, in order to target areas of particularly poor service, business needs and/or high demand. This will need to be balanced with the most efficient network rollout plan. A prioritisation programme will be put in place in this regard, in consultation with the Minister for Regional Development, Rural Affairs, Arts and the Gaeltacht. Once contract(s) are in place, I expect to publish a detailed rollout plan for the network.

The Programme for a Partnership Government commits also to measures to assist in the rollout of the network once a contract is awarded. In this regard, Minister Humphreys will lead on the establishment of county or regional broadband taskforces, working with Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Offices, LEADER Groups and other relevant agencies to help accelerate the broadband network build in rural Ireland, once contract(s) have been awarded.

## **Energy Regulation**

208. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural

Resources his plans to ensure that the development of the liquefied natural gas terminal at the Ballylongford land bank in County Kerry is fully supported, given its strategic commercial and employment importance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13938/16]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Denis Naughten):** Since 2002, the regulation of the gas market has been the responsibility of the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER), which is independent in the performance of its functions. I have no direct statutory function in relation to liquefied natural gas projects, including specific projects such as the Shannon LNG project, which is a commercial private sector initiative.

An LNG facility would provide additional security of supply to Ireland, in that it would bring diversity to Ireland's gas supply sources and would bring connectivity to the global LNG market.

This Government is supportive of the proposal to construct a LNG terminal near Ballylongford and the Programme for Government commits to examining if there are ways to facilitate liquid natural gas on the island of Ireland.

As part of implementing my Department's Energy Policy Paper, "Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future", our dependency on imported gas, particularly in the context of electricity generation, will be examined. The potential role of LNG will form part of this analysis. However, final investment decisions are a commercial matter for project promoters to take.

### **Statutory Instruments**

209. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the legislation governing the making of pay-parking by-laws by local authorities; the statutory instrument stating that modifications by local authority executives to by-laws must entail a full review; if he will change this statutory instrument to make the changing of these by-laws by local authorities more flexible. [13846/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The making of pay-parking by-laws by road authorities, under section 36 of the Road Traffic Act 1994, is a reserved function of each authority.

Guidelines issued by the Minister under that section provide assistance to authorities when making pay-parking by-laws, including examples of the structure and content of such by-laws. Where changes are being made to existing by-laws, other than those relating to fees, new by-laws must be made.

This obliges road authorities to consult with the Garda Commissioner, give public notice of the authority's intention to make new by-laws and the consideration of any observations or objections arising from that process. This requirement ensures that any significant changes to pay-parking by-laws are carried out in an open and transparent way, with the public having the opportunity to be involved in the process.

I do not have any plans to alter that requirement.

### **Road Safety**

210. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will consider lowering speed limits outside rural schools; and if he will make a statement on the



matter. [13902/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Local authorities already have the necessary statutory powers under section 9 of the Road Traffic Act 2004 to provide for a Special Speed Limit of 30 km/h outside of schools if they deem such a limit to be appropriate and necessary. A Special Speed Limit may also include a periodic speed limit which can be designed to apply and operate at specified periods, for example when children are arriving at, or leaving a school during term time. The consent of Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) is required when Special Speed Limits are being applied on national roads.

To assist local authorities in the application of Special Speed Limits, my Department's *Guidelines for Setting and Managing Speed Limits in Ireland*, published in March 2015, provides detailed guidance on the application of Special Speed Limits outside of schools and is available to all local authorities. These Guidelines reiterate that the making of Special Speed Limit by-laws is a matter for the Elected Members of local authorities, subject to following Department Guidelines and to the consent of TII in the case of national roads.

In consideration of a nationwide 30km/h speed limit outside schools during term time, in view of the statutory provisions already available to local authorities, it is my view that the introduction of Special Speed Limits can be best addressed through discussions between all interested parties locally, including council officials and Elected Members, community groups, An Garda Síochána and TII rather than being centrally imposed.

### **Driver Licences**

211. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the procedure whereby a holder of a British driving licence can change to an Irish licence; and the documentation that is required (details supplied). [13903/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** This is procedural information already available in the public domain at [www.ndls.ie](http://www.ndls.ie). Any specific difficulties which the individual may have should be resolved by contacting the National Driver Licensing Service (NDLS) directly as I cannot intervene in individual cases.

### **Insurance Costs**

212. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to engage in exploratory discussions with the Road Safety Authority, the Minister for Finance and Insurance Ireland regarding the possibility of car insurers working with the Road Safety Authority to encourage the use of dashcams, on driver safety grounds, by offering discounts on insurance premia to drivers who install dashcams in their cars. [13918/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** In-vehicle cameras or dashcams may have a usefulness regarding providing evidence in the event of an insurance claim, and insurance companies in some countries may provide discounts if such cameras have been installed in a vehicle. However, I have no role in determining discounts in the motor insurance industry and the matter of applying discounts for the use of dashcams in vehicles is a matter for individual insurers and for the insurance industry.

Regarding the Road Safety Authority's role in encouraging the use of dashcams, I have referred this Parliamentary Question to them. If you have not received a response within 10

working days, please contact my private office.

### **Severe Weather Events Expenditure**

213. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he will make a decision on a submission for additional storm damage funding by Galway County Council, given the urgent need for it so that essential repairs can be carried out on roads damaged in floods in Galway West in 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13932/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** 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 February, Galway County Council was allocated €6m in the 1st tranche of the Severe Weather funding, which was enabled by the additional funding secured by my predecessor. On Friday last the 27th May, in the 2nd tranche of the Severe Weather funding, a further €400,000 was allocated to Galway County Council.

### **Road Improvement Schemes**

214. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his proposals to reinstate the local improvement scheme, including if he proposes to allocate specific funding to local authorities in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13933/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) remains in place. This Scheme provides funding for private roads and laneways, the maintenance and improvement of which is, in the first instance, a matter for the relevant landowner. While the LIS does not have a ring-fenced allocation in 2016, local authorities may use a proportion of State grant funding (15% of the Discretionary Grant) for LIS should they wish to do so. In addition Councils can also provide monies from their own resources towards LIS.

The Programme for a Partnership Government provides that, as the economy recovers, the Government will promote increased funding for Local Improvement Schemes, on an annual basis. A major objective for the new Government will be to prioritise new investment in local and regional road maintenance and improvements, and LIS funding will be promoted in that context.

### **Road Improvement Schemes**

215. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide additional funding for necessary upgrading and repair on the road network, given the deteriorating condition of many non-national roads, and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13934/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads in its area is a statutory function of local authorities in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act, 1993. Works on such roads

are a matter for the relevant local authority to be funded from its own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of projects to be funded from these monies is a matter for each local authority.

In addition to the 2016 regional and local road allocations announced in January this year, my predecessor announced a further €85m in additional funding for regional and local roads in February this year as part of the Tranche 1 funding to local authorities to remedy damage caused by severe weather. On 27 May I approved a further allocation under Tranche 2 of the severe weather funding to local authorities as notified through Circular RW 9/2016. All available funding for 2016 has now been allocated.

When allocating grant funding my Department has emphasised that the commitment of local authorities to contribute significantly from their own resources towards the cost of improving and maintaining the regional and local roads network is essential and that full consideration needs to be given to utilising the Local Property Tax to boost own resources expenditure on regional and local road maintenance and renewal.

### **Sports Capital Programme Expenditure**

216. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of funding for a club (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13958/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The Sports Capital Programme is the primary vehicle for government support for the development of sports and physical recreation facilities and the purchase of non-personal sports equipment. It is part funded from the proceeds of the National Lottery. The Irish Tug of War Association has been funded under previous rounds of the Programme. However, the Programme cannot assist with the running costs of sports clubs and organisations, including the cost of attending competitions.

Any sports club or organisation interested in applying under any future rounds of the programme should register online now at [www.sportscapitalprogramme.ie](http://www.sportscapitalprogramme.ie) as this online portal will be the only way to apply under any future rounds of the Programme.

Sport Ireland is the statutory body with responsibility for the development of sport, increasing participation at all levels and supporting high performance. It also has responsibility for the allocation of current expenditure funding to National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs). I will bring the Deputy's raising of this matter, and the funding challenges that the club faces, to the attention of Sport Ireland.

### **Haulage Industry Regulation**

217. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the regulatory changes or otherwise he is proposing and the implications of these for hauliers in respect of 39-tonne five-axle rigid heavy goods vehicles; the dates involved; if the implications are retrospective or if vehicles registered before a deadline will be exempt; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13988/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I am currently examining this issue in light of a number of factors, for example, the overarching need to secure a significant decrease in road and bridge infrastructure damage and related costs to the public

finances and I hope to reach a conclusion in the coming weeks.

### **Ministerial Responsibilities**

218. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation why she did not appoint a Minister of State with specific responsibility for science and research; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13985/16]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor):** The Government recently appointed two Ministers of State to my Department. John Halligan T.D. serves in my Department as Minister of State with special responsibility for Training and Skills. Pat Breen T.D. serves as Minister of State with special responsibility for Enterprise and Small Business.

Research and development, science and innovation are important priority areas for my Department, and it is my intention to assign these specific areas of policy to Minister of State Halligan. The functions in relation to the research and development, science and innovation aspect of Minister of State Halligan's portfolio will be similar to those of his predecessor.

### **Unemployment Levels**

219. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if she is aware of the Central Statistics Office's quarterly national household survey for the first quarter of 2016, which shows dangerously high levels of unemployment in the south east at 12.5%; her views that urgent and strategic action is necessary; the details on what short, medium and long-term interventions she will take to create and sustain jobs in the region; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13907/16]

220. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the actions that have been taken by the south-east economic jobs forum set up by her predecessor; her views that given the figures contained in the Central Statistics Office's quarterly national household survey for the first quarter of 2016 of 12.5% unemployment in the region that more needs to be done; the further actions the forum intends to take; how often the forum has met since its establishment, in tabular form; the persons who sit on the forum; the actions agreed and implemented; the further actions to be delivered; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13908/16]

221. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the actions Industrial Development Agency Ireland and Enterprise Ireland will take to reduce unemployment and create employment in the south east; if they will prioritise the south east given the Central Statistics Office's quarterly national household survey for the first quarter of 2016 of 12.5% unemployment in the region; the jobs each of these organisations has created and lost in the south east in each of the years from 2013 to 2016 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13909/16]

222. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the steps she will take to implement the recommendations in the south-east economic development strategy published by the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13910/16]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor):** I

propose to take Questions Nos. 219 to 222, inclusive, together.

The recent economic crisis hit the South East's job numbers badly with the loss of 37,800 jobs from Q1 2007 to Q1 2012. However, through the focused collaborative approach and a range of reforms delivered in the region over the recent years, the unemployment rate has fallen from a peak of 20.1 per cent in Q1 2012 to 12.5 per cent in Q1 2016, with 204,400 now at work, which is an increase of 23,100 over the period.

While the unemployment rate is still too high, the figures demonstrate that the overall trend is one of steady recovery and I am working relentlessly with the various agencies and stakeholders in the South East to ensure that this trend continues and jobs are ultimately created.

The South East Economic Forum referred to by the Deputy was established to drive the recommendations of the South East Employment Action Plan, developed in late 2011. The Forum met on five occasions and its membership comprised representatives from this Department and its enterprise agencies, County Councils, the education sector, Teagasc and Fáilte Ireland, The Forum progressed a significant number of actions from the Plan. However with the development of the broader South East Regional Action Plan for Jobs, the role of the Forum was subsumed into the implementation process for that Plan and many of the organisations that were represented on the Forum continue to be involved.

I am particularly pleased that the implementation of many of the key recommendations of the South East Action Plan for Jobs and the South East Economic Development Strategy (SEEDS) reports are having a demonstrable impact on the performance of the South East region. The remaining recommendations in the Plan and some actions set out in the South East Economic Development Strategy have been incorporated into the South East Action Plan for Jobs where appropriate, and are currently being implemented through that mechanism.

The core objective of the South East Regional Action Plan for Jobs, launched in September 2015, is to support an ambitious programme of enterprise growth and job creation in the region. The primary objective of the Plan is to realise the potential to have a further 10-15 per cent at work in the region by 2020 so as to ensure the unemployment rate is within the 1 per cent of the State average.

Among the short, medium and long term actions in the Action Plan to be delivered over the period 2015-2017 include increasing Start-ups/SMEs by 30%; increasing IDA supported investments in the region; a 20% increase in jobs in exporting companies, in particular in manufacturing, agrifood, businesses services and biopharma/medtech; an 85% increase in agri-food exports over the next 10 years and delivering 300,000 extra tourists and 5,000 associated jobs. The implementation of South East Action Plan is being led by a collaborative enterprise and public sector Group, chaired by enterprise champion Frank O'Regan, with the active support of regional stakeholders, including Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland. My Department is working closely with the Group as it progresses the Plan. The first progress report of the Plan will be completed and published in Q3 2016.

In relation to the IDA's role in the South East, the Region has 71 IDA client companies who collectively employ 12,766 people. The number of jobs created and lost in IDA supported companies from 2013 to 2015 are outlined in the following table. The figures for 2016 will not be available until completion of IDA's annual employment survey which takes place in November each year.

No of Companies	65	68	71
Total Jobs	12,003	12,462	12,766

No of Companies	65	68	71
Gross Gain	691	947	735
Gross Losses	-760	-488	-431
Net Change	-69	459	304

IDA Ireland's strategy, *WINNING Foreign Direct Investment 2015 - 2019*, sets out challenging targets including a minimum of 30% to 40% increase in the number of investment for each region outside of Dublin.

Currently, IDA positions the South East in the market place as an investment location with a strong ecosystem of both indigenous and multinational companies operating across a diverse range of sectors. In particular there are strong clusters in the Life Sciences and Financial Services/Business Services sectors, as well as strong FDI Engineering manufacturing businesses, which have contributed to new significant FDI investments.

In relation to Enterprise Ireland's role, the Agency has 524 clients in the South East region which range in size from early stage start-ups to large companies. Employment data for EI is collected annually. Therefore, it is not possible to provide employment figures for 2016 as requested by the Deputy however the job figures for the South East region for the period 2013-2015 are outlined in the following table.

Region		2013	2014	2015
South-East	PFT Jobs	15730	16485	17463
South-East	Other Jobs	1852	2126	2279
South-East	Total Jobs	17582	18611	19742
South-East	PFT Gains	1356	1863	1636
South-East	PFT Losses	1400	1108	658
South-East	PFT Change	44	755	978

In 2015, Enterprise Ireland invested €11.639m in Client Companies in the South East region. From 2011 to 2015, EI approved Innovative High Potential Support to 25 companies in the region, with over €12m of support approved. In addition, 20 start-up companies from the region secured funding of €50,000 each under the Competitive start Fund. Ongoing investment in the region, together with delivery of its suite of enterprise supports, will continue as part of Enterprise Ireland's continued effort to drive job creation in the South East.

### Intellectual Property Management

223. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the recommendation made in 2013 by the copyright review committee on the need for a small claims intellectual property process as prevalent in other European Union states; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13978/16]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor):** An independent Copyright Review Committee was established by the then Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in May 2011 to examine the Irish copyright framework from the perspective of removing any obstacles to developing and growing innovation. The Report of the Copyright Review Committee entitled "Modernising Copyright" was published in October 2013. In its Report, the Committee made in excess of 60 recommendations covering a diverse

range of copyright issues, including that of access to justice before the Courts, particularly for low-value claims.

Since the publication of the Report, my Department has conducted extensive analysis of the recommendations, including an in-depth assessment of the complex legal issues involved in certain of the proposals with the Office of the Attorney General, as well as examination of the proposals from a policy perspective with relevant Government Departments.

The Deputy will appreciate that in general, the issue of the jurisdiction of the courts is not an aspect that comes within my Department's direct responsibility. Nonetheless, my officials have examined this issue with officials in the Department of Justice and Equality, to examine options to improve access to justice for lower value claims as it impacts on the area of intellectual property, for which I have responsibility.

I hope to be in a position, in coming weeks, to bring to Government the Department's response to the Committee's recommendations and to seek approval for legislative proposals in relation to a number of the Committee's recommendations.

### **Job Creation Targets**

224. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the regional job targets projected in the programme for Government for 2020 and in Enterprise 2025, by year, in tabular form; how she will achieve these and the monitoring and reporting mechanisms in place; her job targets up to 2020, by region; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13979/16]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor):** Ireland's return to economic growth has demonstrated our ability, through concerted efforts across Government to focus actions on those areas that help to create jobs. We have made substantial progress since the Action Plan for Jobs process was first introduced in 2012. We can point to the considerable strides made in reducing the unemployment rate from 15.1% at the start of the Action Plan for Jobs process to 7.8 percent in May 2016, with 155,000 extra at work since early 2012.

The Programme for Government sets out a target to create an additional 200,000 jobs from over the period 2016 to 2020, informed by our statement on enterprise policy, Enterprise 2025, which set out Ireland's potential across a number of key metrics. I am convinced that achieving our ambition for sustainable job growth will require a continued cross government focus on addressing the challenges and realising the ambition set out in Enterprise 2025.

To deliver on this ambitious target, in the Programme for Government we commit to maintaining the OECD endorsed Action Plan for Jobs (APJ) Process that will set out, on an annual basis, the best ideas for job creation within available resources. Building on this process, we are focused on ensuring that we can support new job creation in every region in the country over the next five years, through the implementation of the Regional Action Plans for Jobs. A key objective of the plans is to have a further 10 to 15 per cent at work in each region by 2020, with the aim, as set out in Enterprise 2025, of having the unemployment rate of each region within one per cent of the national average. Good progress is being made on the targets in the regional Action Plans with 44,500 extra at work in 2015.

The Regional Action Plan initiative brings the different stakeholders in each of the regions together to identify a range of innovative and practical actions, to be taken across a range of Departments and agencies, with clear timelines for delivery over the period 2015 – 2017.

Each Plan is being monitored and driven in each region by a Regional Implementation Committee, with membership drawn from industry, local authorities, Enterprise Agencies, education sector and other key stakeholders and agencies. Collaboration between the private and the public sector has been a core element in each plan's development, and will be central to each plan's delivery. The first Progress Reports on the implementation of the Plans, covering the period to end-June 2016, will be completed and published in Q3 2016.

The focus on job creation is a government wide agenda, and it involves:

- achieving a leap forward in the capacity and the performance of enterprises based here and in attracting further investment. We will put in place an extra €500 million in capital funding to accelerate export led jobs growth across Ireland's regions;

- focusing investments in areas where Ireland can differentiate itself internationally – specifically education & Skills, creating attractive places to live and work and supporting enterprise innovation;

- improving the environment for business in terms of access to finance, cost competitiveness, tax environment and economic infrastructures. The Programme for Government commits to introducing tax incentives to support our entrepreneurs and job creators, including further reducing Capital Gains Tax for new start-ups, and increasing the earned income tax credit for the self-employed; and,

- maintaining a focus on protecting our national competitiveness from unsustainable cost growth.

Region	Published Regional Action Plan for Jobs targets 2015 to 2020
North East/North West	28,000
Midland	14,000
West	25,000
Dublin	66,000
Mid-East	25,000
Mid-West	23,000
South-East	25,000
South-West	40,000

### Economic Competitiveness

225. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the steps she is planning to address consumer prices, given the recent publication of the costs of doing business in Ireland in 2016 which reported them as 20% higher than the European Union average; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13980/16]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor):** Improving Ireland's competitiveness position is a key economic priority for Government. As set out in 'A Programme for a Partnership Government', our objective is to protect our national competitiveness from unsustainable cost growth and to deliver a job-fit business environment which ranks in the top tier globally.

Core inflation (consumer prices excluding food and energy) has been low in Ireland and across the Euro area in recent years. At present, Ireland is experiencing a negative consumer price environment. Prices on average, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, were 0.1 per



cent lower in April 2016 compared with April 2015. As highlighted by the CSO, the most notable changes in the year were decreases in Transport (-4.9%), Furnishings, Household Equipment & Routine Household Maintenance (-2.6%), Clothing & Footwear (-2.3%) and Food & Non-Alcoholic Beverages (-1.0%). There were increases in Miscellaneous Goods & Services (+4.5%), Education (+3.8%), Restaurants & Hotels (+2.0%) and Alcoholic Beverages & Tobacco (+1.7%).

The Costs of Doing Business Report published by the National Competitiveness Council on April 21st provides an assessment of Ireland's cost competitiveness performance vis-a-vis a range of competitor countries. The report, which has been noted by Government, concentrates on the costs on enterprise that are largely domestically determined such as labour, property, transport, energy, water, waste, communications, credit /financial, and business service. It finds that Ireland's cost base has improved across a range of metrics over the last five years. This has made Irish firms more competitive internationally and made Ireland a more attractive location for firms to base their operations in. However, despite these improvements, Ireland remains a relatively high cost location for a range of key business inputs and there is upward cost pressure evident in property, business services and the labour market. The Council warns that Ireland is particularly vulnerable to external shocks beyond our control – external risks at the moment include in particular Brexit, oil prices and exchange rate movements.

The report is a timely reminder of the risks of complacency regarding our cost competitiveness performance. The improved competitiveness of Ireland's exporting sector, as reflected in the IMD Competitiveness rankings released earlier this week where we have moved to 7th position globally, has been one of Ireland's greatest strengths in recent years and has been central to economic growth and job creation.

In relation to cost competitiveness, as the Council have previously pointed out, we must focus on the controllable portion of our enterprise cost base, and continue to take action to address unnecessarily high costs (i.e. cost levels not justified by productivity) wherever they arise. Measures that ensure open and competitive markets are also essential. At the same time, productivity performance will assume an even more prominent role in driving Irish international competitiveness.

Addressing Ireland's international cost competitiveness is a key economic policy priority for Government and as set out in the Action Plan for Jobs, a range of initiatives are in train across Government Departments to support cost competitiveness. In addition, the Council and my Department and its agencies are continually engage with relevant public and private stakeholders, as there is a role for both the public and private sectors alike to proactively manage their cost base and drive efficiency, thus creating a virtuous circle between the costs of living, wage expectations and cost competitiveness. The policy implications of the Costs of Doing Business in Ireland 2016 report's analysis, and associated structural reforms required to address Ireland's cost base, will be included in the Council's annual Competitiveness Challenge report which will be brought to Government published later this year.

### **Low Pay Commission Remit**

226. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if the impartial function of the independent Low Pay Commission in conducting its evidence-based work is in question, given the wage targets set out in the programme for Government; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13981/16]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor):** The

independence of the Low Pay Commission is firmly established in the National Minimum Wage (Low Pay Commission) Act 2015 (the Act). The Commission can only operate in accordance with that statutory remit and make recommendations to the Minister in accordance with the criteria that are clearly and explicitly set out in the Act.

### **Company Closures**

227. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if sections 9 and 10 of the Protection of Employment Act 1977 were complied with in the closure of an organisation (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13982/16]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor):** Authorised officers have sought information from a number of parties in relation to the collective redundancies that took place on 12 June 2015, pursuant to the appointment of a provisional liquidator to OCS Operations Limited. The work of the authorised officers relates to the application of the Protection of Employment Act 1977 (as amended) to the collective redundancies in question. That Act imposes a number of obligations on employers who are contemplating collective redundancies, including an obligation to consult with employees (section 9) and an obligation to provide certain information to employees for the purpose of section 9 consultations (section 10). The work of the authorised officers is ongoing. In this regard the Deputy may be aware from media reports that one of the parties from whom the authorised officers sought information initiated proceedings in the High Court challenging the powers of the authorised officers. The High Court is due to consider the matter further on 7 July.

On a separate note, the Deputy may be aware from media reports that in July 2015 over 60 former Clerys workers, represented by their respective trade unions SIPTU and Mandate, made complaints to the Rights Commissioner Service under the Protection of Employment Act 1977 (as amended) and that in January 2016 they were awarded compensation by a Rights Commissioner in respect of their complaints. The Rights Commissioner Service was under the auspices of the Labour Relations Commission, prior to the establishment of the Workplace Relations Commission on 1st October 2015. The service acted independently in the exercise of its quasi-judicial function. Hearings heard under the auspices of a Rights Commissioner were heard in private, and in accordance with the relevant legislation their decisions or recommendations were issued to both parties and/or their representative(s), but were not published.

### **Company Closures**

228. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if sections 224, 599, 608 and 621 of the Companies Act 2014 were complied with in the closure of an organisation (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13983/16]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor):** The duty of directors under section 224 of the Companies Act 2014 is owed to the company and the company alone and is enforceable in the same way as any other fiduciary duty owed to a company by its directors. The mechanism for the enforcement of directors' fiduciary duties is through a court action.

Section 599 of the Act provides that, on the application of the liquidator or any creditor or contributory of a company that is being wound up, the court, if satisfied that it just and equitable to do so, having regard to the provisions of the section, may make an order that a related company contribute to the debts of the company being wound up. I understand that the Minister

for Social Protection is currently considering how the provisions of the Companies Act 2014, including section 599, might be used to recover the moneys expended from the Social Insurance Fund. My Department is not a creditor of the company concerned and would have no locus standi in this regard.

Section 608 confers a power on the court, again on the application of the liquidator or any creditor or contributory of a company that is being wound up, to order the delivery of property or the proceeds of sale of property to the liquidator. My Department is not a creditor of the company concerned and would have no locus standi to bring an action in this regard.

The liquidator has a duty under section 624 to administer the property of a company to which he or she is appointed. This duty includes the realisation and distribution of the assets of a company in accordance with law. Section 621 sets out the order of priority of payments of debts in a winding up. The section provides that each type of debt ranks equally among itself and, where the assets of a company are insufficient to meet such debts in full, the debts abate in equal proportions. The liquidator in a winding up by the court is an officer of the court.

Ultimately it will be a matter for the court to determine in any particular case brought before it if the relevant law has been complied with.

### **Early Childhood Care and Education**

229. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if a child born in December 2012 will be entitled to two years in the free early childhood care and education scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13974/16]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** In Budget 2016, my Department announced a significant expansion to pre-school provision under the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. This measure, which will be introduced from September 2016, means that children will be eligible to start free pre-school when they reach the age of 3, and continue to avail of free pre-school until they start primary school (once the child is not older than 5½ years at the end of the pre-school year i.e. end June). Following the introduction of the expanded programme there will be three opportunities each year - in September, January and April - for eligible children to enrol for the free pre-school provision. This will ensure that children aged 3 or over have the opportunity to enrol as soon as possible after their third birthday. The maximum number of free pre-school weeks to which a child is entitled will depend on their date of birth, and the age at which they start primary school.

The expansion of the ECCE programme will see the number of children benefitting from the Programme rise from around 67,000 to around 127,000 in a given programme year. For the 2016/17 programme year, it is estimated that 89,500 children will be eligible to enrol in the Programme from September 2016, an additional 22,000 from January 2017 and a further 15,500 from April 2017. Accommodating this expansion requires a significant increase in capacity in the pre-school sector; providers need time to implement any needed infrastructural or services changes, or to hire additional staff. The September 2016 implementation date was set to allow pre-school providers to put such measures in place. Should an earlier start date have been chosen, the likelihood is that there would not have been sufficient capacity in the sector to accommodate all children.

In addition, an upper age limit for participation in free pre-school was set by the Inter-Departmental Group on Future Investment on the advice of the Department of Education and Skills. Limiting the diversity in age ranges in primary school is considered to be generally in

the best interest of children, in relation to peer interaction in junior infants, as well as other educational considerations. This does mean that different children will spend different lengths of time in free pre-school, but our focus throughout in considering these issues was how to achieve the best outcomes for children.

A child born in December 2012 is eligible to enrol in free pre-school, under the ECCE scheme in September 2016 as this is the earliest entry point after the child's third birthday. They will not be eligible to enrol again in September 2017 as the child would be over the upper age limit of 5½ years at the end of the 2016/2017 pre-school year (i.e. June 2017).

### **Departmental Agencies Board Appointments**

230. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the names and experience of those persons recently appointed to the board of management of Oberstown detention centre, County Dublin; the number of applicants for these positions via the stateboards.ie website; the criteria she used to determine eligibility for appointment; the number of applicants recommended for consideration by the Public Appointments Service; if the service recommended each member who was appointed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13975/16]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I have authority under section 164 of the Children Act 2001 to appoint the board of management for the Oberstown Children Detention Campus. I have recently appointed a new board with effect from 1 June 2016 on the basis of the statutory provisions of the Children Act 2001 and in addition, the 2014 Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards.

Section 167 of the Children Act 2001 contains a statutory requirement that the board include a chairperson and twelve other members, to include at least:

- one officer of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs;
- one employee of Tusla, nominated by the Minister for Health and Children;
- one officer of the Minister for Education and Science nominated by that Minister;
- two members of the staff of the children detention school or schools under the board's management;
- and two representatives of persons living in the area of one or more than one of such schools.

Public expressions of interest via the stateboards.ie website were invited under the 2014 guidelines for state boards for the remaining five board positions on the basis of candidates having significant professional experience in human resource management, financial management, law or youth work. Fifty-five expressions of interest were received. An independent assessment panel convened by the Public Appointments Service reviewed the applications in February 2016 and submitted fifteen names for the consideration of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

I have confirmed the appointment announced by my predecessor of Professor Ursula Kilkelly of the School of Law, University College Cork to the position of chairperson of the new Oberstown board. Professor Kilkelly was originally appointed to the Oberstown board by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in February 2012.

1 June 2016

I have also made the following appointments:

- Mr Jim Gibson, Interim Chief Operations Officer in Tusla, who was recently nominated by the Minister for Health;

- Ms Fionnuala Anderson, Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board was nominated by Minister for Education and Skills in November 2015;

- Mr Fiachra Barrett and Ms Sinead O'Herlihy are both employees on the Oberstown campus and were identified for appointment to the board on foot of a local balloting process by Oberstown staff in December 2015;

- Mr Pat Rooney and Ms Elizabeth Howard are local residents in the vicinity of the Oberstown campus and were nominated by Lusk Community Council, a local community group in November 2015 for reappointment to the board;

- Mr Dan Kelleher is an officer in my Department and was reappointed to the Oberstown board;

- Mr Michael Farrell, Corporate Secretary, University College Cork;

- Mr Charles Irwin, Accountant to the Professional Development Service for Teachers, Dublin;

- Mr Diego Gallagher, solicitor with Byrne Wallace Solicitors, Dublin (who was reappointed from the previous board);

- Ms Emer Woodfull, Barrister at Law, Dublin;

- and Ms Fiona Murphy, Service Coordinator, Extern, Dublin. Extern is a charitable organization which provides services to children assessed as being high risk requiring intensive community based support.

Mr Farrell, Mr Irwin, Mr Gallagher, Ms Woodfull and Ms Murphy were appointed on foot of the stateboards.ie process.

I look forward to working with the new board to ensure continued safe and secure custody for children and a safe working environment for staff on the Oberstown campus.

### **Defence Forces Medicinal Products**

231. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he will investigate if the human rights of members of the Defence Forces are breached when a choice of malaria prophylaxis is denied to them and they are required to take Lariam, given that a choice of malaria prophylaxis is available to all other citizens; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13917/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I do not consider actions taken to protect the health and welfare of the men and women of the Defence Forces are a breach of their human rights. As the Deputy will be aware, there are three anti-malarial drugs in use by the Defence Forces, namely Lariam (mefloquine), Malarone and Doxycycline. The choice of medication for overseas deployment, including the use of Lariam, is a medical decision which is made by Medical Officers in the Irish Defence Forces, having regard to the specific circumstances of the mission and the individual member of the Irish Defence Forces.

Significant precautions are taken by Irish Defence Forces Medical Officers in assessing the medical suitability of members of our Defence Forces to take any of the anti-malarial medications. It is the policy of the Irish Defence Forces that personnel are individually screened for fitness for service overseas and medical suitability. The objective is to ensure that our military personnel can have effective protection from the very serious risks posed by malaria.

### **Defence Forces Reserve Training**

232. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of training field days held for the Reserve Defence Force; the number of units that participated; the number of members in those units in each of the years 2013 to 2016 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13965/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** Unfortunately it has not proved possible to compile the information requested in the time available. My officials are working with the military authorities to obtain the information and I will forward it to the Deputy as soon as it is available.