

Written Answers.

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

Questions Nos. 1 to 8, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions Nos. 9 to 17, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 18 to 29, inclusive, answered orally.

Rural Development Programme Projects

30. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if she has examined the submission her Department received from Irish Rural Link requesting that a working group be set up by her Department encompassing representatives from her Department, the Department of Finance, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, the Irish League of Credit Unions, the Credit Union Development Association, the Irish Postmasters Union, the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland and the Sparkasse Savings Bank Foundation for International Co-operation to investigate the establishment of a local public banking network here as committed to in the programme for Government; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37031/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Michael Ring): The *Programme for a Partnership Government* contains a commitment to investigate, amongst other options, the German Sparkassen model for the development of local public banks that operate within well-defined regions.

The role of my Department is to work with other Departments and stakeholders to examine the feasibility of this model. I can confirm that my officials have been provided with details of a proposal based on the Sparkassen model by Irish Rural Link, which has also presented its proposals to the Department of Finance.

Senior officials from my Department recently met with their counterparts in the Department of Finance and have agreed to develop a work programme to examine the potential of the Sparkassen model and other models of local public banking, as referenced in the *Programme for a Partnership Government*.

The officials will meet again in January and hope to be in a position to conclude their work around the middle of next year. As part of their work, they will engage with relevant stakeholders, as required.

Arts Council Funding

31. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the funding provided by the Arts Council to support its arts and disability policy and strategy 2012 to 2016; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37205/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Under the Arts Act 2003, primary responsibility for the promotion and support of the arts, including arts and disability, throughout the country is devolved to the Arts Council. The Council is, of course, statutorily independent in relation to its funding and executive decisions. The significant additional funding that I secured for the Arts Council as part of Budget 2017 will see an increase in the Council's allocation next year of €5m, or 8%, and will assist it in implementing its 10-year strategy *Making Great Art Work* (2016-2025). The strategy contains 5 high-level values and includes a commitment to excellence, as well as respect for diversity of artistic practice, of public engagement, and of social and cultural traditions.

Rural Development Programme

32. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the extent to which she has identified the primary issues deemed to hinder rural development with particular reference to the need to maintain a viable rural population, thereby ensuring the future of schools, post offices and convenience shops; if she has set specific objectives to address the issues; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37377/16]

41. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the extent to which she has identified deficiencies in various services throughout rural Ireland which appear to have contributed to rural decay; the steps she has put in place to address these issues in the short term with a view to ensuring that there is a distinct programme for rural recovery; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37378/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 32 and 41 together.

The *Programme for a Partnership Government* contains a suite of commitments for delivery across Government relating to rural development. The measures detailed in the Programme include the provision of next-generation broadband, addressing the renewal of the post office network, supporting local jobseekers, and the provision of services in areas such as education, health and security. These services fall under the remit of a number of Government Departments and agencies.

I am currently finalising an Action Plan for Rural Development that will act as an overarching structure for the co-ordination and implementation of initiatives across Government which will benefit rural Ireland. In developing the Action Plan, my Department conducted a consultation process with stakeholders to identify issues that are impacting on rural Ireland and to seek inputs to the Plan. The implementation of the Action Plan will contribute significantly to the protection and enhancement of local services and social inclusion in rural areas.

I intend to publish the Action Plan in the coming weeks. In the meantime, I have already introduced a number of practical measures to support rural communities, including through the roll out of initiatives such as the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, the expansion of the REDZ initiative and the reintroduction of the CLÁR Programme. My Department is also working directly on proposals for the renewal of the post office network, as well as measures to facilitate the roll out of high speed broadband in rural areas once Government contracts are

awarded next year under the National Broadband Plan.

Post Office Network

33. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs her views on the estimate by An Post that 500 post offices throughout the State are unsustainable. [37403/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Michael Ring): As the Deputy is aware, the post office network is operated directly by An Post, which is a commercial State body. There are 1,131 post offices nationwide, 51 of which are operated directly by An Post, with the rest being run under contract to An Post by postmasters and postmistresses.

In the course of a recent appearance before the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs on 9th November 2016, a representative from An Post indicated that 600 post offices are required to satisfy the company's contract with the Department of Social Protection, leaving approximately 530 offices which would not be required to deliver this, their largest, contract. These offices would not be considered sustainable by An Post.

While commercial and operational decisions are a matter for the Board of An Post, the Government would ideally like to see the maintenance of a full national network of customer-focused post offices in the community.

The postal sector is undergoing significant change both nationally and internationally, with the increased use of electronic communications leading to a 38% decline in core mail volume for An Post from its peak in 2007. In recent years, there has also been a 17% decline in Department of Social Protection payments and a 20% reduction in Billpay transactions, both of which have been key revenue lines for the post office network.

The Government is committed to working with all stakeholders to find solutions to the sustainability of the post office network in the changing business environment in which they are operating. This end, the Post Office Network Business Development Group, was established to examine the potential for the delivery of additional Government services through the post offices and to identify new business opportunities for the network.

Following the publication of the Group's report in January of this year, two further Working Groups were established to progress its recommendations. These Working Groups are currently finalising their reports. In addition, my officials have been examining the potential for the post office network to deliver other services, including motor tax and financial services.

I intend to report to Government on these matters in the coming weeks.

Historical Records

34. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs her views on the proposed sale of a letter from Pádraig Pearse; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37213/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): There exist a number of historically important original documents in the posses-

sion of the State written by Pádraig Pearse during the 1916 Rising and during his subsequent imprisonment. Following consultation with the relevant institutions under the aegis of my Department, it is a shared view that the amount being sought for this one letter – between €1m and €1.5m - was not justifiable in terms of expenditure of public monies and in the context of historical material already held.

Arts Council Membership

35. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the number of current vacancies on the board of the Arts Council; if she will commit to ensuring that some artists or arts practitioners will be appointed to fill the vacancies; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37396/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): In line with the provisions of the Arts Act 2003, current members of the Arts Council have extensive knowledge of the arts, both as practitioners, in the areas of writing, theatre and the visual arts, and as arts managers. There are currently 6 vacancies on the Council. The Public Appointments Service, which operates a dedicated website, www.stateboards.ie, through which it advertises vacancies on State Boards, recently called for expressions of interest in these vacancies. Following an assessment of the expressions of interest received, the Public Appointments Service notifies me, as Minister, of the applicants who are qualified. This process is ongoing and will hopefully be completed in the near future.

Rural Recreation Policy

36. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs her plans for the rural recreation scheme in 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37153/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Michael Ring): The Rural Recreation Scheme provides funding for the development and maintenance of recreational infrastructure, which has a positive impact on attracting domestic and overseas visitors to these facilities right across the country.

In 2016, my Department provided funding to a variety of organisations who applied for funding for the development, enhancement, maintenance and promotion of recreational infrastructure projects. Funding of €7.5 million has been approved for a total of 120 projects under the 2016 scheme.

It is my intention to announce a further call for proposals under the Rural Recreation Scheme in 2017. I have secured an additional €8 million in funding for the National Rural Development Schemes under Budget 2017, to ensure that these schemes continue to have a positive impact on the economic, social and cultural development of rural Ireland. These schemes include the Rural Recreation Scheme and the CLÁR initiative and are part of the Government's programme to support the rejuvenation of rural Ireland.

Post Office Network

37. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the Minister with responsibility for the An Post network; if she has a strategy

for same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37393/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Michael Ring): The Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment has overall responsibility for the postal sector, including the governance of An Post. However, under the commitments in the *Programme for a Partnership Government*, my Department has a role in supporting the sustainability of the Post Office network.

The postal sector is undergoing significant change both nationally and internationally, with the increased use of electronic communications leading to a decline in core mail volume for An Post. In recent years, there has also been a decline in Department of Social Protection payments and a reduction in Billpay transactions at post offices.

The Government is committed to working with all stakeholders to find solutions to the sustainability of the post office network in this changed business environment. The Post Office Network Business Development Group was established in late 2014 to examine the potential for the delivery of additional Government services through the post offices and to identify new business opportunities for the network.

The Group published its report in January of this year and, amongst its conclusions, recommended that An Post should review and amend the five-year strategy for the post office network, following appropriate consultation with postmasters and other stakeholders.

Two further Working Groups were also established this year to progress the wider recommendations of the Business Development Group. The Post Office Network Implementation Group has been examining issues such as the number and spatial distribution of Post Offices, branch modernisation, the streamlining of products and services, postmaster payments and contracts, and training and qualifications for post office employees. The Implementation Group is nearing the conclusion of its work and its recommendations will be issued to the Board and management of An Post in the next few weeks. It will be a matter for An Post, as a commercial State company, to consider these recommendations and to bring their proposals to the appropriate Government Ministers for discussion.

Separately, I established the Post Office Hub Working Group to identify potential models under which the post offices could act as community hubs, especially in rural areas. This Group has recently concluded its deliberations and is finalising its report. In addition, my officials have also been examining the potential for the post offices to deliver other services, including motor tax and financial services.

I intend to report to Government on these matters in the coming weeks.

CLÁR Programme

38. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs her plans to run a special module under the CLÁR programme 2017 for local improvement scheme roads; if it will be a condition of this that co-funding is available from the local authorities in question; if funding will be allocated on the basis of the population in the CLÁR area in each county; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37356/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Michael Ring): The reopening of CLÁR this year forms part of the Government's programme to support rural development, which has also recently seen the launch of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, a new phase of the REDZ (Rural Economic Development

Zones) initiative, and funding for rural recreation infrastructure under the Rural Recreation Scheme.

The 2016 CLÁR programme will provide funding for three separate measures: Safety Measures for Schools and Community/Sports Facilities, Playgrounds and Multi-Use Games Areas, and Local Access Roads. I will be announcing funding for the successful projects in the coming days.

Local Authorities are required to meet 20% of the total project cost under the Playgrounds and Local Access Roads strands of the programme; the Safety Measures will be 100% funded by my Department.

I have secured an allocation of €5 million for CLÁR for 2017 as part of Budget 2017. Decisions on the particular measures to be implemented through CLÁR for 2017 and the basis for the allocation of funding will be taken in the New Year.

National Concert Hall

39. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the plans in place for the development of the National Concert Hall; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37394/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): An overall master plan for the redevelopment of the Earlsfort Terrace complex, including the National Concert Hall (NCH), is currently being prepared by the OPW in consultation with the NCH and my Department. These plans will consider the refurbishment and upgrading of the main auditorium, as well as the development of other performance spaces and ancillary facilities, and will assist in long-term development of the complex, subject, of course, to the availability of resources. It should be noted that my Department has provided an allocation of €6m towards the current refurbishment programme at the NCH, which has included the complete renovation of the Kevin Barry Recital Room. This was the setting for the Treaty ratification debates of the 2nd Dáil Éireann in 1921 and has been transformed into a new recital space. It was officially opened in April last as one of the ‘permanent reminder’ capital projects under the *Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme*.

Social Enterprise Sector

40. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the reason that in a recent report (details supplied) on countries with the best conditions for social enterprise Ireland ranks 43rd out of the 44 countries surveyed; and the initiatives she plans to implement to improve these conditions. [33012/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Michael Ring): The report referred to by the Deputy outlines the results of a poll which was largely based on questions regarding the environment for social enterprises that are following a business model.

The social enterprise sector in Ireland covers a wide spectrum of activities, which are delivered by a range of organisations, from local community groups fully supported by the State to companies operating on a commercial basis for a social return. A 2013 report by Forfás indicated that there were over 1,400 social enterprises in Ireland in 2009. However, 63% of

these had no traded income, while income from traded activities made up only 17% of the total income of the remaining enterprises.

A number of Government Departments currently engage with the social enterprise sector and provide supports through a range of programmes and schemes. These include

- the Community Services Programme managed by Pobal for the Department of Social Protection;
- the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme operated by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government;
- Community Employment schemes;
- the Wage Subsidy Scheme for the employment of people with disabilities;
- LEADER funding; and
- Dormant Accounts funding.

Some social enterprises also benefit from the services provided by the Local Employment Offices.

In order to develop a more co-ordinated approach to the social enterprise sector in Ireland and to maximise its potential, I intend to develop a National Policy on Social Enterprise in 2017.

Question No. 41 answered with Question No. 32.

Arts Funding

42. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the current funding being provided for the arts in 2017; the amount that will be allocated by the agencies or organisations under the remit of her Department; the amount being allocated to arts projects directly by her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37395/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Most of my Department's arts and culture budget is allocated to the agencies under its remit. Details of expenditure allocations made available by my Department, to bodies and State agencies under its remit, are published each year in the Revised Estimates Volume (REV) and the Appropriation Account and these are published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform at www.per.ie and on the website of the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General at www.audgen.gov.ie.

The Revised Estimates Volume for 2017 will be published in the coming weeks.

Within these allocations, the Arts Council is the primary State agency for funding the arts. In this regard, I secured significant additional funding for the Arts Council as part of Budget 2017. This will see an increase in the Arts Council allocation of €5 m or 8%. Details of the Council's funding decisions can be found on its website at the following link www.artscouncil.ie/Who_we_funded/.

Direct funding from my Department for arts primarily relates to capital funding for individual projects, as well as the promotion of Irish arts and culture abroad through Culture Ireland.

A small number of summer schools and similar events receive funding from my Department. Details of these are on my Department's website at www.ahg.gov.ie.

As I previously outlined, Budget 2017 will include:

- an additional €5 million for the Arts Council, an 8% increase in its annual budget;
- increased funding for all of the National Cultural Institutions;
- an increase of €2 million for the Irish Film Board and €1 million for Culture Ireland;
- an additional €1 million to the Heritage Council; and
- funding of €5m for the implementation of a *Culture 2025* /Ireland 2016 Legacy Programme, which will allow me to build on the positive legacy of the Ireland 2016 commemorations. I will be announcing details of this new initiative shortly.

All of this represents real and substantial funding increases across the arts and cultural area and has been welcomed across the sector. It also re-affirms the commitment of this Government to progressively increase funding for the arts as the economy improves, as set out in the *Programme for a Partnership Government*.

CLÁR Programme

43. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs when she expects to announce successful applicants under the CLÁR programme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36922/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Michael Ring): I announced the reopening of the CLÁR programme on 6th October this year, as part of the Government's programme to support rural development. CLÁR will provide funding for small scale infrastructural projects in disadvantaged rural areas that have experienced significant levels of de-population.

The 2016 CLÁR programme will provide funding for three separate measures: Safety Measures for Schools and Community/Sports Facilities, Playgrounds and Multi-Use Games Areas, and Local Access Roads.

Local Authorities with responsibility for CLÁR areas were invited to submit proposals in line with the terms of the scheme. The assessment of the applications received has been finalised, and I will be announcing funding for the successful projects in the coming days.

Ferry Services

44. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if she will address the need for action over the impending loss of the sole ferry link between the Aran island of Inis Mór and Galway; her plans to avert this; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32773/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Seán Kyne): As Minister of State with responsibility for the offshore islands, I am very conscious of the importance of the ferry service referred to for the island of Inis Mór and the vital link that it provides to the mainland. The Deputy will be aware that the ferry

service operator has announced that it will cease operations with effect from 1 December 2016 for approximately 4 months. My officials and I have been actively working, to the extent of my Department's competence, to help find a resolution to the issues that brought about the operator's announcement. I have recently had meetings with Galway County Council and with public representatives, as well as representatives of the island community, in relation to the matter. My Department is continuing to examine all of the options that are available to it and will work with interested parties to help reach a settlement which would allow the service to remain in operation, while recognising, of course, the significant role of Galway County Council in the matter.

Arts Council

45. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if the Arts Council will be publishing a new arts and disability policy in 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37204/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Under the Arts Act 2003, primary responsibility for the promotion and support of the arts, including arts and disability, throughout the country is devolved to the Arts Council. The Arts Council is independent in relation to its funding and executive decisions. In 2013, the Arts Council has published its Arts and Disability Policy 2012 -2016 to address issues of equity, access and participation for artists and audiences with disabilities and this is available on the Council's website. I will ask the Arts Council to reply directly to the Deputy regarding its plans on updating the policy in the future.

Údarás na Gaeltachta

46. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta, Gnóthaí Réigiúnacha, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta cad a dhéanfaidh sí chun dul i ngleic leis an easpa béime agus struchtúir atá léirithe sa tuairisc um Athbhreithniú Bainistíochta agus grádú Bainisteoirí Sinsearachá Údarás na Gaeltachta ar phleanáil teanga agus forbairt phobail. [37405/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Seán Kyne): Ba é príomhchuspóir an athbhreithnithe bainistíochta atá luaite ag an Teachta ná measúnú neamhspleách a dhéanamh ar struchtúr bainistíochta Údarás na Gaeltachta ionas go bhféadfar a chinntiú go bhfuil sé ag dul le riachtanais agus cúrsaí ginearálta an lae atá inniu ann. Chuir sainchomhairleoirí seachtracha an t-athbhreithniú i gcrích, ar bhonn comhaontaithe, leis an Údarás agus mo Roinnse. Mar chuid sonrach de seo, bhí sé le cinntiú go dtacaíonn an struchtúr leis an eagraíocht agus í i mbun a sainordaithe reachtaigh a chomhlíonadh. Is iad na téarmaí tagartha a tugadh do na sainchomhairleoirí ná measúnú a dhéanamh ar an struchtúr agus grádú ag leibhéal ard-bhainistíochta Údarás na Gaeltachta, ag féachaint do ról, d'fheidhmeanna, do bhuiséad foriomlán agus d'fhreagrachtaí an chomhlachta, agus an méid seo uile a chur i gcomparáid le heagraíochtaí eile san earnáil phoiblí a bhfuil dualgais den tsórt céanna orthu. Bhí orthu na feidhmeanna breise a tugadh don eagraíocht faoi Acht na Gaeltachta 2012 a chur san áireamh chomh maith.

Tá mo Roinn se agus an tÚdarás ar aon intinn maidir le cur i bhfeidhm na moltaí i dtuarascáil na sainchomhairleoirí. Tá dul chun cinn maith déanta ag an Údarás cheana féin ina thaoibh seo agus tuigtear dom go mbeidh na moltaí uile curtha i bhfeidhm roimh dheireadh na bliana. Faoina shainchúram reachtach, baineann cúrsaí bainistíochta laethúla Údarás na Gaeltachta le

bord agus feidhmeannach sinsearach an chomhlachta ag us níl aon bhaint díreach ag mo Roinn se le is na nithe sin. Dá réir sin, is ar bhord agus ar phríomhfheidhmeannach an Údaráis atá an cúram an próiseas seo a thabhairt chun críche.

Tá mo Roinn se sásta go gcuirfidh cur i bhfeidhm na molta í uile seo ar chumas an Údaráis lean úint orthu ag cur a gcuid feidhmeanna i gcrích ar bhealach rathúil, séanmhar agus go gciallóidh sé go mbeidh an struchtúr foirne ardbhainistíochta is fearr acu a oireann do riachtanais na heagraíochta sa lá atá inniu ann, rud a thacóidh leis an úsáid is éifeachtaí a bhaint as na hacmhainní atá ar fáil - coigilteas suntasach ar an bpárolla san áireamh.

Arts Funding

47. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if any research was carried out by her Department into international best practice in relation to arts policy; if her Department has studied the example of Finland which, since independence, has placed central importance on cultural policy and has invested hugely in arts infrastructure; her views on the centralisation of arts funding here, which, according to the Council of Europe's compendium initiative, is characterised by official neglect; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37389/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Under the Arts Act 2003, primary responsibility for the promotion and support of the arts throughout the country is devolved to the Arts Council. In this regard, I secured significant additional funding for the Arts Council as part of Budget 2017, amounting to an increase of €5m or 8%. This will assist the Council in implementing its ten-year strategy *Making Great Art Work 2016-2025*. This strategy places specific emphasis on the need to plan and provide for children and young people. The Programme for a Partnership Government commits to the publication of Culture 2025 as a priority and the draft Framework Policy Éire Ildánach/Culture 2025 was forwarded to the Oireachtas Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in July. The Culture 2025/Éire Ildánach framework policy sets out:

- a series of high-level objectives under the heading of Enrich, Engage, Participate to establish Government vision in relation to culture and society in Ireland;
- a set of key values including the intrinsic value of culture, the right to participate in the cultural life of the nation, and the role of culture in fostering a more sustainable future in Ireland; and
- a series of priority measures for implementation across Government and public bodies.

I understand that the Committee is preparing a report on the draft and I look forward to receiving it. In the meantime, I believe that it is important to continue the momentum to build on the positive legacy of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme.

My Department has, therefore, been developing a cross-Government initiative to mainstream culture and creativity in the life of the nation and to promote individual, community and national wellbeing. This will focus on boosting cultural provision and participation in communities and harnessing the goodwill and engagement generated by the commemorative programme this year. It will also act as the main vehicle to take forward the priorities identified in Culture 2025. I have secured funding of €5m in Budget 2017 to underpin this new initiative and I intend to announce further details in the coming weeks.

All these initiatives provide platforms to deepen engagement across the sectors referred to.

I understand that the source of the reference quoted by the Deputy is a Council of Europe research project and that many European countries, including ten EU member states, are not included in the data. I understand also that the data is not standardised and is not comparable across countries. For example, local authority expenditure on the arts, the artists' exemption tax relief, expenditure on public service broadcasting and the Irish language are not included in the figures for Ireland but comparable figures are included in the data for some other countries.

I have previously stated that further research on this issue is warranted. The issue of a definition of culture and of capturing public expenditure on culture is an element of the draft Culture 2025 framework policy, which, as I have said, is with the Oireachtas Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs for input.

Arts Council Funding

48. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the measures she will implement to support professional female artists. [37375/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Arts Council is the primary State agency for funding the arts and I was pleased to secure significant additional funding for it in Budget 2017. This will see an increase in the Council's allocation of € 5million, or 8%, and will allow the Council to enhance supports to artists and arts organisations. The Arts Council's Strategy *Making Great Art Work* sets out the Council's plans to lead the development of the arts in the decade to 2025. The Strategy prioritises the professional artist as well as public engagement and outlines a range of actions that will be taken to deliver on its vision. The Council has reaffirmed its commitment to excellence, freedom of expression and diversity in terms of gender and background. The Arts Council is, of course, statutorily independent in relation to the performance of its functions regarding funding of the arts.

In my role as Minister, I seek to take every opportunity to encourage and promote female representation in the arts and culture sector. I recently appointed three new female Chairs to the Irish Film Board, the National Concert Hall and the National Museum of Ireland and I have taken proactive steps to ensure gender balance on the State Boards under my remit.

I also met recently with representatives from the WakingTheFeminists movement, who provided me with an update on their work one year on. I committed to look at the issue of the introduction of gender policies across our cultural institutions, which I believe could have a positive impact on female participation and representation in the arts.

It is also worth noting that, as part of the economic analysis I have commissioned into the film sector, I have asked my Department officials to incorporate the issue of gender balance in the sector into the work of the steering group overseeing the report.

Arts Funding

49. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if the Government will commit to the long term goal of increasing arts funding to the European average of 0.6% of GDP. [37033/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather

Humphreys): I understand that the source of the reference to 0.6% of GDP quoted by the Deputy is a Council of Europe research project and that many European countries, including ten EU member states, are not included in the data. I understand also that the data is not standardised and is not comparable across countries. For example, local authority expenditure on the arts, the artists' exemption tax relief, expenditure on public service broadcasting and the Irish language are not included in the figures for Ireland but comparable figures are included in the data for some other countries.

I have previously stated that further research on this issue is warranted. The issue of a definition of culture and of capturing public expenditure on culture is an element of the draft *Culture 2025* framework policy, which was forwarded to the Oireachtas Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs for input in July last.

In Budget 2017, I secured a series of funding increases across the arts and cultural bodies under my remit. These include

- an additional €5 million for the Arts Council, an 8% increase in its annual budget;
- increased funding for all of the National Cultural Institutions;
- an increase of €2 million for the Irish Film Board and €1 million for Culture Ireland;
- an additional €1 million to the Heritage Council; and
- a new funding stream of €5m for the implementation of a *Culture 2025 /Ireland 2016* Legacy Programme, details of which I will be announcing shortly.

These increases will have a positive and distinct impact on arts provision around the country. I have retained the majority of the €18 million current funding which was provided for the 2016 Commemorations for arts and culture. It will, therefore, become part of the baseline figures for my Department, meaning that it will carry forward into future years.

All of this represents real and substantial funding increases across the arts and cultural area and has been welcomed across the sector. It also re-affirms the commitment of this Government to progressively increase funding for the arts as the economy improves, as set out in the *Programme for a Partnership Government*.

Rural Development Programme Funding

50. **Deputy Ciarán Cannon** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the schemes and supports available within her Department in 2017 to help support rural communities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37408/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Funding for rural development programmes within my Department's Estimate for 2017 will amount to €79.27 million. This represents an €18 million (29%) increase on my Department's 2016 baseline allocation of €61.2 million for those programmes.

The funding for 2017 includes

- A trebling of the funding for the Town and Village Regeneration Scheme, from a baseline of €4 million in 2016 to €12 million in 2017.
- An additional €8 million for National Rural Development Schemes, which includes €5

million for the recently reopened CLÁR Programme.

- €40m for the delivery of the LEADER Rural Development Programme in 2017.
- Increased funding to support Local Authorities to prepare for the roll out of broadband across rural Ireland.

The additional funding will also complement the broader work of the Department, much of which has a positive impact on rural Ireland.

While these initiatives will individually make a positive contribution to rural development, it is their combined impact, along with other initiatives across Government, which will make a real and sustainable difference to rural Ireland. I am currently finalising an Action Plan for Rural Development which will act as a framework for the co-ordination of initiatives across Government to support rural development. The Action Plan will be published in the coming weeks.

CLÁR Programme

51. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the amount of money spent on CLÁR and town and village renewal projects to date in 2016; if, in each case, the funding will be paid after completion of work by the local authorities; the number of projects approved to date under the CLÁR programme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37355/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The reopening of CLÁR and the launch of the Town and Village renewal scheme this year form part of the Government's programme to support rural development. In the case of both initiatives, Local Authorities were invited to submit proposals in line with the terms of the relevant scheme. I recently announced the approval of just over €9.8 million to 172 towns and villages across the country under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

In relation to CLÁR, Minister of State Michael Ring will be shortly be announcing the allocations in respect of the successful projects under the new scheme. Expenditure of €54,597 has issued to date in 2016 to fulfil continuing commitments from the previous CLÁR programme.

The funding under both of these schemes is being paid to the Local Authorities in 2016 by my Department in line with approved sanction, and on the basis of their project proposals and funding agreements with the Department. My Department will be closely monitoring expenditure on both schemes to ensure that expenditure is in line with the Public Spending Code and that the funding is spent promptly and in accordance with the project proposals.

Seirbhísí Oileán

52. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta, Gnóthaí Réigiúnacha, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta cén dul chun cinn atá déanta aici maidir leis an gconradh nua don tseirbhís aeir go dtí oileáin Árann; cad é an staid go dáta maidir leis na pléití faoin tseirbhís do phaisinéirí báid go hÁrainn. [37354/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Seán Kyne): Maidir leis an seirbhís aeir d'Oileáin Árann, mar is eol don Teachta, tá próiseas tairisceana ar siúl le tamall anuas faoi stiúir an tOifig um Sholáthar Rialtais. Tá na tairiscintí a fuarthas don t seirbhís á mheas faoi láthair. Ach an próiseas sin a bheith curtha

i gcrích, déanfar fógra maidir le toradh an chomórtais. Maidir leis an seirbhís farantóireachta paisinéirí d'Árainn, is eol don Teachta go bhfuil fógra eisithe ag an gcomhlacht farantóireachta atá ag cur na seirbhíse ar fáil go bhfuiltear le tarraingt siar ón tseirbhís le héifeacht ó 1 Nollaig 2016. Tá mé féin agus mo chuid feidhmeannaigh gníomhach, feadh ár gcumais, chun cabhrú le réiteach a fháil ar na ceisteanna a mhaíonn an comhlacht a chuir faoi ndeara dóibh an fógra úd a dhéanamh. Mar is eol don Teachta, bhí cruinnithe agam le deireanaí le comhairleoirí agus ionadaithe poiblí áitiúla, le Comhairle Contae na Gaillimhe agus le hionadaithe ó phobal an oileáin, inar pléadh an t-ábhar seo agus na féidearthachtaí chun dul chun cinn a dhéanamh. Leanfaidh mo Roinn se ag scrúdú na roghanna atá oscailte di agus oibreoidh sí leis na scairshealbhóirí uile d'fhonn cabhrú le réiteach a fháil a chinnteoidh go mbeidh seirbhís ar fáil don oileán tar éis 1 Nollaig 2016, ag aithint, ar ndóigh, go bhfuil ról suntasach ag Comhairle Contae na Gaillimhe sna cúrsaí seo uile.

Post Office Network

53. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the specific measures the Government is taking to maintain the post office network; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32063/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Michael Ring): The postal sector is undergoing significant change both nationally and internationally, with the increased use of electronic communications leading to a decline in core mail volume for An Post. In recent years, there has also been a decline in Department of Social Protection payments and a reduction in Billpay transactions at post offices.

The Government is committed to working with all stakeholders to find solutions to the sustainability of the post office network in this changed business environment. The Post Office Network Business Development Group was established in late 2014 to examine the potential for the delivery of additional Government services through the post offices and to identify new business opportunities for the network.

The Group published its report in January of this year and, amongst its conclusions, recommended that An Post should review and amend the five-year strategy for the post office network, following appropriate consultation with postmasters and other stakeholders.

Two further Working Groups were also established this year to progress the wider recommendations of the Business Development Group. The Post Office Network Implementation Group has been examining issues such as the number and spatial distribution of Post Offices, branch modernisation, the streamlining of products and services, postmaster payments and contracts, and training and qualifications for post office employees. The Implementation Group is nearing the conclusion of its work and its recommendations will be issued to the Board and management of An Post in the next few weeks. It will be a matter for An Post, as a commercial State company, to consider these recommendations and to bring their proposals to the appropriate Government Ministers for discussion.

Separately, I established the Post Office Hub Working Group to identify potential models under which the post offices could act as community hubs, especially in rural areas. This Group has recently concluded its deliberations and is finalising its report. In addition, my officials have also been examining the potential for the post offices to deliver other services, including motor tax and financial services.

I intend to report to Government on these matters in the coming weeks.

Commemorative Events

54. **Deputy Ciarán Cannon** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs her plans for the final phase of the 1916 centenary programme; her views on the success of the past year and the way she will build on this in future years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37407/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The 1916 centenary commemorations were inclusive, respectful and measured and sought to strengthen peace and reconciliation on the island of Ireland. Official estimates indicate that over 1 million people were present to participate in and enjoy the commemorative, reflective and celebratory events that took place over the Easter weekend and which were a great source of pride for our citizens. The military parade and ceremony past 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 participating right along the parade 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. 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 has met with widespread support across the political, academic and community sectors. It has engaged our communities at home and abroad in an unprecedented way and the benefits at community level and indeed nationally cannot be underestimated. The inclusive nature of the programme has enabled citizens to really examine our history and has encouraged them to consider the future of their communities. The local authorities developed their own individual programmes based on the national programme and this has encouraged active citizenship at local level and has leveraged economic benefits right across the country.

Of course, 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 has continued through the remainder of 2016, with many exciting and innovative programmes and initiatives, including a large number of activities at local level. A landmark, national conference was hosted by NUI Galway earlier this month, entitled 1916 - 2016: The Promise and Challenge of National Sovereignty. Next month, members of the Defence Forces will be presented with specially commissioned medals in recognition of their professional service during this centenary year.

I believe that it is important to continue the momentum to build on the positive legacy of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme. My Department has, therefore, been developing a cross-Government initiative to mainstream culture and creativity in the life of the nation and to promote individual, community and national wellbeing. This will focus on boosting cultural provision and participation in communities and harnessing the goodwill and engagement generated by the commemorative programme this year. It will also act as the main vehicle to take forward the priorities identified in Culture 2025. I have secured funding of €5 million in Budget 2017 to underpin this new initiative and I intend to announce further details in the coming weeks.

Arts Funding

55. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if she will create an arts capital fund, modelled on the sports capital fund, to ensure better long term funding for Irish arts. [37034/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Earlier this year, I announced a new €9 million investment scheme for arts and cultural centres to run over the next three years, focused on securing and enhancing our arts and culture infrastructure. The scheme will target investment at a range of different facilities, including arts centres, theatres, galleries and museums, as well as artists' studios and creative spaces. The closing date for receipt of applications was in September and applications received are now undergoing evaluation. Awards will be announced in the near future.

I will also be announcing shortly a subset of the scheme with grants of up to €20,000 for community or voluntary organisations. The details of this funding stream are being finalised and will open for applications in the near future.

EU Funding

56. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the portion of the Creative Europe Fund Ireland has drawn down of the total drawn down fund throughout the EU; and the number of projects that are drawn down here in contrast to other EU states to date. [37404/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Creative Europe 2014-20 is the European funding programme for the audiovisual and culture sectors. There are Creative Europe Desks covering culture and media in Ireland, which provide information, advice and technical assistance to arts and heritage organisations in Ireland that are interested in applying to the Creative Europe Media and Culture Sub-programmes. The Creative Europe Culture Sub-programme has granted over €13 million to projects with Irish partners in its first three years. Over €2 million of this has been awarded to Irish-led projects. Recent statistics show that Ireland's participation is improving and organisations are now more likely to look to Europe for funding. Whilst the Culture Programme 2007-2013 saw 32 Irish organisations involved in successful projects, giving an average of 4 successes per year, in the three years of the Creative Europe 2014-20 programme the average has increased to 7 per year.

Ireland's percentage take from the Programme is broadly in line with our population size. A comparison with Denmark, a similar size country to Ireland, shows that Danish organisations have had success with 23 projects to date in the Creative Europe Culture Sub-programme, while Irish organisations have had success with 21 projects. Looking at overall success rates for the last round of Co-operation Projects (the strand through which approximately 80% of the Culture funds are dispersed), the total success rate across the EU was 12%. Ireland's success rate was 13%.

In respect of the Creative Europe Media Sub-programme, since the Creative Europe Programme commenced in January 2014, the Irish audiovisual sector has received some €5.338 million in direct funding from the Media Sub-programme. In the first 2 years, 1.7% of the total Creative Europe Media Sub-programme budget of some €216 million was allocated to Ireland. As Ireland represents less than 1% of the population of the EU and, given that non-EU countries also participate in the programme, Ireland has significantly outperformed on a population ratio by more than 50%.

A complete list of funding results is published on the Education, Audio-Visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) website at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/selection-results_en.

Arts Funding

57. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs when she expects to issue a notice for applications under stream 3 of the arts and culture capital scheme, which will provide grant aid for community-based arts groups; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36921/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Earlier this year, I launched a new €9m investment scheme for arts and cultural centres to run over the next three years, focused on securing and enhancing our arts and culture infrastructure. The scheme will target investment at a range of different facilities, including arts centres, theatres, galleries and museums, as well as artists' studios and creative spaces. The closing date for receipt of applications was in September and applications received are now undergoing evaluation. Awards will be announced in the near future. I will also be announcing shortly a subset of the scheme with grants of up to €20,000 for community or voluntary organisations. The details of this funding stream are being finalised and will open for applications shortly.

Hare Coursing

58. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs when she will publish the report ordered by her into the mauling of a hare at a coursing event in Ballinagar, County Offaly, on 29 October 2016; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36867/16]

62. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if her attention has been drawn to recent evidence that suggests her previous statements that hare coursing was well regulated and avoided any harm to hares were mistaken; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37214/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 58 and 62 together.

Officials of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department attended the Ballinagar coursing meeting and are examining the video footage provided in relation to the meeting. This may result in discussions with the local coursing club and the Irish Coursing Club. I will be happy to make relevant reports available following the completion of this process.

In August this year, my Department issued licences under the Wildlife Acts to the Irish Coursing Club, covering its affiliated coursing clubs, to capture and tag hares for use at regulated hare coursing meetings for the 2016/17 coursing season, which extends from the end of September 2016 to the end of February 2017.

There are a total of 26 conditions which are associated with the licences issued to the Irish Coursing Club. These conditions which have been developed and refined over a number of years cover a wide range of issues including prohibition on coursing hares more than once a day or coursing sick or injured hares, the need for adequate escapes for hares during coursing and

releasing hares in daylight hours after meetings.

Scéimeanna Teanga

59. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht, Gnóthaí Réigiúna-cha, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta cad é líon na bpleananna teanga atá i bhfeidhm le níos mó ná trí bliana; cad é líon na gcomhlachtaí poiblí nár réitigh aon phlean go dáta; cad é an líon pleananna teanga a aontaíodh le comhlachtaí poiblí i mbliana faoi Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003. [37357/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Seán Kyne) : Tá próiseas leanúnach ar siúl faoi Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003 chun líon agus caighdeán na seirbhísí i nGaeilge a chuireann comhlachtaí poiblí ar fáil a fheabhsú. Maidir le haontú scéimeanna teanga a thagann faoin Acht, is fúmsa, mar Aire, atá sé scéimeanna teanga a dhaingniú le comhlachtaí poiblí. Ón uair a tháinig an tAcht i bhfeidhm, tá dul chun cinn céimnithe déanta chun scéimeanna teanga a dhaingniú. Aontaíodh 19 scéim teanga i mbliana, ina n-áirítear 9 chéad scéim, 6 dara scéim agus 4 tríú scéim. Go dáta, tá 116 scéim teanga i bhfeidhm san iomlán, a chlúdaíonn 119 comhlacht poiblí. Déantar scéimeanna teanga a dhaingniú le comhlachtaí poiblí ar bhonn céimnithe agus tá plé gníomhach ar siúl le 117 comhlacht poiblí faoi lathair chun scéimeanna teanga a aontú leo, ar a n-áirítear 60 comhlacht a bhfuil scéim le hathnuachan acu agus 57 comhlacht nár réitigh scéim teanga go fóill leo ach gur eisíodh litir chucu faoi alt 11 den Acht.

Clúdaíonn na scéimeanna teanga atá daingnithe mórchuid na gcomhlachtaí poiblí a mbíonn plé idirghníomhach ag an bpobal leo ar bhonn rialta, lena n-áirítear Ranna agus oifigí Stáit, údarais áitiúla, institiúidí oideachais agus comhlachtaí poiblí eile nach iad.

Tá 47 scéim teanga i bhfeidhm le níos mó ná trí bliana ach, mar is eol don Teachta, fanann scéim teanga i bhfeidhm ar feadh tréimhse trí bliana nó go dtí go ndéantar athnuachan air, cibé acu is déanaí. Tá mo Roinn lán-tiomanta na gealltanais a neartú agus a láidriú sna dara agus tríú scéimeanna teanga chun na seirbhísí atá ar fáil tr í mheán na Gaeilge a fheabhsú.

NAMA Assets Sale

60. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the progress that has been made in regard to the purchase of 5,000 acres from NAMA in the Glenasmole valley; if an agreement has been reached; and the terms of the purchase. [37398/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Michael Ring) : The process to purchase lands at Glenasmole is almost complete and I expect to make a formal announcement in this regard shortly.

Gaeltacht Policy

61. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs her plans for the Gibbstown Gaeltacht in County Meath. [37409/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Seán Kyne) : As the Deputy will be aware, the Gaeltacht Act 2012 gives

statutory effect to the language planning process, under which language plans may be prepared at community level in areas capable of being recognised under the Act as Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas, Gaeltacht Service Towns or Irish Language Networks. In the case of all Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas, including Ráth Chairn and Baile Ghib in Co. Meath, organisations will be given up to 2 years from the date on which Údar ás na Gaeltachta selects them, to submit a language plan to me, as Minister, for approval in line with the language planning criteria prescribed under section 12 of the Act.

Once a plan has been approved under the Act, organisations will be given 7 years to implement the approved language plans with the assistance of Údarás na Gaeltachta. My Department will periodically review the implementation of the plans during that period.

In accordance with the provisions of section 7(3) of the Act, a notice was published in September 2015 in respect of the Gaeltacht Language Planning Area of *Ráth Chairn agus Baile Ghib*, effectively kick-starting the language planning process in the Meath Gaeltacht. It is anticipated that a language plan for *Ráth Chairn agus Baile Ghib* will be submitted for approval by September 2017.

In the meantime, as is the case with all other Gaeltacht areas, my Department, in the context of its own remit, and acting in concert with Údarás na Gaeltachta and other relevant stakeholders, will continue to advance the interests of Gaeltacht na Mí by means of the range of schemes, programmes and initiatives currently being deployed to foster language and economic development in the Gaeltacht.

Question No. 62 answered with Question No. 58.

Cultural Policy

63. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the progress she has made towards the strategy made in Culture 2025; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37035/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I published the draft framework policy *Culture 2025/Éire Ildánach* in July this year, which was submitted to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs for input. The *Culture 2025* framework policy sets out:

- a series of high-level objectives under the headings of *Enrich, Engage, Participate* to establish Government vision in relation to culture and society in Ireland;

- a set of key values, including the intrinsic value of culture, the right to participate in the cultural life of the nation and the role of culture in fostering a more sustainable future in Ireland; and

- a series of priority measures for implementation across Government and public bodies.

I understand that the Committee is currently preparing a report on the draft framework policy, which I will consider when received.

In the meantime, I believe that it is important to continue momentum in terms of delivery of the priorities set out in the framework policy and to build on the positive legacy of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme.

My Department has, therefore, been developing a cross-Government initiative to main-

stream culture and creativity in the life of the nation and to promote individual, community and national wellbeing. This will focus on boosting cultural provision and participation in communities and harnessing the goodwill and engagement generated by the commemorative programme this year. It will also act as the main vehicle to take forward the priorities identified in *Culture 2025*.

I have secured funding of €5m in Budget 2017 to underpin this new initiative and I intend to announce further details in the coming weeks.

Arts Funding

64. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if she will ensure that the allocation of funding being provided for the arts by her Department is decided by the Arts Council only; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37397/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Under the Arts Act 2003, primary responsibility for the promotion of the arts at all levels throughout the country is devolved to the Arts Council, which is independent in its decision-making in regard to the manner in which it disburses the State funding provided to it. In this regard, I was pleased to secure significant additional funding for the Arts Council as part of Budget 2017. The allocation to the Arts Council for 2017 is over €65m. This will see an increase in the Arts Council allocation of €5m, or 8%, and will allow the Council to enhance support to artists and arts organisations.

Capital funding for the arts and culture sector is managed and disbursed by my Department. In addition, certain current funding is applied by my Department, both directly and via other bodies and agencies, for the benefit of arts and culture.

I have no plans to change the present arrangements.

Rural Development Plan

65. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the status of an action plan for rural development; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37154/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Supporting the economic and social development of rural Ireland is a key priority of the Government, and actions to support this objective will be delivered by a number of Departments and agencies. The Action Plan for Rural Development will act as an overarching structure for the co-ordination and implementation of initiatives right across Government which will benefit rural Ireland. The objective is to bring a joined-up approach to the implementation of economic and social policies that impact on rural communities.

The Action Plan is currently being finalised and I intend to publish it in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, I have already introduced a number of practical measures to support rural communities, including through the roll out of initiatives such as the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, the expansion of the REDZ initiative, and the reintroduction of the CLÁR Programme. My Department is also working directly on proposals for the renewal of the post office network, as well as measures to facilitate the roll out of high speed broadband in rural areas once Govern-

ment contracts are awarded next year under the National Broadband Plan.

Cabinet Committee Meetings

66. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Taoiseach when the last meeting of the Cabinet committee on housing took place; and the future plans for meetings. [37414/16]

The Taoiseach: The Cabinet Committee on Housing last met on 7 November. It is scheduled to meet again today, 29 November, and again in December.

The Committee is meeting regularly to oversee implementation of the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, which is a priority for Government.

Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements

67. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Taoiseach his planned travel schedule to meet international leaders up to the end of 2016. [37416/16]

The Taoiseach: On Monday, 28 November, I had a meeting in the Vatican with His Holiness, Pope Francis. Upon my return to Dublin later that day, I met with the Prime Minister of Malta, Joseph Muscat.

I will attend the next meeting of the European Council on 15 and 16 December. While I do not have any formal bilateral meetings scheduled in the margins of the Council, it would be normal for informal encounters to occur at such an event.

At present, I do not have any other firm plans to meet foreign leaders before the end of December 2016.

Appointments to State Boards

68. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Taoiseach the number of vacancies on boards or agencies within his Department's remit that currently exist; the number that have been filled since 8 May 2016; the number of these that were filled through the Public Appointments Service; and the timeline for filling remaining vacancies. [36655/16]

The Taoiseach: I appoint the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) in accordance with the provisions of the National Economic and Social Development Office Act 2006, and the National Economic and Social Council (Alteration of Composition) Order 2010 - SI 603/2010.

The Statistics Act 1993 gives me authority to make appointments to National Statistics Board (NSB). I have delegated this authority to the Minister of State at my Department and Government Chief Whip, Regina Doherty TD.

In the case of the NESC, the legislation provides that I appoint up to 20 members on the nomination of the organisations and interests set out, up to 6 public servants, and up to 8 independent members.

The Statistics Act 1993 provides for an eight member National Statistics Board, the Director General of the CSO, *ex officio*; one representative each from my Department and the Department of Finance, two nominated by the Minister of State and three by organisations representa-

tive of the users of official statistics and providers of information under the Act.

John Shaw, Assistant Secretary in my Department was appointed to the NSB on 15 September 2016 to fill a casual vacancy. There have been no other appointments to the NSB since 8 May 2016 and there are currently no vacancies.

The five year term of the NESC has expired and consideration of the arrangements for a new Council is ongoing. Where appropriate and consistent with the legislation future vacancies on the NESC and NSB will be advertised through the Public Appointments Service process in accordance with the Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards.

Brexit Issues

69. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Taoiseach the date and location of the second plenary all-island civil dialogue. [36923/16]

The Taoiseach: A second plenary of the All-Island Civic Dialogue will take place in the New Year. This plenary will build on the sectoral discussions that will have taken place by then. No location or date has for this has been finalised yet

Departmental Staff Data

70. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Taoiseach the number of staff from his Department currently seconded to other Departments or agencies in the Civil Service per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form. [36972/16]

71. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Taoiseach the number of staff from his Department who have appealed against secondment per annum from 2010 to date, in 2016 in tabular form; and the appeals mechanism involved. [36988/16]

72. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Taoiseach the number of staff from his Department currently seconded to a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; and the details of the company. [37004/16]

73. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Taoiseach the number of staff from his Department currently seconded from a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; and the details of the company. [37020/16]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 70 to 73, inclusive, together.

The table sets out the number of staff seconded to other Departments or Agencies in the Civil Service per annum from 2010 to date in 2016.

Year	Total number of staff on secondment to other Departments or Agencies in the Civil Service
2010	8
2011	9
2012	11
2013	10
2014	13
2015	14

Year	Total number of staff on secondment to other Departments or Agencies in the Civil Service
2016	12

My Department has not received any appeals from staff in relation to secondments.

As part of the public sector-private sector exchange scheme, a member of staff from my Department went on placement to IBEC and a member of staff from IBEC was placed in my Department from end December 2012 to end August 2013. My Department is also currently hosting a member of staff from PricewaterhouseCoopers on placement under the same scheme.

Brexit Issues

74. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Taoiseach if he has requested that Southern sectoral interest groups be invited to participate in the Northern dialogue in order that cognisance be taken of interests from a Southern perspective in view of the fact that the British Government has agreed to have sectoral interest meetings to discuss Brexit. [37121/16]

The Taoiseach: While I have not requested that the British Government invite any specific groups to their sectoral interest groups to discuss Brexit, I would welcome any such engagement.

The invitations to any such British Government meeting to discuss Brexit is the sole responsibility of that Government.

Departmental Funding

75. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Taoiseach the funding that has been provided to County Louth over the previous three years 2014 to 2016, inclusive, by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form. [37229/16]

76. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Taoiseach the applications submitted for funding projects from Louth County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016, inclusive, in tabular form; and if the applications were successful. [37245/16]

77. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Taoiseach the funding for projects in 2017 in County Louth to be funded by his Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form. [37261/16]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 75 to 77, inclusive, together.

The tables detail funding provided to County Louth and Louth County Council by my Department between the years 2014 and 2016.

Local Diaspora Engagement Fund - Louth

Year	Organisation	Project Name	Location	Amount of Grant
2015	Omeath District Development Company/ Thomas D'Arcy McGee Foundation	Thomas D'Arcy McGee Foundation Project	Omeath Co. Louth	€5,000
2015	Drogheda & District Chamber of Commerce	Drogheda's Worldwide Hero'sWeb & networks development	Drogheda Co. Louth	€1,500

Year	Organisation	Project Name	Location	Amount of Grant
2016	Omeath District Development Company/ Thomas D'Arcy McGee Foundation	Thomas D'Arcy McGee Foundation Project	Omeath Co. Louth	€3,000
2016	Drogheda & District Chamber of Commerce	Drogheda Worldwide Hero's – Phase II Invest Drogheda	Drogheda Co. Louth	€5,000

Local Diaspora Strategy Development Fund - Louth

Year	Application	Status	Amount
2016	Louth County Council	Approved	€10,000

The Local Diaspora Engagement Fund (LDEF) was launched in 2015 to promote diaspora engagement at a county, local and community level, which is in line with objectives of the *Global Irish: Ireland's Diaspora Policy* published by Government in March 2015. Eighty organisations around the country benefitted from total funding of €200,000 that allowed them to further develop links with the diaspora from their area through local, cultural, heritage, communications and networking projects. A second round of the LDEF was launched in 2016 and the total amount of the fund was increased to €350,000. A total of 106 local and community projects around the country were approved for funding in 2016.

The Local Diaspora Strategy Development Fund launched in 2016 has made a total of €310,000 available to all Local Authorities to invest in developing strategies for diaspora engagement at local and community level. This new round of funding made up to €10,000 available for each Local Authority around the country to invest in the development of their strategies for diaspora engagement.

No decision on the allocation of funding for Diaspora projects in 2017 has been taken yet.

Departmental Funding

78. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Taoiseach the funding that has been provided to County Meath over the previous three years 2014 to 2016, inclusive, by project name, location and funding amount in tabular form. [37277/16]

79. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Taoiseach the applications submitted for funding and projects from Meath County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016, inclusive, in tabular form; and if the applications were successful. [37293/16]

80. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Taoiseach the funding for projects in 2017 in County Meath to be funded by his Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form. [37309/16]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 78 to 80, inclusive, together.

The tables detail funding provided to County Meath and Meath County Council by my Department between the years 2014 and 2016.

Local Diaspora Engagement Fund - Meath

Questions - Written Answers

Year	Organisation	Project Name	Location	Amount of Grant
2015	Meath Community Action Plan Group in collaboration with Connect Ireland	Meath Community Action Plan	Navan & AshbourneCo. Meath	€3,000
2016	Gleeson Clan Gathering 2016 Organising Committee	Gleeson Clan Gathering	EnfieldCo. Meath	€4,000

Local Diaspora Strategy Development Fund - Meath

Year	Application	Status	Amount
2016	Meath County Council	In progress - Awaiting submission of final paperwork	€10,000

The Local Diaspora Engagement Fund (LDEF) was launched in 2015 to promote diaspora engagement at a county, local and community level, which is in line with objectives of the *Global Irish: Ireland's Diaspora Policy* published by Government in March 2015. Eighty organisations around the country benefitted from total funding of €200,000 that allowed them to further develop links with the diaspora from their area through local, cultural, heritage, communications and networking projects. This fund was administered by my Department. A second round of the LDEF was launched in 2016 and the total amount of the fund was increased to €350,000. A total of 106 local and community projects around the country were approved for funding in 2016.

The Local Diaspora Strategy Development Fund launched in 2016 has made a total of €310,000 available to all Local Authorities to invest in developing strategies for diaspora engagement at local and community level. This new round of funding has made up to €10,000 available for each Local Authority around the country to invest in the development of their strategies for diaspora engagement.

No decision on the allocation of funding for Diaspora projects in 2017 has been taken yet.

Departmental Reports

81. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Taoiseach the reports commissioned by his Department since 2006 that, while completed or are in final draft form, have not been published; the reason they have not been published; the expected publication dates; the cost to date of each such report; if tenders were invited; and if it is not intended to publish any such report, the reason for same. [37555/16]

The Taoiseach: The information requested by the Deputy is contained in a table.

YEAR	REPORT	TENDER TYPE	CONTRACT AWARDED	REPORT COMPLETED	VENDOR
2006	-	-	-	-	-
2007	-	-	-	-	-

YEAR	REPORT	TENDER TYPE	CONTRACT AWARDED	REPORT COMPLETED	VENDOR
2008	Knowledge Management Report(not published - for internal use only)	Request for tenders	April 2008	April 2008	Sogeti Ltd [Cost: €2,269]
2009	-	-	-	-	-
2010	-	-	-	-	-
2011	eCabinet Security Assessment (not published - for internal use only)	Request for tenders	31 August 2011	November 2011	RITS [Cost: €11,495]
2012	-	-	-	-	-
2013	Microsoft License Solution Analysis(not published - for internal use only)	mini-tender competition under a Central Framework Agreement	16 July 2013	September 2013	Sam360 (trading as Smart License Ltd)[Cost: €2,560.37]
2014	-	-	-	-	-
2015	Organisational Risk Assessment Report (not published - for internal use only)	Request for Quotes	June 2015	October 2015	Ward Solutions [Cost: €9,840]
2016	-	-	-	-	-

Non-Disclosure Agreements

82. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Taoiseach if his Department, or the agencies that report to his Department, entered into any non-disclosure or confidentiality agreement with any organisation due to court action or a threatened court action; and if so, the persons or groups with which these agreements exist. [37635/16]

The Taoiseach: Neither my Department nor the National Economic and Social Development Office has entered into any non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements with any organisation due to court action or threatened court action.

Immigrant Investor Programme Data

83. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the opportunities available through the Irish immigrant investor programme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36951/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the Immigrant Investor Programme was launched in April 2012. Key to the programme is that applications are good for Ireland, good for jobs and are in the public interest and that the funds invested are legally acquired and owned by the investor (i.e. not borrowed). It is also essential that applicants be of good character.

The Programme is open to non-EEA nationals who commit to an approved investment in Ireland. The benefit to the applicant is that they and their immediate family members will be granted rights of residence in the State which will allow them to enter the State on multi-entry visas and to remain here for an initial period of 2 years and renewed for 3 years subject to certain criteria being met (i.e. the investment has not been withdrawn, they continue to be law abiding and self sufficient).

The following options are available under the programme:

- Enterprise Investment: €500k invested in an Irish Enterprise for 3 years,
- Investment Funds: €500k invested in an approved fund,
- Endowment: €500k philanthropic donation by an individual,
- Real Estate Investment Trusts: Minimum €2m. investment in any Irish REIT listed in the Irish Stock Exchange,
- Immigrant Investor Bond:* €1m invested in the bond at 0% interest rate,
- Mixed Investment:* Minimum Investment of €450k in a residential property & €500k into the immigrant investor bond.

* The Immigrant Investor Bond and the Mixed Investment were both suspended in July 2016 as they no longer provided value.

All applications under the Immigrant Investor Programme are considered on their merits in a qualitative examination by an independent interdepartmental Evaluation Committee, established under the programme, comprising of appropriate officials from the IDA; Enterprise Ireland; Dept of Finance; Dept of Foreign Affairs & Trade; Dept of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation, and the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (which also provides the administrative assistance to the Committee) who have the required skills and experience to evaluate the applications.

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

84. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in view of the commitment made by the Minister of State with special responsibility for disabilities in May 2016 that the convention would be ratified within six months; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37450/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy Finian McGrath): Considerable progress has already been made to overcome the remaining legislative barriers to Ireland's ratification of the Convention. The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 was signed into law on 30 December 2015 and is a comprehensive reform of the law on decision-making capacity. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill 2015 commenced its second stage reading in the Dáil on 5 October. When enacted, the Bill will reform Section 5 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993 to facilitate the full participation in family life of persons with intellectual disabilities and the full expression of their human rights. Achieving the necessary balance between those rights and ensuring appropriate protection is crucial.

Work is underway on drawing up the Equality/Disability (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill to progress miscellaneous legislative amendments necessary to proceed to ratification. It is intended that the Bill will address issues such as the Convention's requirements in relation to reasonable accommodation and deprivation of liberty, as well as removing archaic references in existing legislation relating to mental health. The General Scheme of the Equality/Disability (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill is available on the Department's website. The Bill is at the final stages of drafting and while I am not in a position to give an exact date, I expect the Bill to be published very shortly so as to facilitate early ratification of the Convention.

Commencement of Legislation

85. **Deputy Josepha Madigan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the reason the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 has not yet been commenced; and the timeline for commencement. [37596/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 was signed into law on 30 December 2015. The Act provides a modern statutory framework to support decision-making by adults with capacity difficulties.

The Act is being commenced on a phased basis and it is my intention that the new decision-making support options provided for in the Act will be substantially implemented during 2017. New administrative processes and support measures, including the setting up of the Decision Support Service within the Mental Health Commission (which is a body under the Department of Health), must be put in place before the substantive provisions of the Act come into force. Careful planning and groundwork, and not just funding, has to be put in place to ensure that the commencement of the Act is correctly, appropriately and effectively handled. My Department is working carefully on this at present in consultation with the Department of Health and the Mental Health Commission. A high-level Steering Group comprised of senior officials from my Department, the Department of Health and the Mental Health Commission is overseeing the establishment and commissioning of the Decision Support Service. My Department is liaising with the Department of Health and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regarding the finalisation of funding for the Decision Support Service in 2017.

The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 (Commencement of Certain Provisions) Order 2016 (S.I. No. 515 of 2016), brought some provisions of Part 1 (Preliminary and General) and Part 9 (Director of the Decision Support Service) of the Act into operation on 17 October 2016. These provisions were brought into operation in order to enable the process of recruitment of the Director of the Decision Support Service to begin. Sanction for the appointment of the Director of the Decision Support Service has been sought by the Department of Health and the intention is that the Mental Health Commission will begin the process of recruiting a Director as quickly as possible.

The commencement of Part 8 of the Act, which provides a legislative framework for advance healthcare directives, is a matter for the Minister for Health. The Minister for Health, under the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 (Commencement of Certain Provisions) (No. 2) Order 2016 (S.I. No. 517 of 2016), brought into operation on 17 October 2016 some provisions of Part 8 of the Act relating to advance healthcare directives. The commenced provisions provide for the establishment by the Minister for Health of a multi-disciplinary group to advise in relation to codes of practice on advance healthcare directives.

Naturalisation Certificates

86. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the assistance available to a person (details supplied) to proceed with the issuing of a certificate of naturalisation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36869/16]

92. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality when a case for citizenship will be completed in respect of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36950/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 86 and 92 together.

I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy is currently being processed. The records show that the applicant was requested, in January 2014, to submit certain documentation in relation to his application but that no further correspondence was received from him until October 2016. The records also indicate that the person's permission to reside in the State expired in December 2014. All non-EEA nationals are required to keep their permission to remain in the State up to date at all times and failure to do so may result in the individual being removed from the State.

Following the receipt of the recent correspondence from the person concerned a letter issued to him on 3 October 2016 requesting his national passport, endorsed with the relevant permission to reside in the State, and his Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) card. A reminder issued on 9 November 2016 granting him an extension of 6 months to provide the relevant documentation. Upon receipt of the requested information, or in the event that the person does not respond, the case will be further processed. I understand from INIS that applications are regularly received from nationals of the country concerned which are supported by appropriate documentation, including passports.

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

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

Court Accommodation Provision

87. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the future of Tralee courthouse; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36913/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy will be aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts, including the provision of accommodation for court sittings, is the responsibility of the Courts Service which is independent in exercising its functions.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that the current courthouse in Tralee comprises two courtrooms and lacks the facilities necessary to deal with the range of business and needs that present in a contemporary court environment. The Courts Service envisages a courthouse comprising four courtrooms and related facilities as being required to meet future demand in Tralee and this will require a building significantly larger than the current courthouse. The scope for refurbishing and developing the existing courthouse on Ashe Street to provide the range of services expected in a modern courthouse is extremely limited due to the nature of the building and

space constraints.

The Courts Service explored the possibility of acquiring adjoining buildings on Ashe Street a number of years ago to provide a larger site but satisfactory terms could not be agreed. In order to advance matters, the Courts Service decided it had to consider other sites including, if necessary, sites outside the town centre. However, no decision as to the future of Tralee Courthouse has been made and I am informed that the views of all court users and interested parties will be considered as part of the decision making process.

Court Accommodation Refurbishment

88. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the renovation of Killarney courthouse; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36919/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy will be aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts, including the provision of accommodation for court sittings, is the responsibility of the Courts Service which is independent in exercising its functions.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that internal upgrading works were carried out to Killarney Courthouse to improve the condition of the building in 2009. The Courts Service is currently in discussions about improving the bathroom facilities in the building for court users.

Garda Station Refurbishment

89. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the upgrading of Tralee Garda station; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36920/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Deputy will appreciate that the programme of replacement and refurbishment of Garda accommodation is progressed by the Garda authorities working in close cooperation with the Office of Public Works, which has responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation. This includes identifying and progressing any necessary remedial or refurbishment works required at individual stations and I, as Minister, have no role in these matters.

As the Deputy will be aware, the upgrade of the Garda Station at Tralee is among the projects included in the Garda Building and Refurbishment Programme 2016-2021, which I announced in October 2015 with my colleague the Minister of State at the Office of Public Works.

I am advised by the Garda authorities that the project provides for upgrade works and includes a reconfiguration of the internal space to maximise the capacity of the station, the creation of a second interview room, and an upgrade of the public area.

The Office of Public Works has advised that the tender package for this project is currently being finalised and it is expected that works will commence in 2017.

Crime Data

90. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of successful prosecutions for selling alcohol to under age persons in the past five years, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36924/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Central Statistics Office (CSO), as the national statistical agency, is responsible for the compilation and publication of the official recorded crime statistics, and the CSO has established a dedicated unit for this purpose. I have asked the CSO to forward the available statistics in relation to the information requested directly to the Deputy.

Proposed Legislation

91. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she will bring forward additional legislation to tackle issues surrounding convicted murderers serving consecutive life sentences; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36945/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The mandatory sentence for murder is life imprisonment, as provided by section 2 of the Criminal Justice Act 1990. A sentence of life imprisonment means that the prisoner is subject to that sentence for the rest of his or her life. Such a prisoner has no right to be released early at any stage. If granted temporary release, the prisoner remains subject to the life sentence and can be recalled to prison at any stage.

Accordingly, the imposition of multiple life sentences, whether concurrently or consecutively, in a case where more than one murder is committed in the same incident, does not increase the severity of the sanction and has no such effect in practice or in law.

Question No. 92 answered with Question No. 86.

Departmental Information

93. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if the provisions of section 18 of the Official Secrets Act 1963 applies to e-mails, text messages and other electronic communications using phone applications; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36957/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Section 18 of the Official Secrets Act 1963 has been repealed by section 14 of the Interception of Postal Packets and Telecommunications Messages (Regulation) Act 1993.

Departmental Staff Data

94. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff from her Department currently seconded to other Departments or agencies in the Civil Service per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36969/16]

95. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff from her Department that have appealed against secondment per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the appeals mechanism involved; and if she will make a

statement on the matter. [36985/16]

96. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff from her Department currently seconded to a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37001/16]

97. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff from her Department currently seconded from a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37017/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 94 to 97, inclusive, together.

The table outlines the number of staff currently seconded to other Departments or agencies of the Civil Service from my Department who have taken up those secondments since 2010. It does not encompass the staff who moved on a temporary basis to the Irish Permanent representation in Brussels during the Irish Presidency of the EU in 2013; the staff who were seconded temporarily to the Insolvency Service of Ireland before it was an established agency of the Department; nor the staff of the Department who are currently serving in Visa Offices abroad.

Year	Number of Secondments
2010	0
2011	0
2012	1
2013	1
2014	4
2015	9
2016	11

My Department had three short term secondments from external firms in the years in question. There was one secondment from Grant Thornton Corporate Finance Limited for the period 12 November 2012 to 11 January 2013; one from KPMG for the period 10 December 2012 to 9 February 2013; and one from Deloitte for the period 4 February 2013 to 12 April 2013. The individuals concerned provided expert assistance on the establishment of the Insolvency Service of Ireland and their services were provided on a pro bono basis.

In addition, the Civil Service Staff Exchange Scheme which operated under the remit of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, was circulated to all Departments in 2013. The Scheme involved the placement of Civil Servants from Government Departments/Offices in private sector companies for a minimum period of three months and up to a period of one year with a reciprocal arrangement with the Private Sector. My Department nominated a member of staff for participation in the scheme in 2013 who was ultimately not facilitated with an actual secondment.

I am advised by my officials that officers from my Department have not appealed against a secondment during the period in question.

Garda Deployment

98. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality her plans to increase the number of gardaí stationed at Maynooth Garda station in view of the fact that the town has a large student population in addition to permanent residents; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37028/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner 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. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that in regard to the deployment of Garda personnel, a distribution model is used which takes into account all relevant factors including population, crime trends and the policing needs of each individual Garda Division. The Divisional officer for each Garda Division allocates personnel within his or her Division as appropriate.

Maynooth Garda Station is in the Leixlip Garda District which forms part of the Kildare Division. As on the 31 October 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, there were 307 members of An Garda Síochána assigned to the Kildare Division, of these 12 were assigned to Maynooth Garda Station. The Kildare Division is supported by 22 members of the Garda Reserve and 29 Civilian Staff. When appropriate, the work of local Gardaí is supported by a number of Garda national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation (NBCI), the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (formerly the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation) and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

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. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014.

I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that since the reopening of the Garda College, 679 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána of whom 35 have been assigned to the Kildare Division. No doubt the Kildare Division, like all Garda Divisions and activities will benefit from the increased resources coming on stream.

Garda Reports

99. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality her reasons for commissioning a new Garda report into undercover policing here by British Metropolitan Police officers; and if she will make the findings of that report public. [37037/16]

100. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if the terms of reference for the new report into undercover policing here by the British Metro-

politan Police will seek to establish if any of the undercover police officers were carrying Irish passports. [37038/16]

101. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if her attention has been drawn to whether any undercover British Metropolitan Police officer used an Irish birth certificate to procure either a British or Irish passport; and if not, if she included this in the terms of reference of the second Garda report. [37039/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 99 to 101, inclusive, together.

As the Deputy will be aware, allegations regarding an undercover police officer in this jurisdiction were first made public in 2011. A report was sought from the Garda Commissioner on the matter at that time and that report was provided to my predecessor in March 2011. The report noted that no evidence had been established that the person in question had been involved in any criminal activity while in this jurisdiction.

As I have stated to the House previously, in the light of developments which have taken place outside this jurisdiction since these matters first came to light, including the establishment of an inquiry into undercover policing by the UK Government, a fresh report has been requested from the Garda Commissioner on any issues arising. In seeking that report, I have not sought to circumscribe in any way the information which the Garda Commissioner would provide. I will fully consider this report when it is available.

I have also made it clear previously that should anything emerge from the findings of the UK's undercover policing inquiry that would be relevant to policing in this jurisdiction I will consider it fully and take any action that may be required.

Workplace Deaths

102. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of workplace deaths reported to the coroner that proceeded to inquest in each of the years 2008 to 2014. [37059/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy may be aware, my Department publishes annual statistics on the number of deaths reported to each Coroner, the number of post mortem examinations ordered by each Coroner and the number of inquests held by each Coroner. These statistics are published on www.coroners.ie. Figures on the number of workplace deaths reported to Coroners are not held by my Department.

Property Issues

103. **Deputy Seán Barrett** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she will establish a property court to deal with all property matters, including commercial property, which would include eviction proceedings, rights of appeal, judgment proceedings, arbitration and so on; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37063/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I wish to inform the Deputy that the Government has no intention, at present, to establish a property court to deal with all property matters. As the Deputy will be aware, the preparation of the Mortgages Special Court Bill/Courts (Mortgage Arrears) Bill is under way. My Department is

in consultation with the Office of the Attorney General, having regard to the constitutional and legal aspects arising, as indicated in the Government's Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness published last July.

As the Deputy will also be aware, priority was given to getting the new national Mortgage Arrears Resolution Service (Abhaile) up and running, and this was formally launched in October 2016. The Service, which forms part of the Programme for Partnership Government commitments on mortgage arrears, comprises a Mortgage Arrears Aid and Advice Scheme, and a related communications and promotions campaign which will be targeted to reach those most in need of help.

Under the Aid and Advice Scheme, home owners who are unable to pay their debts and are at risk of losing their homes are provided with access to free independent expert financial and legal advice and assistance, so they can put in place solutions to their mortgage arrears, with priority to allowing them to remain in their home where that is a sustainable option.

In terms of its success so far, I can confirm that over 2,800 vouchers for financial or legal advice and assistance were issued under the Scheme between 22 July and 25 November 2016.

Garda Deployment

104. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the detail of the allocation of the new 145 gardaí, following on from the Garda passing out parade held on 17 November 2016, by county, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37177/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): 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. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response. I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that since the reopening of the Garda College, 679 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream uniform duties and are on the ground in communities nationwide.

In so far as the allocation of newly attested Gardaí is concerned, this is a matter for 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 Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly

attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and class-room based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required training and development structures and resources in place, including trained Garda tutors and access to a permanently appointed supervisory Sergeant who is thoroughly familiar with their responsibilities under the training programme. The importance of appropriate support and supervision was highlighted in the O'Higgins Report.

For the Deputy's information the table sets out the details provided by the Commissioner of the assignment by Division of the 145 probationer Garda who attested on 17 November 2016.

Assignment of Probation Garda who attested on 17 November 2016

DIVISION	DISTRICT HQ	TOTAL
D.M.R. EAST	DUN LAOGHAIRE	14
D.M.R. NORTH	BALLYMUN	13
D.M.R. NORTH CENTRAL	STORE STREET	17
D.M.R. SOUTH	CRUMLIN	14
pD.M.R. SOUTH CENTRAL	PEARSE STREET	19
D.M.R. WEST	BLANCHARDSTOWN	13
KILDARE	NAAS	10
LAOIS / OFFALY	PORTLAOISE	5
MEATH	NAVAN	4
WESTMEATH	MULLINGAR	0
WICKLOW	BRAY	0
CAVAN / MONAGHAN	MONAGHAN	2
DONEGAL	LETTERKENNY	0
LOUTH	DROGHEDA	3
SLIGO / LEITRIM	SLIGO	5
KILKENNY/CARLOW	KILKENNY	0
TIPPERARY	THURLES	5
WATERFORD	WATERFORD	0
WEXFORD	WEXFORD	0
CORK CITY	ANGLESEA ST	0
CORK NORTH	FERMOY	5
CORK WEST	BANDON	0
KERRY	TRALEE	0
LIMERICK	HENRY STREET	11
CLARE	ENNIS	0
GALWAY	GALWAY	5
MAYO	CASTLEBAR	0
ROSCOMMON/LONGFORD	ROSCOMMON	0
	TOTAL:	145

Garda Vetting of Personnel

105. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if traffic offences are taken into consideration for job applications requiring Garda vetting with local authority leisure centres; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37180/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Employment vetting is carried out by An Garda Síochána through the Garda Vetting Bureau in accordance with, *inter alia*, the provisions of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 which sets out the procedures for vetting disclosures. Section 14A of the Act makes provisions in respect of circumstances in which certain convictions are not required to be disclosed, including arrangements in respect of offences under the Road Traffic Acts.

Electronic Tagging

106. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she will consider the introduction of electronic tagging for criminal offences; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37196/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Programme for Government undertakes to introduce and fast-track legislation providing for stricter bail terms for repeat serious offenders which includes the introduction of electronic tagging. In line with these commitments, the new Bail (Amendment) Bill, which will be published in the coming weeks, will contain streamlined provisions for the electronic monitoring of persons on bail to facilitate the focused and targeted use of monitoring in appropriate cases. The Bill will provide that electronic monitoring may be imposed as a bail condition if the prosecution applies to the court for such a condition.

Provision for the electronic monitoring of certain sex offenders post their release from custody, which will involve the Probation Service, has been approved by Government. These provisions will be included in the Sex Offenders (Amendment) Bill which is currently being drafted.

Garda Civilian Staff Recruitment

107. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date and her plans for 2017 in recruiting civilian personnel in order to replace fully trained gardaí that are currently assigned to office-only duties; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37209/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): 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. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

The target of 4,000 civilians will effectively double the number of civilians undertaking administrative and technical duties within An Garda Síochána at present and represents a medium

term target of 20% civilians by 2021. This will bring An Garda Síochána, currently with 14% civilians, more into line with international norms and ensure that trained Gardaí are not engaging in administrative and technical duties which could be done by suitably qualified civilian staff. The Garda Inspectorate, in its 2015 report “Changing Policing in Ireland”, has estimated that there may be up to 1,500 Gardaí currently in such posts and the Government’s plan aims to return as many of these Gardaí as possible to front-line duties over the next five years. With this in mind, the Garda Commissioner, in conjunction with the Policing Authority, has been requested to identify posts suitable for redeployment by the end of the year and to prepare a 5 year plan for reaching the 20% medium term target.

The recruitment and appointment of up to 500 civilians provided for in Budget 2017 will facilitate the Garda Commissioner in addressing capacity and critical skills gaps across the organisation including in corporate supports, change management, human resources and financial management at the national, regional and Divisional level. These appointments will make an important contribution to the delivery of the ambitious reform agenda set out in the Commissioner’s Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021 and will facilitate deeper civilianisation in the coming years.

In addition, and again flowing from the recommendations of the Garda Inspectorate, the Commissioner has commenced the roll-out on a pilot basis of a Divisional model of policing to replace the current District model. The benefit of the Divisional model is that responsibilities will be allocated on a functional rather than geographical basis which will facilitate greater flexibility in the deployment of resources in response to policing needs. It also will have the benefit of reducing duplicate administrative tasks currently done at both the District and Divisional level. In this regard the Commissioner has estimated that 10 Gardaí will be freed up for front-line duties in each Division once the model is fully rolled out. The roll-out will be done on a phased basis and in such a manner as to ensure that the close relationship between Gardaí and local communities is maintained.

The Deputy may wish to be aware that under section 19 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 as amended, the appointment of civilian staff of grades equivalent to, or above, that of chief superintendent are made by the Policing Authority while the appointment of civilian staff equivalent to, or below, that of superintendent are made by the Garda Commissioner. Arranging for the recruitment of civilian staff is a matter for the Commissioner in accordance with section 26 of the 2005 Act as amended.

Departmental Funding

108. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the funding that has been provided to County Louth over the previous three years 2014 to 2016 by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37226/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The information requested by the Deputy is provided in the table.

Year	Project Name	Location	Funding Amount (€)
2014	North East Domestic Violence Perpetrator Intervention Programme	North East (Louth Meath)	22,682
2014	Local Awareness Raising Activities	Drogheda Women’s Refuge	1,000
2014	Local Awareness Raising Activities	Rape Crisis North East	4,000

Questions - Written Answers

Year	Project Name	Location	Funding Amount (€)
2014	Counselling to Victims of Crime	Dundalk Counselling Service	19,000
2014	Court accompaniment for female victims of domestic violence	Drogheda Women's Refuge	9,500
2014	Court accompaniment for female victims of domestic violence	Women's Aid Dundalk	14,000
2014	Boyne	Drogheda	104,751
2014	Cable	Drogheda	66,734
2014	High Voltage / Cox's Demesne (YPP)	Dundalk	215,000
2014	Team	Dundalk	148,500
2015	North East Domestic Violence Perpetrator Intervention Programme	North East (Louth Meath)	20,500
2015	Local Awareness Raising Activities	Rape Crisis North East	4,000
2015	Court accompaniment for female victims of domestic violence	Drogheda Women's Refuge	9,500
2015	Counselling for Victims of Crime	Dundalk Counselling Service	19,000
2015	Court accompaniment for female victims of domestic violence	Women's Aid Dundalk	14,000
2015	Support for patient victims of crime	Drogheda	10,000
2015	Boyne	Drogheda	105,234
2015	Cable	Drogheda	61,404
2015	High Voltage / Cox's Demesne (YPP)	Dundalk	257,000
2015	Team	Dundalk	148,500
2016	Court accompaniment for female victims of domestic violence	Women's Aid Dundalk	16,500
2016	Support for patient victims of crime	Drogheda	10,500
2016	Boyne	Drogheda	105,234
2016	Cable	Drogheda	66,734
2016	High Voltage / Cox's Demesne (YPP)	Dundalk	257,000
2016	Team	Dundalk	148,500
2016	Court accompaniment for female victims of domestic violence	Drogheda Women's Refuge	10,000
2016	Counselling for Victims of Crime	Dundalk Counselling Service	20,000
2016	North East Domestic Violence Perpetrator Intervention Programme	North East (Louth Meath)	24,000
2015	Calipo Theatre Company	Drogheda	25,003
2014	Calipo Theatre Company	Drogheda	51,300

Departmental Funding

109. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the applications submitted for funding projects from Louth County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016 in tabular form; and if the applications were successful. [37242/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department has not received any applications for funding from Louth County Council in the years referred to by the Deputy.

Departmental Funding

110. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the funding for projects in 2017 in County Louth to be funded by her Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37258/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I can inform the Deputy that my Department has not yet finalised any funding for projects in County Louth for 2017.

Departmental Funding

111. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the funding that has been provided to County Meath over the previous three years, 2014 to 2016, by project name, location and funding amount in tabular form. [37274/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The information requested by the Deputy is provided in the table.

Year	Project Name	Location	Funding Amount (€)
2014	Amen - Awareness Raising Activities	Co Meath	15,000
2014	Amen- Court accompaniment to male victims of crime	Navan	10,000
2014	Court accompaniment for female victims of domestic violence	Meath Women's Refuge	26,000
2014	Meath Traveller Interagency Group	Meath	2,000
2014	Meath Travellers Workshop - Traveller Pride Week	Meath	2,000
2014	Jobmatters Employability Services Meath - Special Initiative for Travellers	Meath	€34,394.93
2014	Meath Travellers Workshop - Traveller Pride Week	Meath	2,000
2014	National Traveller Partnership – Meath Travellers Workshop	Meath	122,420.40
2014	Cultúr Celebrating Diversity Ltd	Navan	66,000
2014	National Traveller Partnership – Meath Travellers Workshop	Meath	122,420.40
2014	Cultúr Celebrating Diversity Ltd	Navan	31,663
2014	Smart, Crann Support Group	Trim	109,500
2014	NYPD, Foróige	Navan	151,016
2014	Third Age Foundation Ltd	Summerhill	100,000
2015	Amen - Awareness Raising Activities	Co Meath	20,000
2015	Court accompaniment for female victims of domestic violence	Meath Women's Refuge	26,000
2015	Amen - Court accompaniment to male victims of crime	Navan Co Meath	12,500
2015	Jobmatters Employability Services Meath - Special Initiative for Travellers	Meath	56,212
2015	Meath Traveller Interagency Group	Meath	10,000
2015	Meath Travellers Workshop - Traveller Pride Week	Meath	2,000
2015	Smart, Crann Support Group	Trim	91,500
2015	NYPD, Foróige	Navan	164,596
2015	Cultúr Celebrating Diversity Ltd	Navan	32,660
2015	Third Age Foundation Ltd	Summerhill	47,000
2016	Smart, Crann Support Group	Trim	109,500
2016	NYPD, Foróige	Navan	259,124
2016	Cultúr Celebrating Diversity Ltd	Navan	54,781

Questions - Written Answers

Year	Project Name	Location	Funding Amount (€)
2016	Third Age Foundation Ltd	Summerhill	84,000
2016	Amen - Court accompaniment to male victims of crime	Navan, Co Meath	16,500
2016	Court accompaniment for female victims of domestic violence	Meath Women's Refuge	30,000

Departmental Funding

112. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the applications submitted for funding and projects from Meath County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016, in tabular form; if the applications were successful; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37290/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the table.

Year	Name	Successful	Amount (€)
2014	Meath Traveller Interagency Group	Yes	2,000
2014	Meath Travellers Workshop - Traveller Pride Week	Yes	2,000
2015	Meath Traveller Interagency Group	Yes	10,000
2015	Meath Travellers Workshop - Traveller Pride Week	Yes	2,000
2016	Meath Travellers Workshop - Traveller Pride Week	Yes	2,000

Departmental Funding

113. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the funding for projects in 2017 in County Meath to be funded by her Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37306/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Details of the projects currently expected to be funded by my Department in County Meath for 2017 are provided in the table.

Name	Location	Projected Amount (€)
Jobmatters Employability Services Meath - Special Initiative for Travellers	Navan	56,212
National Traveller Partnership – Meath Travellers Workshop	Navan	122,420.40

Departmental Reviews

114. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if a person (details supplied) has completed his report on Garda whistleblowers; if she has received the report; the date on which it will be published; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37343/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy is aware, following advice received from the Attorney General, I appointed Mr Justice Iarfhlaith O'Neill to undertake a review of certain protected disclosures which were made to me. Judge O'Neill has been asked to:

- review allegations of wrongdoing contained in the disclosures;
- make any inquiries with persons or bodies that he considers appropriate in relation to the review;
- report within six weeks on the conclusion of the review including any recommendations which he may consider necessary in relation to any further action which may be appropriate and warranted to address the allegations.

As Judge O'Neill was appointed with effect from 12 October 2016, the six weeks deadline for completion of the Review was 23 November 2016. On 22 November, the Judge requested a short extension to 2 December 2016 to complete his review. I have agreed to this request and look forward to receiving his report.

Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities

115. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality when the interdepartmental group to support the comprehensive employment strategy for people with disabilities was convened; the number of times it has met; the progress and outcomes achieved to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37360/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy Finian McGrath): As the Deputy will be aware, the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities was launched in October 2015. It 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. It 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. Implementation of the Strategy will be subject to regular monitoring, and there will be a review and renewal every three years. 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 Comprehensive Employment Strategy Implementation Group convened for the first time in October 2015, and has met on seven occasions to-date. I understand that the Group's first Annual Report, detailing progress made to-date, will be presented to me shortly, and I will arrange to have it published as soon as possible thereafter.

Rights of Way Registration

116. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality when a person has to register an easement, such as a right of way, on a property to have it recognised

under the new legislation; the timetable involved in these issues; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37368/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Land and Conveyancing Law Reform Act 2009, as amended by the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011, provides for applications for registration of easements (such as rights of way) and profit-à-prendre acquired by prescription (long use) to be made directly to the Property Registration Authority (PRA) under Section 49(A) of the Registration of Title Act 1964, for uncontested claims. Alternatively, an application can be made to court under Section 35 of the Land and Conveyancing Law Reform Act 2009 and the court can make an order which shall be registered in the Land Registry or Registry of Deeds, as appropriate.

A claim for rights acquired by prescription, or in the process of being acquired, under the pre-2009 Act law [i.e. under common law, doctrine of lost modern grant and the Prescription Act], can be made by an application to the PRA or by application to court up to 30 November 2021. Thereafter, applications either in the PRA or the courts can be made under the new law as set out in the 2009 Act.

Applications to the PRA under Section 49A require a full case to be made by the applicant for the right to be registered in his/her favour. Certain proofs are required and notices must be served on all interested parties. The PRA's practice in relation to these cases is set out in its Practice Direction "Easements and Profits à Prendre Acquired by Prescription under Section 49A" and "Mapping Practice" available on the PRA's website, www.prai.ie.

Immigration Status

117. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she will allow a person (details supplied) travel home while their application for permission to remain here on the basis of marriage to an Irish national is processed.

[37418/16]

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 person referred to by the Deputy arrived in the State on 25/09/2012, and that their most recent permission to remain in the State, on the basis of student conditions, expired on 29/09/2015. The person was accordingly refused renewal of registration by GNIB on 26/10/2016 because they were out of permission.

As the person concerned had married an Irish National in 2014 they subsequently wrote to INIS at the beginning of November 2016 for permission to remain in the State, as the spouse of an Irish National. Unfortunately, they did not complete the required application form nor submit all the required documents, so INIS could not process the application. I understand that the person concerned has not yet responded to the correspondence which subsequently issued from INIS on 17/11/2016 enclosing the application form and requesting the necessary documentation to support their application.

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

Garda Communications

118. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí that are officially designated as community gardaí; the number of those gardaí that are using a non-garda.ie email address to correspond with members of the public; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37429/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner 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. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that in regard to the deployment of Garda personnel, a distribution model is used which takes into account all relevant factors including population, crime trends and the policing needs of each individual Garda Division. It is the responsibility of the Divisional Officer to allocate personnel within his/her Division.

Community policing is at the heart of An Garda Síochána. It provides a means of recognising that every community – both urban and rural – has its own concerns and expectations. In this regard I welcome the strong emphasis placed by the Commissioner's Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021 on further developing and supporting the community policing ethos of the organisation so that Gardaí spend more time in the community, gaining public confidence and trust and providing a greater sense of security. Proposed initiatives include the establishment of local Community Policing Teams (CPTs) headed by an Inspector and made up of Gardaí from across a range of areas to proactively work with the community to prevent and detect crime; and the establishment of Community Safety Fora in every District comprising local Gardaí, local communities and key stakeholders.

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. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014.

I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that since the reopening of the College, 679 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. It is expected that Community Policing and all other Garda activities, will undoubtedly benefit from these resources now coming on stream.

The use of forms of communication in particular circumstances are operational matters for An Garda Síochána and policy and practice in this regard are a matter for the Garda Commissioner to determine. I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that all Community Gardaí are provided with an official Garda email address for use as appropriate in the course of their duties.

For the Deputy's information the table shows the number, as provided by the Commissioner, of Community Gardaí assigned to each Garda Division on 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available.

Number of Community Garda by Division on 30/09/2016

DIVISION	TOTAL
DMR South Central	33
DMR North Central	104
DMR NORTH	53
DMR EAST	30
DMR SOUTH	39
DMR WEST	58
Waterford	44
Wexford	8
Tipperary	72
Kilkenny/Carlow	90
Cork City	24
Cork North	8
Cork West	5
Kerry	7
Limerick	45
Donegal	22
Cavan/Monaghan	4
Sligo/Leitrim	8
Louth	16
Clare	6
Mayo	3
Galway	14
Roscommon/Longford	8
Westmeath	10
Meath	10
Kildare	0
Laois/Offaly	4
Wicklow	15
Total	740

Garda Vetting Applications Data

119. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality her plans to deal with the undue delays and backlog in Garda vetting at present, as the waiting period for clearance has lengthened in duration and is causing considerable annoyance and distress for applicants; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37436/16]

120. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality her plans to deal with the undue delays and the ever lengthening backlog in Garda vetting for transition year students, third level students and students wishing to go on work placement; if she will explore the delegation of authority for such vetting to district level; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37437/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 119 and 120 together.

I wish to inform the Deputy that there is no particular delay in the Garda employment vetting process; rather, there has been a very significant improvement in vetting processing times in recent months.

The conducting of Garda vetting is an operational matter for the Garda Commissioner. It is carried out by the Garda National Vetting Bureau in accordance with, *inter alia*, the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 which sets out the arrangements to provide vetting by the Bureau under the charge of a Chief Bureau Officer and operating a National Vetting Bureau database system.

I am informed by the Garda Authorities that at present, 80 percent of vetting applications are processed by the Garda National Vetting Bureau in under five working days. This represents a dramatic improvement in turnaround times for the processing of vetting applications in recent years, falling from an average of 14 weeks in mid-2013. This improvement has come about as a result of an unprecedented investment by the Government and the Garda Authorities in providing this service, including an increase of over 80 percent in staffing levels and the roll out earlier this year of an e-Vetting system.

In April this year I commenced the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 and in tandem with that, An Garda Síochána launched the e-Vetting system. E-Vetting facilitates the on-line processing of applications and this has significantly streamlined the vetting process and contributed to a sustained reduction in processing times for vetting applications. I am further informed by the Garda Authorities that the vast majority of vetting applications, over 85 percent of applications, now received by the Vetting Bureau are received and processed via the e-Vetting system.

One very important feature of the e-Vetting system is that the individual applicant can track the progress of their own vetting application on-line and can, therefore, see when their application has been processed and returned to the relevant registered organisation.

There are a small number of registered organisations who are not yet operating the e-Vetting system and continue to use the old paper format for applications. For vetting applications that continue to be submitted in paper format, the average turnaround time is in the order of four weeks from the receipt of the application by the Vetting Bureau and this represents a minimum time frame given the administrative input required. The Garda Authorities continue to work with the organisations who are not yet operating the e-Vetting system to encourage and support them to do so.

Processing times for any given application can be longer in individual cases when, for example, additional enquiries may be necessary or where errors have been made in the application. It is important to note that delays can also occur in other aspects of the application process which are outside of the control of the Garda Authorities, for example, in the submission or return of applications by the registered organisations.

The primary purpose of the vetting service is to seek to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults. Accordingly, the vetting process demands rigorous procedures to safeguard its integrity and to maintain the highest level of confidence by the public and organisations availing of the service. Any vetting process will take a certain minimum amount of time to complete and, taking into account the importance of protecting children and vulnerable adults while providing an effective and efficient service, the current processing period is not unreasonable.

Garda Deployment

121. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of new gardaí that have been or will be allocated to the Sligo- Leitrim Garda division from the new class; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37457/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner 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. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that, as on the 31 October 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, there were 293 members of An Garda Síochána assigned to the Sligo Leitrim Division. The Sligo Leitrim Division is supported by 24 members of the Garda Reserve and 25 Civilian Staff. When appropriate, the work of local Gardaí is supported by a number of Garda national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation (NBCI), the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (formerly the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation) and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

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. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response. I am also informed by the Garda Commissioner that since the reopening of the Garda College, 679 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána of whom 10 have been assigned to the Sligo/Leitrim Garda Division.

In so far as the allocation of newly attested Gardaí is concerned, this is also a matter for the Garda Commissioner. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and class-room based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required training and development structures and resources in place, including trained Garda tutors and access to a permanently appointed supervisory Sergeant who is thoroughly familiar with their responsibilities under the training programme. The importance of appropriate support and supervision was highlighted in the O'Higgins Report.

Work Permits Applications

122. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the restrictions in place on a person returning here to resume their job, with an unlimited work permit for the person and job specified, who had left the country to care for family that have now passed away; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37462/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department, first of all that if the person concerned is a non-EEA national, they might require a visa to enter the State, so they should be aware of that.

As the Deputy will appreciate there are a number of variables in the question he raises, so it is not possible to give a precise answer. If the Deputy has a specific person in mind they should advise the person to write to Unit 2, Residence Division, INIS where the details of the person's case will be assessed. A work permit holder would be given a Stamp 1 by INIS and in the normal course of events, a person must be continuously resident in the State to enable them to renew their immigration permission. Continuous residence means living in the State for a period covered by their permission, but allowing for reasonable periods of absence from the State for holidays and exceptional family circumstances. Without the specifics of the case I cannot comment further.

The Deputy may wish to note that queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been established 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 Question process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Garda Communications

123. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if her attention has been drawn to claims that gardaí are using third party applications (details supplied) for Garda communications; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37526/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The use of particular means of communication by members of An Garda Síochána in particular circumstances is an operational matter and policy and practice in this regard are for the Garda Commissioner to determine. I am advised by the Garda Authorities that An Garda Síochána are currently compiling a report for the Policing Authority and myself in relation to email usage and also access to and usage of commercial email services by the organisation.

They expect to be in a position to submit this report shortly.

Garda Promotions

124. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality her plans to fill Garda vacancies at the rank of sergeant and inspector; the number of promotions to the rank of sergeant and inspector that were made in 2015 and to date in 2016; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37532/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Appointments to the ranks of Sergeant and Inspector are a matter for the Garda Commissioner under

section 14 of Garda Síochána Act 2005. I am informed by the Commissioner that in the period 1 January 2015 to 25 November 2016, 275 Garda were promoted to the rank of Garda Sergeant and 102 Sergeants were promoted to the rank of Inspector. These appointments were made in accordance with the statutory framework as set out in the 2005 Act and related regulations. In particular, the appointees were drawn in order of merit from promotion panels formed on foot of competitions held by the Commissioner in accordance with the Garda Síochána (Promotion) Regulations 2006. I understand that these promotion panels are now exhausted and that the Commissioner intends to announce new competitions for promotion to the rank of Garda Sergeant and Inspector shortly.

Garda Communications

125. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda per district in the Roscommon-Longford division that have working access to a specific Garda email account in their own name, both in the station and when mobile and out of the station. [37539/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner has responsibility for decisions in relation to the allocation of Garda resources and the distribution of personnel and I, as Minister, have no direct role in these matters.

I have requested the Garda authorities to provide the information requested by the Deputy and will revert to him as soon as I have this to hand.

Departmental Reports

126. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the reports commissioned by her Department since 2006 which, while completed or are in final draft form, have not been published; the reason they have not been published; the expected publication date; the cost to date of each such report; if tenders were invited; if it is not intended to publish any such report the reason for same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37552/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I wish to inform the Deputy that it has not been possible to provide the information required in the time available. The information will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it is to hand.

Refugee Resettlement Programme

127. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she has considered the reports of the latest refugee youth service report number three, from November 2016; and the actions which have been taken as a result of its findings. [37579/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Report referred to by the Deputy deals with the situation of unaccompanied minors previously located in the Calais camp. The Refugee Youth Service makes a series of recommendations to the responsible French and British authorities. My Department has no responsibility or any oversight role with regard to the matters raised in this Report referencing the French and British authorities.

The Deputy is aware that a number of Government Departments are, however, currently working together to advance the recently approved Dáil motion calling on Government to work with the French authorities to identify unaccompanied minors, previously in the Calais camp, who have expressed a wish to relocate to Ireland and not to go to the UK.

Immigration Status

128. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the status of a person (details supplied); the reason there is such a long delay; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37599/16]

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 it has written to the person in question, who will be aware that all necessary due diligence in this case awaits completion. Once that process has been completed, a further letter will issue.

The Deputy may wish to note that queries in relation to the status of individual cases may be made directly to the INIS of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy should 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.

Garda Stations

129. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No.174 of 18 October 2016, the status of an issue (details supplied); the status of its location; the amount it cost; the timeframe for development; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37604/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Office of Public Works has the primary responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation and works closely with the Garda authorities in this regard and I, as Minister, have no role in these matters.

The position remains as outlined in my response to Parliamentary Question No. 174 of 18 October 2016 wherein I indicated that the Office of Public Works is progressing legal matters relating to the acquisition of a site for the proposed new Garda station in Bailieborough. The Deputy will appreciate that, until these matters are complete, it is not possible to provide an exact timeline and details concerning procurement or costing of the new station.

Departmental Legal Cases

130. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if her Department, or the agencies that report to her Department, entered into any non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements with any organisation due to court action or a threatened court action; and if so, the persons or groups with which these agreements exist. [37632/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am informed that my Department has not entered into an agreement of the type referred to by the

Deputy.

Immigration Status

131. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she will investigate and allow for stamp 4 permission to be granted to a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37644/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that an application on behalf of the person mentioned was only received on 08 November, 2016. I understand that this application is currently receiving attention.

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

Driver Safety

132. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of unaccompanied learner drivers that have been involved in fatal and serious collisions each year since 2012, identifying whether the collision resulted in either fatality or serious injury; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37654/16]

133. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of fatalities in each fatal collision each year since 2012 involving an unaccompanied learner driver; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37655/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 132 and 133 together.

I have asked the Garda authorities for a report on the information requested and I will contact the Deputy directly when the report is to hand.

Convictions Lists

134. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of unaccompanied learner drivers that have been convicted after being involved in a fatal or serious collision each year since 2012; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37656/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Deputy will be aware that, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act, 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service and I have no role in the matter. Section 4(3) of the 1998 Act provides that the Courts Service is independent in the performance of its functions, which includes the provision of information on the courts system.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and am informed by the Courts Service that it does not hold information on whether individuals convicted of the offence of being a learner driver not accompanied by a qualified driver have been involved in a fatal or serious collision.

Penalty Points System Offences

135. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of fixed charge penalty notices issued to learner drivers who were not accompanied by a qualified driver each year since 2013; the number of those that paid the fixed charge penalty notice; the number that were summonsed to court for failing to pay the fixed charge penalty notice; the number that resulted in a conviction with penalty points applied to their licence; her views on the fact that in 2015 alone 5,609 fixed charge penalty notices were issued for this offence but 2,763, that is, 47%, were not paid; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37657/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I have requested the statistics in relation to the number of Fixed Charge Notices issued to learner drivers that were not accompanied by a qualified driver, the number of those paid and the number of summons that issued when payment was not received and I will contact the Deputy when those statistics are to hand.

However, as the Deputy is aware from replies to previous parliamentary questions, there is no direct or electronic link between prosecutions as recorded on the Courts Service Criminal Case Tracking System (CCTS) and the Fixed Charge Notice originally issued by An Garda Síochána and therefore it will not be possible to extract all of the specific categories of information sought by the Deputy.

Magdalen Laundries

136. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 85, 86 and 87 of 16 November 2016 (details supplied), if she will consider funding for a similar type support group in the USA, particularly in view of the fact the Coalition of Irish Immigration Centres did not receive the information circulated via the embassies in October 2014. [37663/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I can advise the Deputy that the Government made the decision to provide a grant to the Irish Women Survivors Support Network (IWSSN) as over 20% of the applicants to the Magdalen Laundries Redress Scheme are resident in the UK. From an early stage in the process the IWSSN had engaged with my Department, the McAleese Committee and with Judge Quirke.

As the Deputy may be aware, the IWSSN has done good work for a considerable time in providing advice, support and assistance to women survivors of Irish institutions including women who were in the Magdalen Laundries. The grant, provided by the Government, was to enable them to continue this work.

As previously advised, the issue of the Magdalen Laundries and the establishment of the Scheme attracted world wide media attention. Information on the Scheme was also circulated to local Irish communities around the world via our network of embassies. Applications have been received from the USA, Switzerland, Australia and Cyprus.

There are no plans to provide funding to any organisation in the USA or in any other jurisdiction around the world. My officials in the Restorative Justice Implementation Unit are available to assist with any queries regarding the Scheme. If the Deputy is aware of any organisation or individual who would like information on the Scheme my officials will be happy to assist.

Garda Deployment

137. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the locations in which the five gardaí to be allocated to south Kildare will be posted; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37671/16]

138. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if the additional gardaí being allocated to County Kildare will result in a community officer being assigned to south Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37672/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 137 and 138 together.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner 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. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that, as on the 31 October 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, there were 307 members of An Garda Síochána assigned to the Kildare Division. The Kildare Division is supported by 22 members of the Garda Reserve and 29 Civilian Staff. When appropriate, the work of local Gardaí is supported by a number of Garda national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation (NBCI), the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (formerly the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation) and the Garda National Drugs and Organise Crime Bureau.

While there are currently no Gardaí specifically assigned to the role of Community Garda attached to the Kildare Division, the Commissioner has advised that it is the case that all Gardaí have a role to play in addressing community policing issues as and when the need arises. In that sense, community policing involves far more than a single unit within An Garda Síochána. Community policing is at the heart of An Garda Síochána. It provides a means of recognising that every community – both urban and rural – has its own concerns and expectations. In this regard I welcome the strong emphasis placed by the Commissioner's Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021 on further developing and supporting the community policing ethos of the organisation so that Gardaí spend more time in the community, gaining public confidence and trust and providing a greater sense of security. Proposed initiatives include the establishment of local Community Policing Teams (CPTs) headed by an Inspector and made up of Gardaí from across a range of areas to proactively work with the community to prevent and detect crime; and the establishment of Community Safety Fora in every District comprising local Gardaí, local communities and key stakeholders.

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. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for

the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response. I am also informed by the Garda Commissioner that since the reopening of the Garda College, 679 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream uniform duties and that 35 of these probationer Garda have been assigned the Kildare Division. It is expected that Community Policing and all other Garda activities, will undoubtedly benefit from these resources now coming on stream.

In so far as the allocation of newly attested Gardaí is concerned, this is also a matter for the Garda Commissioner. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and class-room based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required training and development structures and resources in place, including trained Garda tutors and access to a permanently appointed supervisory Sergeant who is thoroughly familiar with their responsibilities under the training programme. The importance of appropriate support and supervision was highlighted in the O'Higgins Report.

Garda Disciplinary Proceedings

139. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the steps she has taken to deal with the urgent need to update Garda disciplinary regulations which presently date back to 2007. [37674/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The disciplinary process in An Garda Síochána is governed by the Garda Síochána (Discipline) Regulations 2007 as amended in 2011 and 2015.

A number of amendments to the Regulations are in train in order to facilitate the commencement of the provisions of the Garda Síochána (Policing Authority and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2015 in relation of the removal of senior officers of An Garda Síochána. The provisions contemplate a role for the Policing Authority in the removal process where the alleged breach relates to policing services. Work on the preparation of the proposed changes is well advanced in my Department and I expect to seek Government approval of the draft Regulations in the next number of weeks. Work is also progressing in my Department on a number of other amendments to the Regulations have regard to developments including in case law over recent years. Work on these amendments will be further progressed following the completion of the amendments necessary to commence the outstanding provisions of the 2015 Act.

Private Security Industry Regulation

140. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 239 of 22 March 2016, if she is satisfied with the time-frame for dealing with applications and appeals to the private security authority; if there is a reason a company (details supplied) in County Carlow has not had their appeal dealt with; and if the matter will be expedited. [37768/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I wish to inform the Deputy that the Private Security Appeal Board (PSAB) is an independent body established under the Private Security Services Act 2004, as amended, to consider appeals against decisions of the Private Security Authority (PSA). The PSAB is independent in the performance of its functions and is independent of the PSA.

The necessary arrangements are currently in train to appoint a new board for the PSAB. Expressions of interest were invited from suitably qualified candidates for appointment to the board via the stateboards.ie webpage, in accordance with the process outlined in the approved *Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards*, published in November 2014. The process for the selection of candidates is now being finalised and I intend to bring nominations for appointment to the board to the Government for approval in the near future. As the Deputy will appreciate, all appointments to the PSAB are made by the Government in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 2 to the Private Security Services Act 2004.

When the appointments process has been completed the company to which the Deputy refers will be contacted directly by the PSAB regarding its appeal.

Departmental Appointments

141. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the appointment of additional special advisers by her and Ministers of State in her Department. [37892/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): In line with the instructions issued by the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform in respect of Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil, and with the agreed sanction of that Department, I appointed one additional full-time special adviser in May. This reflects the increased responsibilities of my new combined role as Tánaiste and Minister for Justice & Equality.

Minister of State David Stanton has no special advisers appointed to his office.

Dara Murphy T.D. is the Minister of State for Data Protection at the Department of Justice and Equality and the Department of the Taoiseach. He is also Minister of State for European Affairs and the EU Digital Single Market at the Departments of the Taoiseach and Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is responsible for the appointment of staff in respect of Minister of State Murphy.

Finian McGrath T.D. is Minister of State attending Government and Minister of State at the Departments of Social Protection, Justice & Equality and Health with special responsibility for Disabilities. The Department of Health is responsible for all appointments in respect of Minister of State McGrath.

Capital Allowances

142. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Finance the number of Waterford busi-

nesses that have availed of the accelerated capital allowance scheme in each of the past five years. [37422/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by Revenue that the number of Waterford businesses that have availed of accelerated capital allowances in any given year between 2012 and 2015 is between 1 and 10. Figures for 2016 are not yet available. According to Revenue records, no businesses in the county availed of the scheme in 2011.

The Deputy may be aware that the provisions of Section 851A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 oblige Revenue to treat taxpayer information confidentially. As such, due to the low numbers of businesses involved, the precise numbers by year cannot be provided.

Help-To-Buy Scheme

143. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Finance if a person is entitled to a rebate under the help-to-buy incentive scheme if they take out a mortgage for 90% of the build value. [36863/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As I have already answered in response to the Deputy's identical question of 24 November last, the Help to Buy incentive is a new income tax relief designed to assist first-time buyers with obtaining the deposit required to purchase or build their first home. With a view towards increasing the supply of new housing, the relief will only be available in respect of 'new builds'. To be eligible to apply for the Help to Buy incentive, a first-time buyer must take out a mortgage of at least 70% of the value of the purchase price, or in the case of a self-build, 70% of the valuation approved by the mortgage provider.

The full conditions of the scheme are provided for in Section 8 of the Finance Bill 2016 as published, the commencement of which is subject to the approval of the Oireachtas.

Tax Credits

144. **Deputy Josepha Madigan** asked the Minister for Finance if consideration has been given to the unfair treatment of a secondary carer, who is also a major financial contributor to a child, being unable to receive the single person child carer credit when the primary carer chooses to cohabit and is no longer able to relinquish the credit to the secondary carer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36928/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Single Person Child Carer Credit (SPCCC) replaced the One-Parent Family Tax Credit (OPFTC) with effect from 1 January 2014. It operates differently from the One-Parent Family Credit in that it is available in the first instance only to the Primary Claimant.

The Primary Claimant is the individual with whom the child resides for the whole or greater part of the year. The Primary Claimant must be either the child's parent or the individual who has custody of the child and who maintains the child at his or her own expense for the whole or the greater part of the year.

The Commission on Taxation acknowledged that the previous One Parent Family Tax Credit played a role in supporting and incentivising the labour market participation of single and widowed parents. However, in its recommendations it concluded that the credit should be retained but that it should be allocated to the primary carer only. The restructuring of the credit into the

SPCCC achieves such an outcome. I would also point out that there is no specific tax credit for children in the tax code. Therefore, married or cohabiting couples are unable to avail of any additional credit to assist them in the financial maintenance of their children.

It is possible for a qualifying Primary Claimant to surrender (relinquish) his or her entitlement to the credit, in favour of a Secondary Claimant where the child resides with that Secondary Claimant for at least 100 days per year. It should be noted that a Secondary Claimant does not qualify for the SPCCC in his/her own right. Rather it is the primary carer of the child who is entitled to the credit subject to meeting the qualifying criteria and, should he/she choose, may subsequently surrender the credit to a Secondary Claimant who has care of the child for at least 100 days in a year. Where the child's primary carer is married, in a civil partnership or cohabiting they would not be entitled to the SPCCC (or indeed the previous One Parent Family Tax Credit), on the basis that the relevant child is not, in the main, being cared for by a single person. In such circumstances the Primary Claimant cannot relinquish the credit to a secondary carer.

However should the Secondary Claimant become the primary carer of the child in the future, he/she may be entitled to apply for the SPCCC in his/her own right.

Departmental Staff Data

145. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Finance the number of staff from his Department currently seconded to other Departments or agencies in the Civil Service per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36965/16]

146. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Finance the number of staff from his Department who have appealed against secondment per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the appeals mechanism involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36981/16]

147. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Finance the number of staff from his Department currently seconded to a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36997/16]

148. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Finance the number of staff from his Department currently seconded from a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37013/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 145 to 148, inclusive, together.

The number of staff from my Department currently seconded to other Departments or Agencies in the Civil Service per annum from 2010 to date in 2016 is contained in the table.

No staff from my Department has appealed against a secondment. Secondments are considered by the Executive Board of my Department and are agreed with the staff member and their line Manager before the secondment commences.

There are currently no staff of my Department seconded to a firm in the private sector nor is there any staff in my Department seconded from a firm in the Private Sector.

Staff currently seconded out from my Department:

Year secondment commenced	Number of Staff	Department/Agency
2010	Nil	N/A
2011	Nil	N/A
2012	1	ReBo
2013	Nil	N/A
2014	1	Citizen's Information Board
2015	1	D/PER
2015	1	D/Foreign Affairs & Trade
2015	1	Tax Appeals Commission
2016	1	D/PER

Pensions Legislation

149. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the action which will be taken to recoup the pension tax relief given to the €73 million transferred overseas (details supplied); the anti-avoidance measures which can be put in place to stop this happening; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37114/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The transfer of the deferred benefits of a member of an occupational pension scheme or a Personal Retirement Savings Account (PRSA) contributor's PRSA fund to an overseas pension arrangement is permitted, subject to the transfer complying with the Occupational Pension Schemes and Personal Retirement Savings Accounts (Overseas Transfer Payments) Regulations, 2003 and Revenue requirements. The Regulations are under the remit of the Minister for Social Protection and prescribe the conditions for transfers to arrangements established outside the State.

I am informed by the Revenue that many transfers of pension benefits overseas are made for legitimate reasons and are fully compliant with the transfer Regulations and Revenue requirements. The issue of seeking to recoup the tax relief provided to such individuals in building up their pension benefits here does not, therefore, arise.

Since 2012, all overseas pension transfer requests must be accompanied by a declaration signed by the individual concerned to the effect that the transfer is for bona fide reasons and conforms to all of the relevant transfer obligations. As I mentioned recently in my response to Deputy McGrath's Parliamentary Question No. 77 of 24 November 2016, since 2014 Revenue has been involved in an ongoing compliance program in relation to the transfer of pension funds off-shore with the objective of seeking to ensure the legitimacy of such transfers. I also mentioned in that reply that seeking to move pension funds or PRSAs overseas in an effort to circumvent the requirements of Irish tax legislation may fall foul of the conditions under which they were approved by Revenue and that this could result in the withdrawal of approval, the effect of which would be the claw back of the tax relief previously given. I also made reference to the fact that, to date, no withdrawal of approval has taken place.

Finally, my Department has been engaged in a review of the whole area of pension transfers abroad in conjunction with Revenue, the Department of Social Protection and the Pensions Authority with a view to establishing what additional safeguards may be required in this area. This review is not yet completed. However, I am conscious of the need to ensure that any amendments to the existing arrangements do not impede or interfere with legitimate overseas transfers that allow individuals leaving the State permanently to simplify their tax affairs by

taking their pensions savings with them, so that they can continue to save to provide an income in retirement.

Company Law

150. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance if he will address an issue raised by a person (details supplied) who has an ongoing complaint with the ODCE and wishes to view their documents; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37115/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Section 790 of the Companies Act 2014 provides that no information, book or document relating to a company that has been obtained under any of sections 778 to 780, 783 or 787 of the Companies Act 2014 shall be published or disclosed unless (a) the company in question consents to the publication or disclosure, (b) the publication or disclosure is, in the opinion of the Director of the Office of Corporate Enforcement, required under any of section 791 (a) to (n) of the Companies Act 2014, or (c) the publication or disclosure is made to a competent authority specified in section 792 of the Companies Act 2014.

While disclosure can be made to me as one of the competent authorities listed under section 792, I am prohibited by section 790 from publication or disclosure of such documents. Given this prohibition, I cannot provide the documents which the person concerned wishes to view.

Departmental Funding

151. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Finance the funding that has been provided to County Louth from 2014 to 2016, inclusive, by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37222/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): There was no provision in the Vote for my Department for funding for projects for the years in question.

Departmental Funding

152. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Finance the applications submitted for funding projects from Louth County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016, inclusive, in tabular form; and if the applications were successful. [37238/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): There was no provision in the Vote for my Department for funding for projects for the years in question.

Departmental Funding

153. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Finance the funding for projects in 2017 in County Louth to be funded by his Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37254/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): There is no provision in the Vote for my Department for funding for projects in 2017.

Departmental Funding

154. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Finance the funding that has been provided to County Meath from 2014 to 2016, inclusive, by project name, location and funding amount in tabular form. [37270/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): There was no provision in the Vote for my Department for funding for projects for the years in question.

Departmental Funding

155. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Finance the applications submitted for funding and projects from Meath County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016, inclusive, in tabular form; if the applications were successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37286/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): There was no provision in the Vote for my Department for funding for projects for the years in question.

Departmental Funding

156. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Finance the funding for projects in 2017 in County Meath to be funded by his Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37302/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): There is no provision in the Vote for my Department for funding for projects in 2017.

Tax Code

157. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance if the Revenue Commissioners will review its policy on patronage shares being assessed for income tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37336/16]

162. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance the status of letters issued to farmers regarding tax (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37474/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 157 and 162 together.

I would first note that, since the establishment of the Revenue Commissioners in 1923, successive Governments and the Oireachtas have reaffirmed the principle of the independence of the Revenue Commissioners in their dealings with the tax affairs of any individual under tax and customs legislation. This independence is seen as critical to maintaining the integrity of the taxation system and forms a key pillar of Revenue's Governance framework, and it would therefore be neither appropriate nor possible for a Minister for Finance to instruct the Revenue Commissioners to review their policy with regard to the administration of tax legislation.

I am advised by Revenue that patronage shares were received by suppliers of milk as a con-

sequence of and in proportion to the quantity of milk supplied. Where the number of shares is based on and dependent on the level of business between the members and the cooperative or nominated purchaser and where the cooperative does not receive the market price for the shares issued, then the profit accruing i.e. the difference between the market value of the shares issued and the price paid for these shares, to the member is a trading receipt of the member's farming income. This is no different to the general tax treatment that applies to other forms of share based remuneration. Employees are liable to income tax on share awards for similar reasons the share award is linked to their work and as a consequence the value of any shares awarded is treated as taxable employment income.

Capital Gains Tax (CGT) applies to the growth in the value of a capital asset. For example, if an individual sells a share that grew in value after it was acquired, CGT would apply, subject to the availability of any exemption, on the increase in value between it being acquired and being sold. The matter at issue in the particular case, however, is the initial value of the shares received by farmers as a result of their trading relationship with the co-op. The shares were a form of payment received for the milk supplied by the farmers and therefore the value of the shares forms part of the trading income for the relevant years.

I am assured by Revenue that there has been no change in policy with regard to the imposition of income tax or CGT to share awards and they have emphasised that the matter at issue in this instance is the original market value of the shares received by farmers as a result of their trading relationship with the co-op.

I am further informed by Revenue that the letters which issued to certain farmers were invitations to engage with Revenue as regards their tax position for the years 2011 to 2013. The letters in question are in the first instance enquiries with the farmers concerned as to whether the value of the shares received has been included in the accounts for the years in question. Farmers who did include the share value in their accounts will not have any additional income tax liability in relation to the specific matter raised in these inquiries.

Early engagement with Revenue, where the share value received has been included in the accounts for the years in question, will mean an early conclusion of Revenue's enquiries. Early engagement with Revenue, where the share value received was not included in the accounts for the years in question, will facilitate a discussion between the individuals concerned and Revenue with a view to agreeing a mutually satisfactory arrangement, including if necessary, a phased payment arrangement, to deal with any tax liability involved. I am advised by Revenue that there have been extensive contacts with them in regard to this matter generally and they are and will be responding very quickly to those contacts in order to assist farmers to bring matters to an early conclusion.

I would ask the Deputies to encourage any farmers who have received a letter from Revenue in this matter to engage with Revenue without delay.

Mortgage Data

158. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the retail credit firms that currently own residential mortgages as per the residential mortgage arrears and repossessions statistics Q2 2016. [37344/16]

159. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the unregulated loan owners that currently own residential mortgages as per the residential mortgage arrears and repossessions statistics Q2 2016. [37345/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 158 and 159 together.

I am informed by the Central Bank that information collected by it relating to unregulated loan owners and retail credit firms, published in the Central Bank's quarterly statistics on mortgage arrears and repossessions, is subject to a strict confidentiality agreement with the providers of the data. It is, therefore, not possible to disclose this information.

Banks Recapitalisation

160. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide for each bank the State has a share in, the number of cases being investigated by the bank as part of its review into the sale of tracker mortgages; when each bank will conclude its investigation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37433/16]

161. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of cases in which each State backed bank has admitted it was at fault with regard with regard to the tracker mortgage investigations being undertaken by banks; the number of these cases in which the bank has made a redress arrangement with the mortgage owner; the number of legal cases being taken overall per bank; the number within those that have availed of a redress scheme in which legal action against the bank has begun or concluded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37434/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 160 and 161 together.

As the Deputy is aware, the Central Bank of Ireland announced in October 2015 that it would conduct a detailed review of Tracker Mortgage portfolios with all the banks under its supervision. The Central Bank sought to conduct a broad examination of tracker mortgage-related issues covering, among other things, transparency of communications with and contractual rights of tracker mortgage borrowers.

This review is now underway, and the Central Bank is working with the banks to conduct a comprehensive examination of customer mortgage accounts with regard to tracker rates, including any instances where banks may have failed to deliver on their obligations to customers. Such instances may include cases where the bank was not sufficiently clear with customers on their terms and conditions, or where they have failed to honour contractual commitments.

The Central Bank has laid out a detailed and rigorous process for each institution to follow. The identification of affected customers, implementation of any appropriate rectification actions, as well as the calculation of any appropriate interest redress or compensation, are all processes currently being worked through by the banks. The review also involves oversight of each bank's work by an independent third party, and the establishment of an independent appeals process. Further, the Central Bank continues to review and monitor each institution's progress at every stage. It is possible that different banks will progress through the review process at different speeds.

I expect that the Central Bank, and each of the institutions involved, will provide information periodically on steps taken and progress made. The tracker mortgage review is an ongoing process involving the banks, their regulator and any affected customers; I have no direct role in its implementation. It is therefore not possible, nor appropriate, for me to speculate at this time on the number of customers that may be affected.

For completeness, I have requested a brief update from each of the banks in which the State is a shareholder:

AIB

“AIB is conducting a comprehensive review of customer mortgage accounts with regard to tracker rates. This process is ongoing. AIB’s review has found the bank fell short on its obligations to some customers. In order to prevent further detriment for the customers identified to date, AIB has in the first instance begun correcting interest rates on these accounts and writing to customers to outline their new interest rates and repayment amounts. As the review progresses, AIB is commencing refunds to customers who overpaid interest and is paying compensation. Details of a set payment towards the cost of independent professional advice will also be made available to customers and the bank will establish an independent appeals process. An independent third party, KPMG, is reviewing key aspects of AIB’s work. These steps are in line with the principles outlined by the Central Bank. The overall review will take some time to complete and other customers may be identified through this ongoing process. AIB has put in place a customer Freephone Helpline, 1800 235 460 (Mon-Fri, 8:00am-7:00pm), to assist with any queries its customers may have.”

PTSB

“As part of its response to the Central Bank initiated review of Tracker Mortgages in all Irish banks, Permanent TSB is reviewing all Tracker Mortgages issued by the bank. This review is comprehensive and complex and we are not currently in a position to state with certainty when the matter will conclude.

Separately in July 2015 Permanent TSB concluded an investigation into certain specific identified issues in respect of Tracker Mortgages. This review identified 1,372 cases where customers had lost an entitlement to a tracker mortgage through a failure at the bank. The bank has written to all impacted customers to offer redress including compensation for this failure. To date over 90% of impacted customers have accepted this redress and compensation. Customers have various options to challenge the amount of redress / compensation offered whether by availing of specific independent appeal panels established for this purpose or by bringing a case to the Financial Services Ombudsman (FSO) or by initiating court proceedings.

As of 28 October last, 194 (14%) of impacted customers have lodged an appeal with the independent appeals panels while 1,178 (86%) have not. The bank does not have complete information on how many customers may/have lodged an appeal with either the FSO or the Courts.”

BOI

“In 2015 the Central Bank of Ireland announced that it would conduct a Tracker Mortgage Examination with all lenders in Ireland. This examination is underway, and Bank of Ireland is co-operating fully with it.”

Question No. 162 answered with Question No. 157.

Banking Sector Investigations

163. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the recent new complaints process and complex fee refund compensation scheme announcement for business customers that were part of a bank’s (details supplied) global restructuring group and the access that customers that were part of a division of the bank will have to the complaints process and

compensation fund. [37484/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Tomlinson report dealt with the lending practices of UK banks to Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and it alleged that a division of Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS), the Global Restructuring Group, was guilty of “systematic and institutional behaviour” in artificially distressing otherwise viable businesses. Following this report, the UK’s Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) appointed Promontory Financial Group to further investigate these allegations. Promontory’s work along with the involvement of the FCA, led RBS to recently announce redress for certain SME customers of RBS’s Global Restructuring Group. The final details of the redress scheme remain to be agreed with the FCA.

As I have previously answered, Ulster Bank Ireland Limited undertook an independent review into the relevance of these allegations to its corresponding division, namely the Global Restructuring Group Ireland (GRGI). On the 19th December 2014, Ulster Bank published the findings of the independent review by Mahon Hayes Curran into practices at GRGI. The investigation found no evidence to support the allegations and suggested that GRGI’s driving policy was to manage its customers through the cycle, supporting them where possible to return them to viability.

The Central Bank is the statutory body with responsibility for the investigation of any such allegations in an Irish context and I consider this as a matter properly for the Central Bank. I am confident that legislative changes since the financial crisis have equipped the Central Bank with an array of investigative, regulatory and enforcement powers to ensure that regulated financial service providers adhere to the requirements of financial services legislation.

These changes include significantly enhanced powers for the Central Bank to gather information under the Central Bank (Supervision and Enforcement) Act 2013 which broadened the Bank’s information gathering and authorised officer powers. It is evident that the Central Bank is properly undertaking its enforcement role by the recent sizeable settlements in enforcement cases.

Departmental Reports

164. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Minister for Finance the reports commissioned by his Department since 2006 which while completed or in final draft form have not been published; the reason they have not been published; the expected publication date; the cost to date of each such report; if tenders were invited; if it is not intended to publish any such report the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37548/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The information requested by the Deputy in relation to reports commissioned by my Department from external parties which were completed but not published is set out in tabular form in the table.

As the Deputy is aware, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform was established in 2011 and assumed certain functions previously held by the Department of Finance; therefore reports which relate to the transferred areas do not feature in the table.

The Deputy may wish to note that the response does not capture expert witness statements/evidence/reports which were commissioned for the purposes of providing evidence to the courts and would never have been intended for publication but would instead be exhibited to the courts.

Reports Commissioned From External Parties Which Have Not Been Published: -

Year	Details of unpublished commissioned report	Expected publication date	Cost to date (€)	Tenders invited	Reason not published to date/intended to publish
2011	Report commissioned to feed into Government strategy to deal with mortgage arrears ARAM International Partners	N/A	€100,000	No	It informed the deliberations of the Keane Group and fed into the Keane Report on Mortgage Arrears.
2013	Assistance and Analysis in the Preparation of the Medium-Term Economic Strategy (MTES) 2014-2020 PMCA Economic Consulting	N/A	€49,043	Yes	Final report submitted to the Department of Finance in December 2013. It was not published because it was commissioned to provide evidence-based economic analysis as an input to the MTES. This analysis is reflected in the text of the MTES
2013	Spatial Development Patterns - Implications for the Medium Term Economic Strategy (MTES) ESRI	N/A	€4,624	No	Used as input to the MTES and analysis is reflected within the MTES.
2015	Assessment of special regeneration areas for the Living City Initiative John Martin	N/A	€2,500	Yes	The details of these areas were published when the Living City Initiative was launched

The Deputy may also wish to note that the list does not include research outputs under the joint Macro-economy and Taxation research programme between the Department of Finance and the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI).

Finally, in order to comply with the Department's Safety, Health and Welfare at Work statutory obligations, the Department also commissioned a number of assessments/audits over the period which are not listed and these details can be made available to the Deputy if required.

Departmental Agencies

165. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance if his Department, or the agencies that report to his Department, entered into any non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements

with any organisation due to court action or a threatened court action; and if so, the persons or groups with which these agreements exist. [37628/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am assuming that the Deputy is referring to non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements which govern the ongoing relationship between my Department or the agencies which report to my Department and other organisations.

There are no ongoing non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements between my Department with any organisations arising from court action or threatened court action. In the time available it has not been possible to ascertain the position with regard to all agencies which report to my Department, but no such agreements have been identified at this point. I will revert to the Deputy confirming whether any such agreements have been entered into as soon as the information is to hand.

It would not be unusual for the terms of individual settlement agreements in respect of discrete court actions to be subject to confidentiality agreements as to their terms. Such settlements are not collated and information in relation to all such agreements is therefore not currently available.

Mortgage Lending

166. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Finance if he will address issues regarding banking rules here which are applied to cross-Border workers resident here (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37676/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The supplementary material provided by the Deputy in respect of this question would appear to refer to the Central Bank statement of 23 November 2016 regarding changes to its macro-prudential mortgage lending rules and which will come into effect from 1 January 2017. These mortgage lending control measures apply to any Central Bank regulated financial provider which provides a mortgage loan which is to be secured on residential property located in the State. However, those regulations do not place any particular residency or currency requirement on relevant loans which would specifically impact on cross border workers resident in the State.

However, the Deputy may also wish to note that the European Union (Consumer Mortgage Credit Agreements) Regulations 2016, which transposed the Mortgage Credit Directive into Irish law, contains certain consumer protection provisions governing the provision of the foreign currency mortgage loans. In particular, it provides that, at the time the foreign currency mortgage agreement is concluded, the consumer borrower will have the right to convert the loan into an alternative currency or that other arrangements be in place to limit the exchange rate risk to which the borrower is exposed. This is a mandatory requirement of the Directive and the transposing Regulations provide that a lender shall ensure that at least one of these options will be available where applicable. It is accepted that this new provision will impose some additional regulatory requirements on an Irish bank when providing foreign currency mortgage loans, but this will also need to be considered against the additional protections which will now be available to consumer borrowers who enter into such credit contracts. While it is and remains a commercial matter for individual lenders to decide on the type and nature of credit it wishes to offer consumers, either in general or in an individual case, I would expect lenders to be in a position to adjust their systems and practices to take on board evolving and legal requirements which have the primary objective of increasing the protections available to consumer mortgage borrowers including those in relation to foreign currency mortgage loans as provided for in the Mortgage Credit Directive.

Departmental Staff

167. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance the status of the appointment of additional special advisers by him and Ministers of State in his Department. [37889/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I wish to inform the Deputy that I have not appointed additional Special Advisors. I have 2 Special Advisors in accordance with Section 11 of the Public Service Management Act, 1997.

The responsibilities of Minister of State Eoghan Murphy TD spans both the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. In that regard, I have been informed that the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform intends to bring a memo to cabinet in due course to allow for the appointment of a special adviser to Minister of State Murphy to assist him in his duties.

School Services Staff

168. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will facilitate the continued employment of a caretaker in a school (details supplied) in Dublin 5; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37669/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department provides capitation funding to recognised primary schools. The amount of grant paid to an individual primary school for capitation and ancillary services is determined by the school's enrolment, subject to a minimum grant for both capitation and ancillary services in respect of schools with enrolments up to 60, and a maximum ancillary services grant in the case of schools with enrolments of 500 or more.

Where a school uses grant funding to employ a secretary or caretaker, such staff are employees of individual schools. My Department therefore does not have a role in determining the pay and conditions under which they are engaged. These are matters to be agreed between the staff concerned and the school authorities. It is not therefore appropriate for my Department to determine whether or not the caretaker referred to by the Deputy should be facilitated with continued employment.

In relation to funding to schools for the pay of grant-funded school secretaries and caretakers, my Department accepted the findings of an arbitration process.

The detailed arrangements are set out in Circular 0076/2015 that was published in December 2015 on the Department's website.

In March 2016 the ancillary services grant paid to primary schools was increased by €6 from €147 to €153 per pupil to enable them pay the first phase of the arbitrator's findings. The next phase of the pay increase is due to take effect from 1 January 2017. A circular will be issued by my Department later in 2016 with the revised rate of grant funding to facilitate the payment of the next phase of the arbitrator's finding.

Schools Building Projects Status

169. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a building project at a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[36855/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The school to which the Deputy refers is being delivered under the Departments Design & Build Programme. The planning application was lodged in August 2016. Clare County Council issued an additional information request on 27/09/2016. The Project Management Team is currently finalizing a response to this request and it will be submitted to the Council shortly.

The project will proceed to tender when planning permission is secured.

Minor Works Scheme

170. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the minor works grant for the year 2016-2017 in view of the fact that much of the year has already passed; and if it will be available for schools in 2016. [36856/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): On 17th November 2016, I announced the Minor Works Grant 2016/2017, totalling €28.5 million. Payment will issue to primary schools this week.

Home Tuition Scheme Administration

171. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will investigate the situation whereby a person (details supplied) who assisted a child that was availing of the home tuition scheme was not paid. [36860/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Deputy will be aware that the purpose of the Home Tuition Scheme is to provide a compensatory educational service for children who, for a number of reasons such as chronic illness, are unable to attend school, for children with special educational needs awaiting a suitable educational placement and for early intervention for children with autism.

Parents engage tutors directly and prior to September 2015 parents received their grant directly either on a monthly basis in arrears or where possible in advance to assist them cover the cost of engaging a tutor. It is then the responsibility of the parent/legal guardian to transfer the fees received to the tutor.

The case which the Deputy refers relates to the period January to March 2015 and my Department issued payment to the parent in question on the 19th May 2015 upon receipt of a payment claim form in accordance with the published terms of the then Home Tuition Scheme.

An allegation of non payment was received by my Department from the approved tutor and the approved tutor has been in regular contact with officials from my Department.

My Department does not intervene in the private payment arrangements between home tutors and the parents who engages them in relation to the payment of fees owed by the parents to the home tutors.

School Enrolments

172. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on

a matter (details supplied) regarding school enrolment criteria; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36865/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In relation to school admissions, parents can choose which school to apply to and where the school has places available the pupil should be admitted. However, in schools where there are more applicants than places available a selection process may be necessary.

This selection process and the enrolment policy on which it is based must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants. However, this may result in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice.

As the Deputy will appreciate, my Department's main responsibility is to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking places. In this regard, my Department is currently reviewing the demographic demand in the area serviced by the school referred to.

A building project for the school concerned, is included in my Department's 6 Year Capital Programme. This demographic review will assist in determining the appropriate level of accommodation required for the proposed building project.

In the interim, I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department recently approved additional temporary accommodation to address the school's immediate and essential accommodation needs.

Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 provides for an appeal by a parent or guardian to the Secretary General of my Department, or in the case of an Educational Training Board (ETB) school to the ETB in the first instance, where a Board of Management of a school, or a person acting on behalf of the Board, refuses to enrol a student in a school, expels a student or suspends a student for 20 or more days in any school year. Further information on the Section 29 appeals process is available on the Department's website www.education.ie.

The Educational Welfare Service of the Child and Family Agency (EWS) is the statutory agency which can assist parents who are experiencing difficulty in securing a school place for their child. The EWS can be contacted at 01-7718500.

Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools Scheme

173. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the replacement for the DEIS scheme will be announced; the criteria that will be used to ensure that the schools serving the most disadvantaged in society will be included in the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36891/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As I have already announced, it is my intention to publish a new Action Plan for Educational Inclusion in the coming weeks.

A process to review DEIS - the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion established last year is now nearing completion. The review is looking at all aspects of DEIS, including the range and impact of different elements of the School Support Programme, particularly the scope for increased integration of services provided by other Departments and Agencies, in order to improve effectiveness.

Among the measures to be included in the plan are a series of pilot schemes aimed at intro-

ducing measures which have been shown to work well in improving results for disadvantaged children and students. The plan is expected to include targeted measures in the area of:

- School leadership
- School networks and clusters
- Teaching methodologies
- Integration of schools and other State supports within communities
- Greater use of Home School Community Liaison services

The Review process also includes the development of a new methodology for the identification of schools in terms of educational disadvantage is nearing completion. This new Assessment Framework will use centrally held CSO and DES data for the identification of schools. The relevant CSO data is based on information drawn from the National Census of Population and includes socio-economic variables that are known predictors of poorer educational outcomes. It is proposed that the framework will have the capacity to be updated as required to take account of relevant new CSO and DES data.

The Review has also included extensive stakeholder consultation, in particular, engagement with relevant education partners, academics and practitioners to ensure that learning from the implementation to date of DEIS is factored into our plans for a renewed School Support Programme.

Implementation of actions arising from the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion will begin in the 2017/18 school year, and will be a continuing theme in our wider Annual Action Plan for Education.

Further information on the DEIS Review process is available on my Department's website at <http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Review-Process-Information-Note.pdf>.

Pensions Legislation

174. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason Montessori teachers do not receive any pension; and the reason they do not get paid during their holidays. [36907/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that Montessori schools are private educational entities and not recognised schools under the Education Act 1998. Therefore the employment terms and conditions of their workers, including access to paid holidays and pension entitlements are matters for the owners/managers of those facilities.

Local Authority Functions

175. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 108 of 16 November 2016, the timeframe for when a preferred site might be finalised (details supplied); the stage this project is at; if there will be an increase in staff and jobs; if it will provide more places to service users; and if he will make a statement on the

matter. [36910/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As indicated in my reply of 16 November, the proposed project is primarily a matter for the relevant local authority, which would be best placed to provide further information. My Department is not directly involved in the project and accordingly I am not in a position to provide the type of information requested by the Deputy.

School Transport Review

176. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the review of the school transport scheme; and if his Department will consider increasing funding to the scheme in line with a recommendation by a charity (details supplied) of €5 million resulting in an abolition of fees for parents. [36911/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): As committed to in the Programme for Government, a review of the concessionary charges and rules element of the School Transport Scheme has been undertaken and is being considered.

School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department.

Currently in the region of 114,000 children, including some 10,000 children with special educational needs, are being transported in over 4,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually.

Children are generally eligible for school transport where they meet the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school.

The annual charges for school transport are €100 per child attending a primary school and €350 per child attending a post primary school. The annual family maximum for primary children is €220 while the overall family maximum is €650 per annum.

These charges, which may be paid in two instalments in July and December, are a contribution towards the overall cost and do not reflect the true cost of providing school transport services. Research carried out in the context of the Value for Money Review of the School Transport Scheme showed that the annual unit cost per pupil for the provision of school transport was some €1,000, €950 and €7,000 for primary, post primary and children with special educational needs (excluding escorts) respectively.

Children who are eligible for school transport and who hold valid medical cards (GMS Scheme) are exempt from paying the annual charge; children who are eligible for school transport under the terms of my Department's School Transport Scheme for Children with Special Educational Needs are also exempt from paying the annual charge.

Given that the annual cost of school transport provision is some €175m it is not proposed to change the current charges.

Psychological Services

177. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a cluster of five schools (details supplied) in County Mayo has no dedicated psychological service

available to it for the second school year running; the proposals in place to address this issue; his views on the provision of psychological services to schools in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36926/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy may be aware my Department's National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) provides an educational psychological service to all primary and post primary schools through an assigned NEPS psychologist and in some cases through the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments (SCPA), full details of which are in the NEPS section of my Department's website. Under this scheme schools can have an assessment carried out by a member of the panel of private psychologists approved by NEPS, and NEPS will pay the psychologist the fees for this assessment directly.

I have made enquiries in the matter of the five schools detailed in the Deputy's question and have been informed that in respect of three (Midfield, Culmore and Kinaffe National Schools) there is a NEPS psychologist currently assigned and providing service to each.

NEPS psychologists are recruited via regional panels formed from national recruitment competitions administered by the Public Appointments Service (PAS). Two of the schools referred to by the Deputy (Swinford and Meelick National schools) lost its assigned NEPS psychologist to a career break and while attempts were made to fill the vacancy in the NEPS Castlebar office from the existing PAS panel (and indeed by internal transfer of existing personnel within NEPS) they were ultimately unsuccessful.

A new national recruitment competition has been put in place by PAS to fill vacancies within all NEPS Regions. The closing date for applications is now passed and work is currently ongoing in relation to the vetting of applicants, preparatory to the staging of interviews in this connection. It is envisaged, following this, that recruitment panels will be formed and active filling of vacancies will commence early in the New Year.

In the interim, schools whose service from NEPS are the subject of such vacancies have been advised that they may access assessment services via the Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments described above and that they will continue to be able to access advice and assistance, in the event of a critical incident, from their local NEPS office.

My Department's NEPS service will continue to communicate developments in this regard to the schools involved.

Schools Building Projects Status

178. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the construction of a new school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36927/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the Letter of Acceptance for the preferred Tenderer for the project in question is expected to issue this week. I understand that all outstanding issues for the project have been resolved to enable this. My Department now expects that the project will commence on site early in the New Year.

Education Funding

179. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding funding for further education; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36948/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Department of Education and Skills currently provides more than €400m in student supports to assist some 80,000 disadvantaged students to participate in higher education.

Currently for the 2016/17 academic year students who meet the qualifying conditions for the special rate of grant under the Student Grant Scheme are eligible to have their post graduate tuition fees paid up to the maximum fee limit of €6,270. The conditions for the special rate of grant are that reckonable income must be below €22,703 and be in receipt of a qualifying payment as listed in Schedule 2 of the Student Grant Scheme 2016.

A €2,000 contribution is available towards the cost of fees if the postgraduate student's reckonable income is below €31,500 increasing relative to the number of family dependents.

In line with the Programme for a Partnership Government commitment a Budgetary announcement for 2017 included the introduction of a full maintenance grant (worth almost €6000 per student) from September 2017 for postgraduate students who meet the qualifying conditions for the special rate of grant.

In relation to other supports, students in third-level institutions experiencing exceptional financial need can apply for support under the Student Assistance Fund. This Fund assists students, in a sensitive and compassionate manner, who might otherwise be unable to continue their third level studies due to their financial circumstances. Information on the fund is available through the Access Officer in the third level institution attended. This fund is administered on a confidential, discretionary basis.

Tax relief at the standard rate of tax may also be claimed in respect of tuition fees paid for approved courses at approved colleges of higher education including approved undergraduate and postgraduate courses in EU Member States and in non-EU countries. Further information on this tax relief is available from the Revenue Commissioners.

Schools Building Projects

180. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the next round of capital funding for major school works will be announced. [36954/16]

222. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the major capital projects which were announced to begin construction in 2016 and which have not commenced yet. [37458/16]

223. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the major capital projects which were announced to go to construction in 2017 and which are now expected to proceed. [37459/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 180, 222 and 223 together.

In response to the Deputy's questions, all major school projects which were on the Construction Programmes announced by the previous Ministers and have not reached tender and construction stage will continue to be progressed through the architectural and design stages

and remain to be considered for progression to tender and construction stages over the course of 2017. It is my Department's intention to fully implement these programmes to completion.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the decision as to when an individual school project can commence the tender and construction stage depends on factors such as the stage reached by the project in the architectural process, the extent of contractual commitments and availability of funding under the programme at that time. I also wish to advise the Deputy that my Department is liaising directly with each of these schools in relation to their projects. Details of the schools that are approved to advance to tender and construction stage over the course of 2017 will be updated to my Department's website www.education.ie at the appropriate time.

Schools Building Projects

181. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the major school projects which were announced in previous years to go to construction by 2017 or earlier which have not proceeded in the year announced or which will not proceed in 2017. [36955/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In response to the Deputy's question, all major school projects which were on the Construction Programmes announced by the previous Ministers and have not reached tender and construction stage will continue to be progressed through the architectural and design stages and remain to be considered for progression to tender and construction stages over the course of 2017. It is my Department's intention to fully implement these programmes to completion.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the decision as to when an individual school project can commence the tender and construction stage depends on factors such as the stage reached by the project in the architectural process, the extent of contractual commitments and availability of funding under the programme at that time. I also wish to advise the Deputy that my Department is liaising directly with each of these schools in relation to their projects. Details of the schools that are approved to advance to tender and construction stage over the course of 2017 will be updated to my Department's website www.education.ie at the appropriate time.

Departmental Staff Data

182. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of staff from his Department currently seconded to other Departments or agencies in the Civil Service per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36963/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The information requested by the Deputy is contained in the table.

Number of staff from the Department of Education and Skills currently seconded to other departments or agencies in the Civil Service per annum from 2010 to date in 2016.

Year	Number
2010	30*
2011	2
2012	4
2013	5

Year	Number
2014	1
2015	9
2016	2

*This figure includes 27 Civil Servants who were seconded to FÁS.

Departmental Staff Data

183. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of staff from his Department who have appealed against secondment per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the appeals mechanism involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36979/16]

184. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of staff from his Department currently seconded to a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36995/16]

185. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of staff from his Department currently seconded from a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37011/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 183 to 185, inclusive, together.

During the period in question mentioned by the Deputy no officials at my Department have taken up employment in the private sector on a secondment basis.

Education Funding

186. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his preferred options for the funding of third-level education in the future, in view of the fact that a system of student loans may present an obstacle to students whose parents are in the lower income group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37048/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Report of the Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education, published in July, identifies income-contingent loans as being one of the possible options for the future funding of the higher education sector. Other options include a predominantly State-funded system or a State-funded system supplemented with continuing student fees.

As committed to in the Programme for Government, I have referred the report to the Oireachtas Education Committee and this engagement will form part of the process for formulating a plan for the future funding of the sector. I do not want to pre-empt the work of the Committee, however, I look forward to working with it as it analyses all of the options put forward by the Expert Group and hears the voice of all stakeholders.

While Cassells deals with the medium and long term funding needs of higher education we also have to consider the immediate challenges and in that context I am pleased that we placed a particular focus on this area in Budget 2017. I secured additional funding for the sector for

the first time in recent years. In 2017 an additional €36.5 million will be made available with €160 million additional over the next three years. This will allow the sector keep pace with demographic increases and introduce targeted initiatives in areas such as disadvantage, skills, research and flexible learning. Among those who will benefit from the additional third level funding being made available are, students from disadvantaged backgrounds, lone parents and Travellers.

In Budget 2017 the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform and I, announced a policy review with the aim of designing and implementing a sustainable and predictable multi-annual funding model for higher and further education and training involving increased Employer and Exchequer contributions from 2018. This review will be undertaken as part of the overall response to meeting the anticipated skills needs in the economy over the coming years, in line with the policy framework set out in the National Skills Strategy.

This review will include an analysis of the business case for enhanced investment in the higher and further education and training sectors. In this context it will identify key elements of the new funding model and of the expected impacts including those on employers. The review will include consultation with stakeholders.

The policy review will be published by the end of April 2017, and will complement the on-going work by the Oireachtas Committee in relation to the Cassells report.

Student Unions

187. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which the student unions are likely to remain independent of college authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37049/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy will be aware, Universities and Institutes of Technologies are autonomous institutions and my Department does not have any function in relation to their day to day operational affairs, for which the Governing Bodies and the management staff of the institutions are responsible.

My understanding is that Student Unions are separate entities from the Higher Education Institutions and I understand that they run their own affairs independently of the Higher Education Institutions.

Neither my Department, nor the HEA, has any role in relation to the regulation or operation of Student Unions in Higher Education Institutions.

Third Level Fees

188. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding Northern Irish and British students enrolling in universities here; and if, post-Brexit, their current EU rate fee arrangements would apply. [37060/16]

196. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an amendment to the State's free fees initiative is envisaged to cater for Northern Ireland and UK students post-Brexit. [37166/16]

208. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if students from Northern Ireland or Britain who apply to study a third-level course here in the next term will

have their funding guaranteed as EU students for the duration of their course; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37322/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 188, 196 and 208 together.

The Government has published a contingency framework which maps the key issues that will be most important to Ireland arising from the UK's decision to leave the EU. It contains the key actions that will be taken to address the contingencies.

My Department participated fully in and contributed to the preparation of this framework for the education sector and has identified student flows as a priority area.

My Department is conscious of the resulting pressures that may fall on the Irish higher education system following the UK's decision to leave the EU. The Department will be liaising with all relevant parties, including the relevant education departments in the UK in relation to these pressures. These include issues with regard to the movement of students between this State and the UK, fees and student grant arrangements. The Higher Education Authority has also initiated discussion around the implications of BREXIT for the sector.

The Irish Universities Association has confirmed that all UK students currently enrolled in an Irish university will continue to enjoy the same conditions as other EU students regarding fees and contributions for the duration of their degree.

Gaelcholáistí Issues

189. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the provision of a gaelcholáiste in north Kildare, as previously indicated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37061/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The new schools which will open in 2017 and 2018 to cater for increased demographic demand nationwide were announced in November 2015. At that time it was stated that a Gaelcholáiste to serve the North Kildare area will open in 2019, subject to sufficient viability of the Irish-medium Aonad, which is currently part of Maynooth Community College.

The Gaelcholáiste will operate under the patronage of Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board with An Foras Pátrúnachta. My Department will continue to work closely with the Education and Training Board and An Foras Pátrúnachta in relation to the establishment of this Gaelcholáiste.

School Placement

190. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the source of the statistic used by his Department that on average 20% of schools, mostly in Dublin, are over-subscribed; if the statistic that 20% of schools use some selection criteria is correct; and if these figures are out of date. [37108/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The statistic referred to by the Deputy is based on information obtained from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) report "Adapting to Diversity: Irish Schools and Newcomer Students". This report was published in 2009 and looked at a broad range of issues in relation to the integration of new-

comer pupils in schools.

An element of the overall research considered the effects of admission practices and policies on the distribution of newcomer pupils across schools. It reported that at second level 80 per cent of principals said that all students who apply are usually accepted for admission and at primary level 81 per cent of principals said that all students were accepted.

In relation to schools admissions generally, it is the Department's responsibility to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking school places in an area. Parents can choose which school to apply to and where the school has places available the pupil should be admitted. However, in schools where there are more applicants than places available a selection process may be necessary.

This selection process and the enrolment policy on which it is based must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants. However, this may result in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice.

The Deputy will be aware that the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill was published on 6th July 2016 and progressed to second stage on 17th November 2016.

Publication of the Bill reflects the commitment in the Programme for Government to publish new School Admissions legislation taking account of current draft proposals and addressing issues including publication of school enrolment policies, an end to waiting lists, introduction of annual enrolment structures, and transparency and fairness in admissions for pupils and their parents.

The Bill will oblige all schools to admit pupils where there are available places. The Bill also provides for schools to explicitly state in the school's admission policy that it will not discriminate against an applicant for admission on the grounds of disability, special educational needs, sexual orientation, family status, membership of the traveller community, race, civil status, gender or religion while including provision for single sex schools and denominational schools to reflect, in their admission policy, the exemptions applicable to such schools under equality legislation.

The Bill also provides for the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) to designate a school for a child with no school place and for the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) to designate a school for a child who has no school place for reasons related to the child's special educational needs.

It is important to point out that my Department has opened 71 new schools since 2009 and that the staffing schedule across the school system is broadly the same compared to that year.

School Placement

191. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department has undertaken any research into the number of schools that employ selection criteria in their school admissions based primarily on religion rather than non-religious selection criteria, such as catchment area. [37109/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In relation to school admissions, it is the Department's responsibility to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking school places in an area. Parents can choose which school to apply to and where the school has places available the pupil should be admitted. However, in schools

where there are more applicants than places available a selection process may be necessary.

This selection process and the enrolment policy on which it is based must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants. However, this may result in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice.

A school's enrolment policy is a matter for school management and it would not be feasible for the Department to examine the enrolment policies of almost 4,000 primary and post primary schools across the country. Instead, the more effective way to deal with this particular issue is to require all schools to publish their admissions policy, so that communities and parents can scrutinise and compare them. This requirement is being enacted through the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016, which recently passed second stage.

Schools are not permitted to discriminate against an applicant for admission on any of the grounds set out in the Equal Status Act, 2000. However, Section 7 (3)(c) of the Equal Status Act 2000 provides that an educational establishment does not discriminate where the establishment is a school providing primary or post-primary education to students and the objective of the school is to provide education in an environment which promotes certain religious values, it admits persons of a particular religious denomination in preference to others or it refuses to admit as a student a person who is not of that denomination and, in the case of a refusal, it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) published a report "Adapting to Diversity: Irish Schools and Newcomer Students" in 2009. This report looked at a broad range of issues in relation to the integration of newcomer pupils in schools.

An element of the overall research considered the effects of admission practices and policies on the distribution of newcomer pupils across schools. It reported that at second level 80 per cent of principals said that all students who apply are usually accepted for admission and at primary level 81 per cent of principals said that all students were accepted.

The Deputy will be aware that the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill was published on 6th July 2016 and passed second stage on 17th November 2016.

Publication of the Bill reflects the commitment in the Programme for Government to publish new School Admissions legislation taking account of current draft proposals and addressing issues including publication of school enrolment policies, an end to waiting lists, introduction of annual enrolment structures, and transparency and fairness in admissions for pupils and their parents.

In bringing this legislation through the Oireachtas, there will be opportunities for members to raise and fully debate all of the relevant issues and I look forward to working with the Houses in this regard.

School Admissions

192. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department or a body under its aegis has undertaken any research into the number of children with autism spectrum disorder, ASD, who have not been admitted to a mainstream school in any given year, due to so-called soft barriers to entry as well as hard barriers such as the absence of special classes or individualised education programmes for students with ASD. [37110/16]

193. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the

fact that some children with autism spectrum disorder who could be taught in mainstream post-primary schools are being accommodated in special schools, due to the lack of availability of special classes or other suitable resources in mainstream schools. [37111/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 192 and 193 together.

The Deputy will be aware that this Government is committed to ensuring that all children with Special Educational Needs, including those with autism, can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in school settings through the primary and post primary school network.

Such placements facilitate access to individualised education programmes which may draw from a range of appropriate educational interventions, delivered by fully qualified professional teachers, with the support of Special Needs Assistants and the appropriate school curriculum.

Almost 14,000 students in schools have been diagnosed with autism. The Department of Education and Skills invests over €300m annually in providing additional resources specifically to support students with autism in schools enabling:

63% of students to attend mainstream schools;

23% to attend special classes in mainstream primary and post-primary schools; and

14% to attend special schools.

Resources which are provided to schools to support children with Autism include the following:

2,200 extra teachers in mainstream schools specifically to support children with Autism;

889 special classes for students with autism – up from fewer than 80 in 2001;

20 special schools specifically for students with Autism;

One teacher and a minimum of two Ss for every primary special class of six students with ASD and 1.5 teachers and a minimum of two Ss for every post-primary special class;

SNA support – About 69% of all students with ASD access Support;

Assistive technology;

Professional development for teachers;

Access to the Special School transport scheme;

Access to special equipment and furniture where required;

Enhanced capitation grant;

Adapted school buildings;

Access to the extended school year scheme (July Provision).

The NCSE, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), in consultation with the relevant education partners, is responsible for the establishment of special classes in various geographical areas as required. Special classes are part of a continuum of educational provision that enables students with more complex special educational needs to be

educated, in smaller class groups, within their local mainstream schools.

Special classes offer a supportive learning environment to students with ASD who are unable to access the curriculum in a mainstream class, even with support, for most or all of their school day. Special class for students with ASD are staffed with a lower pupil–teacher ratio of 6:1 at primary level and 6:1.5 at post primary level, and also have Special Needs Assistant support normally amounting to 2 Ss for a class of 6 children.

Students enrolled in special classes should be included in mainstream classes to the greatest extent possible, in line with their abilities.

The NCSE continues to engage with schools in opening special classes where there is an identified need for special class provision.

Progress in developing this network has been significant and in addition to the special school placements there are 1,153 special classes available, which is an increase of over 100% in the number of special classes which were available in 2011, which was 548.

This includes 127 ASD early intervention classes, 525 primary ASD classes and 237 post-primary ASD classes, which represents an increase of approx. 16% on 2015/16 classes for children with autism.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) published its policy advice on Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Schools in July. The report is available on the NCSE's website www.ncse.ie. In the course of preparing this policy advice, the NCSE commissioned two research papers and conducted extensive consultations with stakeholders including students, parents, teachers, principals, academics, experts, psychologists, HSE officials, officials from Departments of Health, Children and Youth Affairs and Education and Skills and others in developing this policy advice.

The NCSE found that Students are generally well supported in schools with appropriate curriculum; extensive teacher and S supports; improving range of educational placements supported by improved accommodation and equipment; improved teacher knowledge and understanding and a generally good standard of provision at primary and post primary levels.

Notwithstanding this, the NCSE acknowledged that while most schools welcome and enrol children with special educational needs, some continue to erect overt and/or soft barriers to prevent or discourage parents from enrolling their children.

The Department and the NCSE continue to work with, schools, patron representatives and management bodies to address these challenges. Where barriers to opening classes are identified the Department will address these barriers with the schools Patrons and Boards of Management with a view to overcoming the difficulties and establishing the required classes.

The Department retains records of the number of children with Autism for whom school placements are not available at a given time through its home tuition schemes. The Department also retains records of children who appeal schools' decisions to refuse enrolments. It is not possible however to identify the number of children in respect of whom soft barriers may have impacted their enrolments as in many cases alternative enrolment options are availed of by parents.

The Education (Admission to Schools) Bill was published on 6th July 2016. The Bill contains a provision which will empower the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) to designate a school for a child who has no school place for reasons related to the child's special educational needs and for the Child and Family Agency to designate a school for a child who

has no school place (other than a child with special educational needs).

In line with recommendations from the NCSE in policy advices provided in 2011, it is the policy of the Department to include a Special Needs Unit in the accommodation brief for new school buildings, unless local circumstances indicate that it will not be required. In addition, the Department may also provide capital funding to schools to establish special needs provision e.g. re-configure existing accommodation to provide a special class where this has been approved or recommended by the National Council for Special Education.

School Curriculum

194. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when it is proposed to introduce the new religion and ethics curriculum in primary schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37112/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Advisory Group to the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector recommended in its report that programmes in Education about Religion and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics be developed. The NCCA was asked to explore the development of such programmes.

The NCCA produced a Consultation Paper in 2015 outlining the proposed rationale, vision, aims and features of a curriculum in ERB and Ethics, and engaged in an extensive consultation process with patrons, education partners, schools, teachers and parents.

I have recently received a report on the consultation process from the NCCA, which will be published shortly. The report outlines the key messages arising from the consultation process and emerging directions for the development of a curriculum. I am considering the NCCA's advice on the approach and timelines to be adopted in developing curriculum provision for Education about Religions and Beliefs and Ethics at primary level.

Third Level Staff

195. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department or a body under its aegis, in considering any proposals to reform career structures for researchers with masters degrees and PhDs working in higher level institutions or in research bodies attached to these HEIs that receive State research funding and contracts, has concerns that contracts of indefinite duration used in these contexts to employ researchers have a negative effect on the State's ability to attract and retain research talent; and his views on whether these contracts can be exploitative of researchers. [37113/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Human capital is a critical factor in reaping economic and social rewards from investment in research. In this regard, a comprehensive framework for researcher careers brings clarity and certainty to the career structure and provides researchers with developmental opportunities to enhance their skills and employability, within academia, within the enterprise sector and also the wider economy.

Innovation 2020, Ireland's strategy for Research and Development, Science and Technology proposes the development of career pathways for researchers to help them maximise their potential and, as a consequence, help to maximise the return on Ireland's investment in innovation and research. In this regard the Irish Universities Association is developing a draft framework to address these issues and is consulting policy makers and research funders on its

development.

Success in initiatives such as Horizon 2020 will be maximised if researchers are being supported from an early-stage to improve their, and Ireland's, research impact. In addition to the work being done by the Irish Research Council in this area, I have provided funding in Budget 2017 for the Council to commence a new Frontiers Research Programme, which will enable the next generation of researchers to transition to Principal Investigator status.

In relation to the awarding of employment contracts, the higher education institutions are autonomous bodies and therefore have responsibility for the day to day management of their own affairs, including issues relating to the awarding of fixed-term contracts.

Question No. 196 answered with Question No. 188.

Brexit Issues

197. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the discussions he has had with his counterparts in Great Britain, the Northern Ireland and Scottish Assemblies and in the EU with regard to the education issues following Brexit. [37167/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Both I and the Secretary of State for Education in the UK have corresponded on the likely Brexit impacts on our respective education systems in terms of a range of areas affecting students, academics, research and others. It is our intention to meet to explore these issues further on a mutually suitable date.

I had a bi-lateral meeting with the Northern Ireland Minister for Education, Peter Weir MLA, on the margins of the North South Ministerial Council Plenary Meeting in Dublin Castle on 4th July 2016. While the meeting was mainly of an introductory nature, Brexit matters were discussed. This NSMC Plenary Meeting provided the new Irish Government and the new Northern Ireland Executive with the opportunity to meet formally for the first time and exchange views on a wide range of issues of mutual interest and concern, especially in light of the UK referendum result.

At the North South Ministerial Council Education Sectoral meeting in Armagh on 21st September I had a preliminary discussion with Minister Weir on the possible implications of Brexit and we agreed to have further discussions on the matter at future NSMC Education meetings. The next meeting is scheduled to take place in March 2017.

I attended the NSMC Plenary Meeting in Armagh on 18th November 2016 when further discussion on the implications of the UK Referendum took place. The meeting agreed that Ministers will continue their discussions at NSMC sectoral level in the coming months and that bilateral discussions will continue, as required, between relevant Ministers and officials.

At official level, the Secretary General of Department attended the UK/Ireland Permanent Secretary/Secretary General Summit in London on 5th and 6th October. The Summit discussed a wide range of areas concerning proposed post-Brexit arrangements. In this context I have asked my officials to build on their contacts with counterparts in Britain and across the devolved administrations to ensure a common understanding of the issues and priorities affecting our respective education systems in a post-Brexit scenario.

So far I have not had discussions with my counterpart in Scotland, and look forward to an opportunity to do so.

Equality Issues

198. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the CSO criteria he plans to use to decide which new schools will be able to access the DEIS scheme for the first time. [37202/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As you may be aware, a process to review the DEIS Programme which began last year is nearing completion and it is my intention to publish a new Action Plan for Educational Inclusion in the coming weeks.

The review process, is looking at all aspects of DEIS, including the range and impact of different elements of the School Support Programme, the potential for innovation within and between schools and its scope for increased integration of services provided by other Departments and Agencies, in order to improve effectiveness.

Among the measures to be included in the plan are a series of pilot schemes aimed at introducing measures which have been shown to work well in improving results for disadvantaged children and students. The plan is expected to include targeted measures in the area of:

School leadership;

School networks and clusters;

Teaching methodologies;

Integration of schools and other State supports within communities;

Greater use of Home School Community Liaison services.

A new assessment framework is also being developed using centrally held CSO and DES data for the identification of schools for inclusion in a new School Support Programme. The relevant CSO data is based on information drawn from the National Census of Population and includes socio-economic variables that are known predictors of poorer educational outcomes. The number of schools to be included in a new School Support Programme will be determined by this proposed new identification process which will assess all schools in the country. Schools will not be required to make an application for assessment as the methodology to be applied involves the use of centrally held data already available to my Department.

Implementation of actions arising from the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion will begin in the 2017/18 school year, and will be a continuing theme in our wider Annual Action Plan for Education.

Further information on the DEIS Review process is available on my Department's website at:

<http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Review-Process-Information-Note.pdf>.

Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools Scheme

199. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the appeals mechanism which will be in place for schools that fail to secure DEIS status in the next admissions to the scheme. [37203/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware, a process to review the DEIS Programme which began last year is nearing completion and it is my intention to publish a new Action Plan for Educational Inclusion in the coming weeks.

Included in the review process is the development of a new assessment framework using centrally held CSO and DES data for the identification of schools for inclusion in the new School Support Programme. The relevant CSO data is based on information drawn from the National Census of Population and includes socio-economic variables that are known predictors of poorer educational outcomes.

The number of schools to be included in the programme will be determined by this proposed new assessment framework which will assess all schools in the country. Schools will not be required to make an application for assessment as the methodology being developed involves the use of centrally held data already available to my Department. Arrangements for appropriate follow-up with schools to deal with issues arising from the assessment process are under consideration as part of the development of the assessment framework.

Implementation of actions arising from the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion will begin in the 2017/18 school year, and will be a continuing theme in our wider Annual Action Plan for Education.

Further information on the DEIS Review process is available on my Department's website at:

<http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Review-Process-Information-Note.pdf>.

Departmental Funding

200. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funding that has been provided to County Louth over the previous three years 2014 to 2016 by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37220/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Capital funding provided in the primary, post primary and third level sectors to County Louth in the years 2014 to 2016 is attached.

Details of all school capital works that have been funded by my Department, including in the area referred to by the Deputy, may be viewed on my Department's website at www.education.ie and this is updated regularly.

Capital expenditure details in respect of individual school projects can be provided on receipt of school name and roll number.

YEAR	PRIMARY & POST PRIMARY	THIRD LEVEL	TOTAL
2014	€15.740m	€0.600m	€16.340
2015	€24.445m	€0.900m	€25.345
2016	€16.788m	€0.750m	€17.538
			€59.223

Departmental Funding

201. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the applications submitted for funding projects from Louth County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016 in tabular form; and if the applications were successful. [37236/16]

204. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the applications submitted for funding and projects from Meath County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016, in tabular form; if the applications were successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37284/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 201 and 204 together.

I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has no record of receiving applications for funding projects from Louth and Meath County Councils.

Departmental Funding

202. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funding for projects in 2017 in County Louth to be funded by his Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37252/16]

205. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funding for projects in 2017 in County Meath to be funded by his Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37300/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 202 and 205 together.

In response to the Deputy's questions, all major school projects in Counties Louth and Meath which were on the Construction Programmes announced by the previous Ministers and have not reached tender and construction stage will continue to be progressed through the architectural and design stages and remain to be considered for progression to tender and construction stages over the course of 2017. It is my Department's intention to fully implement these programmes to completion.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the decision as to when an individual school project can commence the tender and construction stage depends on factors such as the stage reached by the project in the architectural process, the extent of contractual commitments and availability of funding under the programme at that time. I also wish to advise the Deputy that my Department is liaising directly with each of these schools in relation to their projects. Details of the schools that are approved to advance to tender and construction stage over the course of 2017 will be updated to my Department's website www.education.ie at the appropriate time.

Departmental Funding

203. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funding that has been provided to County Meath over the previous three years 2014 to 2016 by project name, location and funding amount in tabular form. [37268/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The capital funding provided in the primary and post primary sectors in County Meath in the years 2014-2016 is as follows:

Year	Amount
2014	€24.072m
2015	€31.952m
2016	€39.687m

Details of all school capital works that have been funded by my Department, including in the area referred to by the Deputy, may be viewed on my Department's website at www.education.ie and this is updated regularly.

Capital expenditure details in respect of individual school projects can be provided on receipt of school name and roll number.

Question No. 204 answered with Question No. 201.

Question No. 205 answered with Question No. 202.

School Curriculum

206. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he plans to publish guidelines to schools in relation to best practice for children that wish to opt out of receiving religious instruction; the timeframe for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37320/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Article 44 of the Constitution and Section 30 of the Education Act 1998, provides that parents have a right to have their children opt out of religion classes if they so wish. The manner in which any school ensures that the right to opt out of religion classes is upheld is a matter for the school concerned.

Each individual school must determine the particular arrangements which are most appropriate in its individual circumstances having regard to local issues such as available space, supervision requirements and how the school concerned organises classes etc.

The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the primary school sector (2012) recommended steps that could be taken to ensure that the education system can provide a sufficiently diverse number and range of primary schools to cater for children of all religions and none.

The Programme for Government includes a commitment to increase the number of multi-denominational schools to 400 by 2030. However, existing schools will continue to be expected to cater for the full range of traditions, religions and beliefs in the community.

A public consultation on inclusiveness in primary schools was carried out in 2013. Views were sought on issues such as how best to accommodate students of various belief systems and traditions and having school policies on the conduct of religious celebrations and the display of religious symbols. A paper, entitled "Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector: Progress to Date and Future Directions", which took account of the public consultation, was published in 2014. The paper outlined good practice and options for promoting diversity in schools in a number of areas, including the right to opt-out of religious classes.

The paper gives an overview of current practice in schools in relation to the right to opt-out of religious classes and states that each school should arrive at solutions that suit its own particular context and to engage in dialogue with parents about the arrangements to be put in

place before the child starts school. Schools are encouraged to develop their own practices and policies in this regard.

Subsequently, the Catholic Schools Partnership (2015) developed a resource for Catholic schools entitled 'Catholic Primary Schools in a Changing Ireland: Sharing Good Practice on Inclusion of All Pupils'. It gives suggestions on developing policies and sharing best practice with regard to inclusion of all pupils, which gives practical suggestions to schools in how to engage positively in inter-cultural dialogue.

The Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016, which passed second stage on the 17th November 2016, also includes a specific requirement that school enrolment policies must include details of the school's arrangements for any students who do not wish to attend religious instruction.

I believe this is an important measure which will help ensure transparency from the outset as to how a school will uphold the rights of parents in this regard.

The Department has also been working on draft legislation to provide for replacing the current Section 28 of the Education Act, 1998. The legislation will provide the statutory basis for ministerial guidelines which will form the framework for a Parents' and Students' Charter in every school following consultation with parents, students, recognised school management bodies and staff associations representing teachers and other appropriate bodies.

The Parents and Students Charter Bill essentially deals with how schools communicate with parents and will provide an opportunity for dealing with such issues.

Special Educational Needs Data

207. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of schools that were invited by his Department to participate in the pilot model for the proposed new resource allocation model for children with special educational needs; the number that refused; the reasons for the refusal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37321/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Deputy will be aware that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has a statutory role under the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 to provide me with policy advice in relation to matters concerning the education of persons with special educational needs.

The NCSE identified that the current model for allocating resource teachers to schools is potentially inequitable, because access to the range of professional assessments required for the diagnosis of low incident disabilities is not always readily available to those who cannot afford to access them privately. The NCSE has also advised that the current model can lead to unnecessary labelling of children from a young age.

The NCSE has proposed a new resource teaching allocation model which will, when introduced, remove the formal requirement for diagnostic assessment to access additional support and which will provide resources to schools based on school profiles.

Some 66 schools were invited to participate in this pilot. 19 schools, including 15 primary schools and 4 posts primary schools, declined to participate in the pilot project. These schools were unable to participate for a number of reasons, such as due to the time required to be involved in the project, or involvement in a range of other projects or pilots.

The pilot of this new model was therefore conducted in 47 schools over the course of the 2015/16 school year. 28 at Primary School and 19 at Post Primary School.

A review of this pilot has been completed and a report of the review is currently being finalised.

I understand that the review will indicate that the new model has been positively received by schools and parents.

Schools indicated that they welcomed the increased flexibility and autonomy provided by the model to allocate resources based on need. Most schools believe the model allows more scope for team teaching, targeted interventions, mix of in-class and group work, with less focus on withdrawal and one to one teaching. Schools welcome the move away from the unnecessary labelling of children in order to secure resources. Schools also welcomed that they no longer need to wait for diagnosis and that this facilitates intervention at an earlier stage based on the schools identification of need. In addition schools indicated a belief that they were broadly well supported in meeting the needs of children with Special Educational Needs.

As part the recent Budget announcements, I announced that following development and piloting over the past number of years, a new model for the allocation of teaching resources for children with special educational needs will be implemented from September 2017.

An additional €18 million will be provided in 2017 to provide for around 900 resource teacher posts.

Further details regarding implementation of the new model will be announced in the coming months.

Question No. 208 answered with Question No. 188.

Brexit Issues

209. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department has put in place a plan to address the issues facing the education sector by the proposed exit of Britain from the EU; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37323/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Government has a contingency framework in place which maps the key issues that will be most important to Ireland in the coming weeks and months. The Government has published the key actions that will be taken to address the contingencies arising from the UK's decision to leave the EU.

My Department participated fully in and contributed to the preparation of this framework for the education sector. Contingency planning and stakeholder consultations are being led and managed by the EU/International unit of the Department. This Unit reports regularly to the Management Board, the Secretary General and myself on Brexit planning. Their role included participation in cross-Departmental planning and co-ordination Groups.

Following the British Prime Minister's announcement of the intention to invoke Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty by March 2017 the Government on 4th October 2016 detailed further actions to ensure continuing effective management of, and engagement on, Brexit issues. Six working groups were established to deepen the analysis already undertaken by Departments of the sectoral implications of Brexit. Their purpose is to advise Government on the sectoral and thematic contexts and priority recommended Government actions both in terms of negotiation

process and policy measures.

Among these, the Economy and Trade Workgroup has five sub-groups concerned with specific sectoral issues including education. Chaired by my Department and representative of a number of agencies and other Departments, the Education subgroup met on 28 October 2016 to consider key issues and priorities for the Irish education sector in the context of the future discussions and negotiations should the UK Government proceed as announced to invoke Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty in early 2017. Further meetings of the Education Subgroup will be held in the coming weeks and will reflect on the outcomes of the stakeholder engagement process that is under way.

In seeking to respond to these issues dialogue and consultation with stakeholders and interested parties form an integral part of our Brexit planning. In that regard I opened a Brexit information event for the education sector on 14 November 2016 in Dublin. At this event I set out the latest Government position and actions to prepare for Brexit, and outlined the format of further consultations to take place to confirm our priorities in preparation for the negotiation phase in 2017.

To that end I have asked my Department to convene consultative fora for the schools sector, the further education and training sector and the higher education sector in December 2016 and January 2017. My intention is that these events will facilitate the widest possible involvement of stakeholders across our education system and help us achieve a fuller understanding of their issues and concerns as we continue to plan for the UK's exit from the EU.

National Educational Psychological Service Data

210. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the average time between referral for assessment and report completion for children assessed by the National Educational Psychology Service for each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37324/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I can inform the Deputy that the average time in days between the referral for assessment of a student to my Department's National Educational Psychological Service and the furnishing of a formal report to Parents and School Authorities was for 2011/12, 78 days; 2012/13, 80 days; 2013/14, 73 days; 2014/15, 75 days; and 2015/16, 66 days. This data is derived from the NEPS Casetrack system which records short-hand details of NEPS psychologist pupil referrals.

I can also inform the Deputy that these time differentials do not accurately reflect the gap in time between the raising of a referral and the provision of advice and support to the school and parents on the concerns raised in relation to children undergoing assessment. This in fact is usually imparted much earlier through post assessment feedback followed by a later provision of a formal written report.

Tionscadail Tógála Scoileanna

211. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Carol Nolan** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna an dtabharfaidh sé tuairisc maidir leis an dul chun cinn atá á dhéanamh chun foirgneamh nua a thógáil do Ghaelscoil Riabhach, Baile Locha Riach, Co. na Gaillimhe; an bhfuil muinín ag an Aire go mbeidh an scoil ullamh le bogadh isteach inti ag tús scoilbhliain 2017/2018; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [37325/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Tá an chéim le seilbh a fháil ar shuíomh do Ghaelscoil Riabhach beagnach curtha i gcrích agus mura dtagann aon fhadhbanna chun cinn nach bhfuiltear ag súil leo, táthar ag dréim a bheith críochnaithe go luath.

A luaithe agus atá seilbh faighte ar an suíomh is féidir leis an tionscadal bogadh ar aghaidh go dtí an obair thógála. Ní féidir clár tascach maidir leis an tionscadal a thabhairt chun críche a chur ar fáil go dtí sin.

Riachtanais Speisialta Oideachais

212. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Carol Nolan** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna an dtabharfaidh sé soiléiriú maidir le cén uair a chuirfidh an Roinn maoiniú breise ar fáil chun áiseanna agus seomraí breise a sholáthar do scoil Tí Nan Dooley ar an gCeathrú Rua, Co. na Gaillimhe, ionas gur féidir leo an curaclam iomlán a sholáthar do na daltaí ansin; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [37326/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Is féidir liom a dheimhniú gur chuir an scoil a ndearna an Teachta Dála tagairt di iarratas ar chóiríocht bhreise faoi bhráid mo Roinne. Tá soiléiriú maidir leis an iarratas iarrtha ag mo Roinn ar an scoil. Nuair atá an t-eolas seo faighte againn déanfar an t-iarratas a bhreithniú tuilleadh agus cuirfear cinneadh in iúl don scoil.

School Staff

213. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the specific training that is provided to teachers to equip them with the skills necessary to address incidents of physical violence from students, whether directed at the teacher or other member of staff or between two or more students; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37327/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): All teachers receive training in behaviour management and in an understanding of the developmental and emotional needs of children and young people as part of their initial teacher education programme. Individual school management authorities are responsible for health and safety matters within their school. There is no specific training on physical safety for teachers provided by the Department's support services as training on health and safety matters can be addressed by individual schools and tailored to their assessed training needs.

School Admissions

214. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the rationale behind the approach taken in the draft regulations on school admissions which were published in September 2013 that sought to limit the number of places that could be allocated to children of past pupils to a maximum of 25%. [37339/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Education (Admission to Schools) Bill was published on 6 July 2016 and passed second stage on 17 November 2016.

Publication of the Bill reflects the commitment in the Programme for Government to publish new School Admissions legislation taking account of current draft proposals and addressing issues including publication of school enrolment policies, an end to waiting lists, introduc-

tion of annual enrolment structures, and transparency and fairness in admissions for pupils and their parents.

The Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 provides that where a school has places available it must admit all applicants. The Bill clarifies the power of the Minister to make regulations and sets out clearly matters relating to enrolment that regulations may address.

The Bill aims to strike an appropriate balance between school autonomy and the interests of parents in our education system.

In relation to a school providing priority in admissions to children of past pupils, the approach taken in the draft regulations, which were published with the General Scheme in September 2013 by the then Minister for Education Mr. Ruairí Quinn, aimed to strike a balance by limiting the number of places that could be allocated by an oversubscribed school to children of past pupils to a maximum of 25%.

At present the Admissions Bill is silent in relation to any power to determine a limitation on priority for children of past pupils where a school is oversubscribed either by setting a percentage or otherwise.

I consider that in bringing the Bill through the Oireachtas, there will be opportunities for members to raise and fully debate this matter, which I plan to deal with in primary legislation by way of an amendment to the Bill.

My view is that the previous proposal by the then Minister Quinn, that this limitation be set at 25%, is broadly where I see consensus being possible. However, I intend to listen to all views on this matter.

Schools Building Projects Status

215. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of a permanent extension for a school (details supplied); when work will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37340/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The project to which the Deputy refers was authorised to proceed to tender recently. The Design Team are currently undertaking the pre-qualification of suitable contractors. This process will be completed early in the New Year.

It is anticipated that the Design Team will be in a position to issue tender documents to the selected contractors in the first quarter of 2017.

School Accommodation Provision

216. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a decision will be made on an application for funding by a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37341/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I can confirm that the school referred to by the Deputy has submitted an application to my Department for capital funding for the provision of additional school accommodation.

The application is currently being assessed a decision will be conveyed to the school authority as soon as the assessment process has been finalised.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

217. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a special needs assistant will be provided to a person (details supplied). [37439/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), which is an independent statutory agency, is responsible, through its network of Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports, including S support.

The NCSE allocates S support to schools in accordance with the criteria set out in my Department's Circular 0030/2014, which is available on my Department's website at www.education.ie in order that students who have care needs can access S support as and when it is needed.

It should be noted that S allocations are not made to individual children, but are made to schools to support the care needs of children with assessed special educational needs in the school.

Responsibility for deciding on the quantum of educational supports and resources to be allocated to schools to support individual pupils rests with the NCSE.

Where a school wishes to appeal the S support allocation which has been made to them, they may do so through the NCSE appeal process, details of which are set out at www.ncse.ie. The option to invoke the NCSE appeals process is open to the school in question.

All schools have the contact details of their local SENO. Contact details are also available on the NCSE website. The local SENO is also available to discuss any concerns that parents have about the present or future educational needs of their child.

As the question raised by the Deputy relates to an application for S support for an individual child, I have arranged for this question to be forwarded to the NCSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

School Staff

218. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will approve the resources that may be necessary for the allocation of a temporary teaching post until June 2017 for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37446/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The criteria used for the allocation of teaching posts for the 2016/2017 school year is set out in the Staffing Schedule (Circular 0007/2016) which is available on the Department website. The key factor for determining the level of staffing resources provided at individual school level is the staffing schedule for the relevant school year and pupil enrolments on the 30 September 2015. The staffing schedule also includes an appeals mechanism for schools to submit an appeal under certain criteria to an independent Appeals Board.

The school referred to by the Deputy submitted an application for consideration by the Appeals Board at its October meeting under the Small Schools criteria. The requirements set out

in the staffing circular under this criteria state that the school must have the required enrolment on 30th September 2016 for the appointment of an additional teacher for September 2017 in order to be granted an appeal post for this school year. In the case of this school, an enrolment of 19 was required on 30th September 2016 to meet this criteria. As the school had an enrolment of 17 on that date, the Appeals Board determined that the appeal did not satisfy all of the published criteria as set out in Circular 0007/2016. The Appeals Board operates independently of the Department and its decision is final.

The measure announced in Budget 2017 provides a capacity for one teacher mainland schools to make an appeal to the Staffing Appeals Board for an extra teacher, where the single teacher has children across 6 or more class groups. Before a school can make an appeal to the Staffing Appeals Board it must have a minimum enrolment of 15 pupils. The detailed arrangements for this measure will be set out in the staffing schedule Circular for the 2017/18 school year i.e. the date this measure is effective from. The circular will be published early in 2017.

School Accommodation

219. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the case of a school (details supplied) which has applied to his Department under the additional school accommodation for primary schools fund for a parents room in the school; if he will acknowledge that the application has been received; the process for progressing the application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37452/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I can confirm that the school to which the Deputy refers has submitted an application to my Department for capital funding for the provision of additional accommodation. The application is currently being considered in the context of the competing demands on my Department's capital budget, imposed by the need to prioritise the available funding for the provision of essential classroom accommodation to meet demographic growth. A decision will be conveyed to the school authority as soon as possible.

Teaching Contracts

220. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 139 of 17 November 2016, if sitting Members in the Houses of the Oireachtas are restricted from applying for the job sharing scheme; the part of the Government decision (details supplied) made on 1 February 2011 which restricts sitting Oireachtas Members from applying for the job sharing scheme; the provision of Statutory Instrument No. 110 of 2011 which gave effect to the Government decision of 1 February 2011 which restricts the eligibility for sitting Oireachtas Members to apply for the job sharing scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37455/16]

226. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 139 of 17 November 2016, the reason it is not expressly detailed in chapter 5 5.5 of the terms and conditions of employment for registered teachers in recognised primary and post primary schools that sitting Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas who are teachers on a career break may not apply to resume teaching duties on a job sharing basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37478/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 220 and 226 together.

The position is, and for the avoidance of doubt, I can confirm that a teacher who is a sitting member of the Oireachtas cannot retain their post on a job sharing or full-time basis while serving as a member of the Oireachtas. This gives effect to the Government decision of 2011 which revised the employment and pension arrangements for teachers who became Oireachtas members so that any member of the Oireachtas who holds a teaching post in a primary, secondary, community, comprehensive or vocational school would have the option of applying for a career break of up to 10 years. This replaced then existing leave arrangements. The decision also applied to lecturing staff of Institutes of Technology. The December 2015 Government decision extended these career break/unpaid leave provisions to all staff in the education and training sector.

Prior to the 2011 Government decision, teachers who were elected to the Oireachtas could enjoy beneficial leave arrangements. Under these arrangements, a teacher who was elected as a T.D. or Senator was paid full salary. A temporary replacement teacher was employed and the Oireachtas member teacher repaid the salary of that replacement teacher to the Department/ their employer, together with the appropriate superannuation and employer's PRSI contributions. The Oireachtas member teacher retained any surplus amount. The Oireachtas member teacher continued to accrue incremental credit in their teaching post. In addition to this, Oireachtas member teachers in primary, voluntary secondary and Community and Comprehensive schools continued to accumulate pensionable service in both their teaching post and as a member of the Oireachtas.

The 2011 Government decision is communicated to school management and teachers in Chapter 4 of the Terms & Conditions of Employment for Registered Teachers in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools - Career Break Scheme where it states: "The main objectives of this scheme below, which are not exhaustive, is for employers, wherever possible to facilitate applicants in the areas of: Public Representation".

To permit Oireachtas members to job share in a teaching post whilst still members of the Oireachtas would mean such members receiving two public salaries at the same time. One as a public representative and one as a teacher with consequent reduced hours for the existing replacement teacher.

The reason public representation is not stated in chapter 5 of the Terms & Conditions of Employment for Registered Teachers in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools – Job Sharing Scheme is because public representation is already covered in Chapter 4 of the book.

The effect of the Government decisions is that the only means by which a person employed in the education and training sector who takes up a seat in the Oireachtas can temporarily take leave from their post and subsequently return to it is through taking a career break/period of unpaid leave.

I am aware that a number of Oireachtas members are employed as teachers or at other grades in the education and training sector. The career break/unpaid leave arrangements apply to all such individuals while they are sitting Oireachtas members. I am sure that you, along with all members of the Oireachtas, will appreciate the thinking behind the Government decisions in this matter and to allow an Oireachtas member to job share in a teaching post whilst at the same time attend the Oireachtas as a member would not be in keeping with the Government decision.

Schools Building Projects Status

221. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a purchase has

been completed for a site for a school (details supplied). [37456/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Officials from my Department have worked closely with officials from Meath County Council under the Memorandum of Understanding for the acquisition of a school site for the provision of permanent accommodation for the school referred to by the Deputy.

I can confirm that agreement in principle has been reached with a landowner in respect of a site to accommodate the school. The next stage in the acquisition process is the completion of the conveyancing process. Officials in my Department are liaising with representatives of the landowner in order to progress the acquisition through this stage.

The school patron will be informed as soon as the acquisition is complete.

Questions Nos. 222 and 223 answered with Question No. 180.

School Services Staff

224. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide for a scheme for schools to employ secretaries separate from capitation payments. [37464/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): A scheme was initiated in 1978 for the employment of Clerical Officers in primary and secondary schools. While a small number of these staff remain in schools, the scheme is being phased out and has been superseded by a more extensive capitation grant scheme.

The majority of primary and voluntary secondary schools in the Free Education Scheme now receive capitation grant assistance to provide for secretarial (and caretaking and cleaning services). Within the capitation grant schemes, it is a matter for each individual school to decide how best to apply the grant funding to suit its particular needs.

My Department has no plans to develop an alternative scheme for schools to employ secretaries separate to the current system of capitation grant assistance.

National Educational Psychological Service Data

225. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the schools throughout the State which do not currently have a NEPS psychologist assigned to them, in tabular form. [37466/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy may be aware my Department's National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) provides an educational psychological service to schools through the direct assignment of a NEPS psychologist and in some cases through by providing schools access to the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments (SCPA) where schools can have an assessment carried out by a member of the panel of private psychologists approved by NEPS, and NEPS will pay the psychologist the fees for this assessment directly.

In respect of NEPS staffing, NEPs psychologists are recruited via regional panels formed from national recruitment competitions administered by the Public Appointments service. In the case of some schools, NEPs psychologists may no longer be assigned to those schools as a result of retirement, resignation or transfer to another NEPs region, and while every effort was

made to recruit a replacement from the existing PAS panels sometimes this is not successful.

However it is important to point out that in these cases, these schools continue to have access to a psychologist through the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments which is also run by NEPS.

A new national recruitment competition has been put in place by PAS to fill vacancies within all NEPS Regions. The closing date for applications is now passed and work is currently ongoing in relation to the examination of applications and short-listing of candidates for interview. It is envisaged, following interviews, that recruitment panels will be formed and active filling of vacancies will commence in the New Year.

The table lists the schools which do not currently have a NEPS psychologist assigned to them under the assigned NEPS psychologist scheme, and which therefore are relying on the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments.

It is also important to point out that all schools are able to access full NEP supports in the event of a critical incident.

[[Schools](/debates%20authoring/webattachments.nsf/0/3DF8CB211D65BE498025807C00470DF6/$File/Schools.docx?openelement)]

Question No. 226 answered with Question No. 220.

Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools Scheme

227. Deputy Seamus Healy asked the Minister for Education and Skills the criteria for DEIS status and funding going forward with regard to the review of DEIS; if there are changes to the component of DEIS; the most relevant information in supporting a submission; the time-frame for the roll-out of the new DEIS; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37515/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As you may be aware, a process to review the DEIS Programme which began last year is nearing completion and it is my intention to publish a new Action Plan for Educational Inclusion in the coming weeks.

The review process is looking at all aspects of DEIS, including the range and impact of different elements of the School Support Programme, the potential for innovation within and between schools and its scope for increased integration of services provided by other Departments and Agencies, in order to improve effectiveness.

Among the measures to be included in the plan are a series of pilot schemes aimed at introducing measures which have been shown to work well in improving results for disadvantaged children and students. The plan is expected to include targeted measures in the area of:

- School leadership
- School networks and clusters
- Teaching methodologies
- Integration of schools and other State supports within communities
- Greater use of Home School Community Liaison services

Overall resources under the new School Support Programme, including funding, will be

informed by the outcome of this review process.

A new assessment framework is also being developed using centrally held CSO and DES data for the identification of new schools for inclusion. The number of schools to be included in the programme will be determined by this proposed new identification process which will assess all schools in the country. Schools will not be required to submit an application for assessment as the methodology being applied involves the use of centrally held data already available to my Department.

Funding will be considered as part of the Action Plan.

Implementation of actions arising from the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion will begin in the 2017/18 school year, and will be a continuing theme in our wider Annual Action Plan for Education.

Further information on the DEIS Review process is available on my Department's website at <http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Review-Process-Information-Note.pdf>

Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools Scheme

228. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the rank that Tipperary town has regarding the review of DEIS, in view of the fact that no primary school in Tipperary town has DEIS status; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37516/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As you may be aware, a process to review the DEIS Programme which began last year is nearing completion and it is my intention to publish a new Action Plan for Educational Inclusion in the coming weeks.

The review process is looking at all aspects of DEIS, including the range and impact of different elements of the School Support Programme, the potential for innovation within and between schools and its scope for increased integration of services provided by other Departments and Agencies, in order to improve effectiveness.

Among the measures to be included in the plan are a series of pilot schemes aimed at introducing measures which have been shown to work well in improving results for disadvantaged children and students. The plan is expected to include targeted measures in the area of:

- School leadership
- School networks and clusters
- Teaching methodologies
- Integration of schools and other State supports within communities
- Greater use of Home School Community Liaison services

A new assessment framework is also being developed using centrally held CSO and DES data for the identification of schools for inclusion in a new School Support Programme. The relevant CSO data is based on information drawn from the National Census of Population and includes socio-economic variables that are known predictors of poorer educational outcomes. The number of schools to be in a new School Support Programme, including schools in Tipperary, will be determined by this proposed new identification process which will assess all schools in the

country. Schools will not be required to make an application for assessment as the methodology to be applied involves the use of centrally held data already available to my Department.

Implementation of actions arising from the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion will begin in the 2017/18 school year, and will be a continuing theme in our wider Annual Action Plan for Education.

Further information on the DEIS Review process is available on my Department's website at <http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Review-Process-Information-Note.pdf>

School Accommodation Provision

229. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address matters in respect of a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37524/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has no record of receiving an application from the school in question for capital funding for the works referred to in the details supplied.

I can however advise the Deputy that all applications for capital funding must be considered in the context of the significant challenge facing my Department in ensuring that every child has access to a physical school place and that the limited funding available is expended on meeting demographic demand and providing classroom accommodation where an additional teacher is being appointed.

The details supplied also made reference to works that the school wish to have undertaken outside of the vested school site, including road safety measures and the availability of a Lollipop attendant. My Department has no function in this area. These are matters that the school may wish to take up directly with the local authority.

School Accommodation Provision

230. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding an application for additional school accommodation by a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37533/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The application for additional accommodation by the school referred to by the Deputy has been assessed and a decision will be conveyed to the school authority shortly.

Departmental Reports

231. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reports commissioned by his Department since 2006 which while completed or are in final draft form have not been published; the reason they have not been published; the expected publication date; the cost to date of each such report; if tenders were invited; if it is not intended to publish any such report the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37546/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Department does not record or compile information in the format requested by the Deputy and it is consequently unavailable. Since 2011, the Department publishes details of consultancy engagements on its website and this includes information in relation to the status of reports that were produced through the consultancy process <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Corporate-Reports/Financial-Reports/Expenditure-on-Consultancy/>. Details in respect of consultants engaged in 2016 will be compiled and published in early 2017.

Should the Deputy have a particular interest regarding any of the items in the published lists or in relation to any other specific subject matter, officials will endeavour to supply further details.

School Curriculum

232. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason history is being considered as a non-core subject at junior certificate level; his views on this proposal; the timeframe for the introduction of this proposal; if concerns have been expressed by stakeholders; if his Department plans to hold a public consultation process in respect of the proposal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37582/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In line with the philosophy of the Framework for Junior Cycle, no subject or short course will be deemed compulsory apart from Irish, English and Mathematics, and the new area of learning of Wellbeing. Thereafter schools will have the flexibility and autonomy to choose from 18 other subjects, including History. Schools will be given flexibility to shape their own junior cycle programme by including a selection of subjects, short courses and other learning experiences that will allow their students to meet the requirements of the twenty-four statements of learning outlined in the Framework.

Overall, I am in favour of leaving the decision on what is offered at the discretion of the school. Curriculum choice is important in motivating students to learn and to remain in school to completion of senior cycle. The vast majority of schools already offer History and Geography and the vast majority of students choose these subjects although they are currently compulsory in only half our schools. The popularity of subjects depends on the quality of teaching, the passion of the teachers for their subjects and the engagement of their students. I see no reason why the popularity of History will change in the future.

History will begin implementation in schools from September 2018, with the new specification being made available in mid 2017.

My Department met with representatives of the History Teachers' Association of Ireland in early 2012 and the discussion at that meeting helped to inform the design of the JC Framework. I have every confidence that the changes envisaged in Framework will ensure that the place of historical study will be retained and given a new impetus across the junior cycle curriculum. Such an impetus should help to improve take up of History at senior cycle also.

National Training Fund

233. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there is a current surplus in the national training fund; the expected increases in the fund; if there is a surplus projected in the fund; if there is further projected spending of the fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37583/16]

234. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the details of the spend from the national training fund and the projected spend in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37584/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 233 and 234 together.

The amount collected by the employment levy for the National Training Fund (NTF) varies due to changes in numbers of people in employment. Receipts went from a high of €413m in 2008 to €299m in 2012. Receipts then increased to €364m in 2015 and are expected to be up to €383m this year. It is expected that there will be a surplus of €217m in the fund at year end and €272m at the end of 2017.

A total of €362million was allocated from the National Training Fund for training and services this year and a similar amount has been provided for 2017. It should also be noted that NTF funding forms part of the Department's annual overall expenditure ceiling and any increase in NTF expenditure would have to be offset by reductions in expenditure elsewhere.

In 2016 the allocation from the NTF is almost €83 million for training for the employed and almost €279 million for training for unemployed people. There will be a rebalancing of this funding in 2017, with greater provision for programmes for people in employment such as apprenticeship and programmes run by Skillnets. Demand for these programmes are rising as apprenticeship registrations rise, new apprenticeships are developed and greater numbers of employers engage with Skillnets. Demand for training for unemployed people is reducing as unemployment continues to fall.

In accordance with the NTF Act the surplus remains in the accounts of the National Training Fund. In the past, the accumulated surplus in the fund has been important in maintaining expenditure levels, particularly in the provision of training for the unemployed, in periods when receipts fell.

Adult Education Provision

235. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the actions taken by his Department to address the concerns outlined in the Special Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General in February 2012 entitled, Matters Arising out of Education Audits; if any of these concerns are outstanding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37585/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): A number of matters were raised by the Comptroller and Auditor General in his report of February 2012, Matters Arising out of Education Audits. The majority of the matters raised have been addressed, some have been overtaken by events since the publication of the report. The issue regarding the payment of contributions for the 'pay-as-you-go' model pension schemes in the University sector has been the subject of discussions with the Higher Education Authority and the Comptroller and Auditor General and I understand has been satisfactorily resolved.

Higher Education Institutions Expenditure

236. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the audited accounts of higher education institutions in receipt of public funds are made public; the latest date for which the audited accounts of such institutions have been completed; and if he will make a

statement on the matter. [37586/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The financial statements of all of the Universities and Institutes of Technology are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) and are laid by my Department before the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Once audited by the C&AG the Universities and Institutes are obliged to submit to my Department their audited accounts, along with the C&AG audit certificate within one month of completion of the audit by the C&AG. My Department must then lay the accounts before the Houses of the Oireachtas within two months of them being received.

Institutes of Technology Funding

237. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department is considering extending borrowing rights to institutes of technology, particularly in view of the recent HEA financial review of the institute of technology sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37587/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy may be aware, Institutes of Technology (IoTs) are classified as within General Government Balance for Eurostat purposes. This arises primarily due to the smaller level of income received by IoTs from non-State sources as against the Universities which have a higher proportion. The Deputy will appreciate the recent economic crisis and continuing constraints on Government as a result of EU fiscal rules on expenditure and debt levels has to date prevented the agreement of a borrowing framework for the IoTs.

However, my Department is continuing to discuss with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform the possibility of agreeing a borrowing framework as part of broader deliberations arising from the report of the Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education and the recently published Financial Review of the IoTs by the Higher Education Authority (HEA).

I can assure the Deputy that the HEA has been closely monitoring the financial position of all of the IoTs and in particular are working closely with those Institutes that are experiencing financial difficulties in order to ensure appropriate mechanisms are put in place to eliminate any deficit as quickly as possible.

The Financial Review of the Institutes was carried out by the HEA in order to provide an overview of the financial health of the IoT sector, to consider capacity issues and to examine the challenges for the institutions given their respective plans for the future. The report makes a number of recommendations on how some of the issues which contribute to funding problems in the IoT sector can be addressed, including the introduction of a borrowing framework to facilitate campus development in IoTs. All of the policy recommendations will feed into the work currently being undertaken on developing a sustainable funding model for the sector.

Special Educational Needs Staff

238. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if savings will be made by his Department by the introduction of the new resource allocation model for special educational needs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37588/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Deputy will be aware that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has a statutory role under the Educa-

tion of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 to provide me with policy advice in relation to matters concerning the education of persons with special educational needs. The NCSE identified that the current model for allocating resource teachers to schools is potentially inequitable, because access to the range of professional assessments required for the diagnosis of low incident disabilities is not always readily available to those who cannot afford to access them privately. The NCSE has also advised that the current model can lead to unnecessary labelling of children from a young age.

The NCSE has proposed a new resource teaching allocation model which will, when introduced, remove the formal requirement for diagnostic assessment to access additional support and which will provide resources to schools based on school profiles.

As part the recent Budget announcements, I announced that following development and piloting over the past number of years, a new model for the allocation of teaching resources for children with special educational needs will be implemented from September 2017.

An additional €18 million will be provided in 2017 to provide for around 900 resource teacher posts to support the introduction of this model.

Savings will therefore not be made by my Department by the introduction of the new resource teaching allocation model. Rather, additional provision is being made to support the introduction of the model, which is aimed at improving outcomes for the students involved. The total number of resource teachers which will be provided will be known when the school profiling exercise has been completed.

Further details regarding implementation of the new model will be announced in the coming months.

Higher Education Institutions

239. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a review has taken place of the procurement practices within the education sector, particularly in the higher education sector; if such a review is proposed; if concerns have been raised with his Department in relation to procurement practices in the higher education sector or other bodies within the remit of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37589/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department in conjunction with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) has decided to commence a series of Corporate Governance Compliance Reviews utilising a centralised procurement framework to deliver reviews which will evaluate the effectiveness of governance in organisations against stated policy, best practice, national and international standards.

The first such 'rolling review' which has commenced is looking at governance compliance practices in relation to procurement across the higher education sector. I understand that the final report will be submitted to officials of my Department shortly.

As the Deputy will be aware higher education institutions are bound by public procurement procedures in relation to their spending. The tender process and legal arrangements are a matter for the individual institutions as autonomous bodies.

School Curriculum

240. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on maintaining history as a core subject for the junior certificate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37592/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In line with the philosophy of the Framework for Junior Cycle, no subject or short course will be deemed compulsory apart from Irish, English and Mathematics, and the new area of learning of Wellbeing. Thereafter schools will have the flexibility and autonomy to choose from 18 other subjects, including History.

Schools will be given flexibility to shape their own junior cycle programme by including a selection of subjects, short courses and other learning experiences that will allow their students to meet the requirements of the twenty-four statements of learning outlined in the Framework.

Overall, I am in favour of leaving the decision on what is offered at the discretion of the school. Curriculum choice is important in motivating students to learn and to remain in school to completion of senior cycle. The vast majority of schools already offer History and Geography and the vast majority of students choose these subjects although they are currently compulsory in only half our schools. The popularity of subjects depends on the quality of teaching, the passion of the teachers for their subjects and the engagement of their students. I see no reason why the popularity of History will change in the future.

The new specification for History will be available to schools from September 2017.

My Department met with representatives of the History Teachers' Association of Ireland in early 2012 and the discussion at that meeting helped to inform the design of the JC Framework. I have every confidence that the changes envisaged in Framework will ensure that the place of historical study will be retained and given a new impetus across the junior cycle curriculum. Such an impetus should help to improve take up of History at senior cycle also.

School Funding

241. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason for the refusal of funding for a school (details supplied) in County Donegal; if his Department will reconsider its application in view of the circumstances facing the school if funding is not allocated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37603/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I can confirm to the Deputy that an application for additional accommodation received in 2015 was not approved for funding on the basis of sufficient accommodation being available to the school in question.

In recent days the school contacted my Department to advise that their accommodation requirements had changed in the intervening period due to an increase in the allocated resource hours. In that regard, my Department advised that an application for additional accommodation may be submitted. Once this application is received, the matter may be considered further.

Access to Higher Education

242. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a commitment given in the programme for Government (details supplied) was published in advance of the budget; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37614/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Programme for Government contains a commitment to commission an independent examination to identify the supports and barriers to accessing higher education for lone parents, and examine measures to increase participation.

In line with this commitment, my Department engaged a multi-disciplinary team in NUI Maynooth to undertake the independent review.

The review is being overseen by a steering committee comprising officials from my Department and from the Departments of Social Protection and Children and Youth Affairs, as well as the Higher Education Authority.

The review will examine existing data and describe the supports that are currently available for lone parents with a view to identifying the specific challenges faced by lone parents in accessing higher education. The intention is to identify measures and best practice that will address those challenges in the future.

The review is currently being finalised. This is a complex policy area that involves three Government Departments. However, the review was sufficiently progressed to inform policy discussions between the relevant Departments in advance of Budget 2017.

In this context, I secured additional funding in Budget 2017 to support more lone parents to participate in higher education. This new funding will be used to respond to the recommendations contained in the review.

Non-Disclosure Agreements

243. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department, or the agencies that report to his Department, entered into any non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements with any organisation due to court action or a threatened court action; and if so, the persons or groups with which these agreements exist. [37626/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The information requested by the Deputy is not readily available in my Department. It is currently being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.

School Transport Applications

244. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will investigate the case of a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary who is waiting on a decision for a school transport grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37653/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department.

Currently over 114,000 children, including some 10,000 children with special educational needs, are being transported in approximately 4,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually.

The child referred to by the Deputy is eligible for school transport under the terms of my Department's School Transport Scheme for Children with Special Educational Needs.

Bus Éireann is responsible for the planning and timetabling of school transport routes and endeavours, within available resources, to ensure that each eligible child has a reasonable level of school transport service. In this regard Bus Éireann has advised that this child can be accommodated on an existing service and therefore the question of a special transport grant does not arise. The parent was advised of this in April 2014.

Home Tuition Scheme Eligibility

245. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will review the annual process for approval of the minor works grant for primary schools to a system with an earlier approval date which would allow more certainty for schools as they budget and make plans for their upcoming year, in view of the fact the current system leaves uncertainty for schools trying to manage with limited resources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37756/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The terms and conditions for the payment of the Minor Works Grant to primary schools are set out in Circular Letter 0062/2013. The funds that are transferred under the grant to schools must be spent on the physical infrastructure of the school or on items of furniture and equipment for educational use, including IT related equipment.

The Circular states that the grant will only be paid in future years as funding permits. In that context it is vital that schools take this stipulation into account before commencing any infrastructure related works.

The Deputy will be aware that I announced the Minor Works Grant 2016/2017 on the 17 November 2016 and that schools will receive the grant this week. The total cost of the grant is over €28.5m.

Home Tuition Scheme Eligibility

246. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a home tuition package will be provided in respect of a person (details supplied); and if a positive decision will be expedited. [37764/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The purpose of the Home Tuition Grant Scheme is to provide funding towards the provision of a compensatory educational service for children who, for a number of specific reasons, are unable to attend school.

The scheme provides a compensatory educational service for

- a. Early educational intervention for children with autism who meet the schemes eligibility criteria
- b. Students with special educational needs seeking an educational placement in a recognised school
- c. Students, enrolled in schools, with significant medical conditions which has caused, and is likely to continue to cause, major disruption to their attendance at school

An application for home tuition for the child referred to by the Deputy was received in my Department on the 15th November 2016 and approved on 17th November 2017.

The application sought the provision of Home tuition on the basis that, while there was a school placement available for the child, the child is currently unable to access the placement due to his current medical condition.

On 17th November 2017, my Department approved Home Tuition on this basis, to support the child while he recovers to the extent that he can be enrolled in and attend school. The child in question is in receipt of the maximum hours available for children with significant medical conditions which has caused, and is likely to continue to cause, major disruption to their attendance at school.

The application can be reconsidered when the child has recovered to the extent that he can be enrolled in and attend school.

Ministerial Advisers Appointments

247. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the appointment of additional special advisers by him and Ministers of State in his Department. [37887/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department has applied for and received sanction from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for the appointment of Ms. Michelle Clancy as a Special Adviser to assist the Minister of State in carrying out his official functions at the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation.

A Memorandum for Government will be presented to the Cabinet to ratify the appointment in due course.

Housing Assistance Payments

248. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he is considering increasing the housing assistance payment limit in view of the increase in rents. [36934/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Government increased the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) (and Rent Supplement) rent limits in every local authority area, taking account of geographic variations in market rents, with effect from 1 July 2016 meeting its stated commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government and Rebuilding Ireland: An Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness. In addition, additional flexibility above the existing HAP rent limits was made available to all local authorities operating HAP from the same date. These changes have had the effect of providing further targeted supports to those households in most need; providing prospective HAP recipients with access to a greater number of properties in the market; and reducing the number of households falling into homelessness.

More than 2,500 pre-existing households being supported by HAP have received an increase in their level of support since the introduction of the new rent limits in line with costed projections. All local authorities where HAP is operational can now exceed the prescribed rent limits (by up to 20%), on a case by case basis, subject to guidelines.

HAP is now available to all qualified households in 19 local authority areas, with over 15,500 households currently being supported by the scheme and over 10,000 separate landlords

and agents providing accommodation to those households. Furthermore, HAP will be available from 1 December 2016 in the following local authorities – Cavan, Kerry, Laois, Leitrim, Longford, Roscommon, Westmeath, Wexford and Wicklow.

I am satisfied the HAP rent limits, in combination with the discretion available to local authorities operating the scheme, is sufficient to provide housing support while meeting market demands. My Department continues to keep the operation of the scheme, including the effectiveness of rent limits, under review. In general, I am satisfied with the operation of HAP scheme and I consider it to be a key vehicle for meeting housing need and fulfilling the ambitious programme under Rebuilding Ireland: An Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness.

Archival Material

249. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the supports in place for development and protection of county archive services to preserve local cultural patrimony. [37079/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): It is the responsibility of each local authority, in accordance with Section 80 of the Local Government Act 2001, to make proper arrangements for the management, custody, care and conservation of their records and archives and to provide public access to their archives. Similarly, the annual cost for the storage of records and archives is a matter for each local authority and is a matter in which my Department has no role.

Pension Provisions

250. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the position of a pension-related deduction payable in respect of dual public sector workers and specifically in respect of retained fire fighters with dual employment with their local authorities. [37490/16]

251. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if retained fire fighters should have the pension-related deduction thresholds on both employments, as was the case in 2009 and 2010. [37491/16]

252. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the reason certain public sector workers are paying very little and in some cases no pension-related deduction in relation to their fire fighting services. [37492/16]

254. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his views on whether it is fair and equitable that retained fire fighters who had already chosen to waive joining the superannuation scheme in favour of accepting a gratuity had retirement benefits significantly diminished when compared to the pension-related deduction payable over their working lives up to the point of retirement. [37495/16]

255. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if his Department expects to address the inequality suffered by retained fire fighters in dual employment as a result of the application of the pension-related deduction to their dual employment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37496/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 250 to 252, inclusive, and 254 and 255 together.

In 2008, retained fire-fighters were given the option of joining the Local Government Superannuation Scheme (LGSS) and receive a pension and retirement lump sum based on their pensionable remuneration and length of service. Retained fire-fighters who opted not to join the scheme receive, on retirement, a gratuity of 1/8th of the annual retainer multiplied by the number of years of actual service (up to a maximum of four times the annual retainer). All retained fire-fighters appointed after 1 January 2013 must join the Single Public Service Pension Scheme.

The Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2009 states that any public servant who is a member of a public service pension scheme, is entitled to a benefit under such a scheme, or receives a payment in lieu of membership of such a scheme, is subject to Pension Related Deduction (PRD) from their remuneration. Additional pension benefits do not arise as a result of this deduction.

In the case of a local authority worker who is also a member of the Local Government Superannuation Scheme, PRD contributions are payable in respect of the pay applicable to that employment also, on the basis that such a person qualifies for the payment of a pension and lump sum as a member of the LGSS.

The payment of the retirement gratuity to retained firefighters who are not members of the LGSS is a payment in lieu of membership of a pension scheme and, as such, all retained fire-fighters, whether members of a public service pension scheme or not, are subject to the deduction outlined in the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2009. Responsibility for this legislation rests with my colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

Local Authority Staff

253. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the reason the 2009 circular issued to local authorities which states that in the case of staff employed in more than one capacity, each employment may be treated separately for the purposes of calculating revised remuneration in accordance with this circular was applied for two years and then changed in 2011. [37493/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): On 22 December 2009, my Department issued Circular EL 17/2009 which, in regard to staff employed in more than one capacity, stated:

“Dual Employment

In the case of staff employed in more than one capacity, each employment may be treated separately for the purposes of calculating revised remuneration in accordance with this circular”.

On 28 January 2011, my Department issued Circular EL 01/2011 which, on the same issue, stated:

“Dual Employment

In the case of staff employed in more than one capacity, each employment may be treated separately for the purposes of calculating revised remuneration in accordance with this circular.”

As the Deputy will note, with regard to staff employed in more than one capacity, there was no change from the 2009 Circular to the 2011 Circular.

Questions Nos. 254 and 255 answered with Question No. 250.

Foreshore Licence Applications

256. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if, when the EPA approved a foreshore licence to a company (details supplied), it was aware that there was hazardous waste adjacent to the jetty comprised of bauxite raw material and alumina material; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37754/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): On 12 August 2016, I approved an application for a foreshore licence from the company named to allow them to carry out maintenance dredging. The proposed activity also required a licence from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Dumping at Sea Acts 1996-2009; all relevant documentation in relation to the licence application, which is a matter entirely for the EPA, is available on the Agency's website at www.epa.ie.

Library Services Provision

257. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government further to Question No. 163 of 17 November 2016, the way in which the customer demand was measured; if it was gathered anecdotally with library staff working in branches or through management teams working in offices; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36861/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): Demand for extended public library opening hours was identified through a formal consultation process carried out by my Department in the development of Opportunities for All, the national public library strategy 2013-2017. This demand had been previously highlighted by public library user surveys carried out in 2002 and 2007.

The 'My Open Library' initiative has been identified as an innovative approach to meeting the demand for additional opening hours. In this regard, it allows library members the freedom and flexibility to use the library at times that suit them. It provides additional opening hours from 8am to 10pm, seven days-per-week, ensuring access to library services for users who cannot avail of them during regular staffed hours.

The initial 'My Open Library' pilot was introduced in Tullamore, Banagher and Tubbercurry libraries from November 2014. The pilots were established to examine the feasibility of the open library model for Ireland. I am satisfied that the learning from the original pilots, and the very positive feedback from library users, justifies extending the pilot phase to a further 23 library branches from January 2017. The extended pilot phase will inform and shape the future development and implementation of the service across the broader library network.

Housing Assistance Payments Administration

258. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the guidance his Department has provided to local authorities

regarding the circumstances in which a person in receipt of HAP and who is on a transfer list for the local authority will be housed by that local authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36866/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): On 16 December 2014, a statutory direction was issued to all authorities involved in the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme, instructing them to take the necessary steps to ensure that households benefiting from HAP can avail of a move to other forms of social housing support, should they wish to do so, through a transfer option. Local authorities were also directed that HAP recipients who apply to go on the transfer list should get full credit for the time they spent on the waiting list and be placed on the transfer list with no less favourable terms than if they had remained on the waiting list.

It is ultimately up to the household to choose if they wish to be placed on a local authority's transfer list, and I understand that the majority of HAP households do avail of this option. As of the start of November 2016, over 190 households across the country have transferred from the HAP scheme to other forms of social housing support.

The practical operation of transfer lists is a matter for each local authority to manage, on the basis of their scheme of letting priorities.

Health and Safety

259. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he will provide the safety certificates that he or his Department has received in respect of funfairs in County Meath in each of the years 2015 and 2016, in tabular form. [36887/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): Section 239(4) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 requires that the owner of fairground equipment shall not make it available to the public unless such equipment has a valid certificate of safety.

Section 239 (7) states that a person who intends to hold or organise a funfair, other than at a place where the operation of funfair equipment has been authorised by a permission under Part III of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 or Part IV of the Act of 1963 or is not otherwise an unauthorised use, shall give 2 weeks notice (or such other period of notice as may be prescribed) in writing to the local authority in whose functional area the funfair is to be held. The notice referred to shall be accompanied by a valid certificate of safety for the fairground equipment to be used at the funfair and shall give details of the names of the organiser of the funfair, the owner or owners of the fairground equipment to be used at the funfair and the location and dates on which the funfair is to be held.

Certificates of Safety are returned annually to my Department in accordance with Section 8 (3)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (Certification of Fairground Equipment) Regulations 2003. The 2015 and 2016 Certificates received by my Department for funfairs in County Meath are listed in the table:

Year	Location	Equipment
2015	Mount Hanover, Duleek, Co. Meath	Activity Stall x 2
		Bee Jets

29 November 2016

Year	Location	Equipment
		Bungee Tramps
		Candy Floss
		Cassely Big Wheel
		Cassely Pirate Ship
		Convoy Device
		Cork Shoot
		Cup & Saucer
		Dodgems x 2
		Extreme
		Inflatable Slide
		Inflatable Stall
		Juvenile Galloper
		Miami
		Punch Ball
		Round Stall
		Stall Churns
		Street Fighter
		Toy Ride
		Twist
		Waltzer
		Water Balls
2015	Tayto Park, Ashbourne, Co. Meath	Air Racer
		Coaster
		Honey Pot
		Jump Around Frog
		Maxi Dance
		Pony Express
		Sky Tower
2016	Tayto Park, Ashbourne, Co. Meath	Air Racer
		Coaster
		Endeavour
		Gallopers
		Honey Pot
		Jump Around Frog
		Maxi Dance
		Mini Ferris Wheel
		Pony Express
		Power Fans
		Power Surge
		Rocking Tug
		Sky Tower

RAPID Programme

260. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the criteria to be used to designate areas under the revived RAPID scheme; if demographic changes that have taken place in the past ten years since the last revision of the

RAPID areas took place will be taken into account in any review of RAPID areas, in view of the significant change in such areas in the past ten years with new housing estates being built; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36892/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): The new RAPID programme is due to roll out from early next year. The logistics and modalities for the programme are currently under consideration in my Department. Further information will be made available once the programme specification is agreed.

Mortgage to Rent Scheme Data

261. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the number of successful applications for the mortgage-to-rent scheme since its inception broken down by county and by year; the reason for the low take-up of the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36905/16]

294. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he will review the criteria for the mortgage-to-rent scheme with a view to increasing the number of distressed mortgage holders who would qualify to avail of the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37509/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 261 and 294 together.

There are currently two Mortgage to Rent (MTR) schemes funded by my Department. A scheme exists whereby a local authority (LA) can acquire ownership of properties with unsustainable local authority mortgages, thus enabling the household to remain in their home as a social housing tenant. The second scheme provides for an Approved Housing Body (AHB) to acquire ownership of a property with an unsustainable private mortgage from a lender, which also enables the household to remain in their home as a social housing tenant. Both schemes are part of the overall suite of social housing options and an important part of the mortgage arrears resolution process.

Information in relation to Local Authority Mortgage to Rent (LAMTR) scheme applications during its pilot phase in Dublin City Council and Westmeath County Council in 2013 and from the national roll out of the scheme in 2014 to the end of 2015, including by local authority and by year, is available on my Department's website at the following link: -

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/house-prices-loans-and-profile-borrowers/local-authority-loan-activity>.

To date in 2016, 59 LAMTR cases have been received and approved and a further 19 claims are currently being processed. Local authorities are responsible for submitting valid LAMTR applications to my Department and all applications received were approved.

In relation to activity under the AHB Mortgage to Rent scheme which was introduced in 2012, up to the end of Quarter 3 2016, a total of 3,498 cases had been submitted. Of the 3,498 cases submitted, 2,642 were ineligible or terminated during the process. The reasons for this are varied and can depend on the lender, the property, the household and the ability of the AHB sector to increase their involvement in the scheme. Of the remaining cases submitted, 669 are actively being progressed and 187 have been completed. Further statistical information relating to the scheme since its inception, including a breakdown by local authority and by year, is available on the Housing Agency's website at the following link: www.housingagency.ie/Our-

Services/Housing-Supply-Services/Mortgage-to-Rent.aspx.

A number of amendments were made to the AHB Mortgage to Rent Scheme in July 2015 to enable more properties to qualify and to make the scheme more flexible and accessible to borrowers.

Notwithstanding the amendments already made to the scheme, the Government has included a review of the AHB Mortgage to Rent Scheme as an action in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness. The review, currently underway, is examining what further amendments can be made to the scheme to make it work better for borrowers and my Department is consulting with key stakeholders in this regard. The review is to be completed by the end of the year.

Local Authority Expenditure

262. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the process by which council budgets are developed; the legislative provisions that govern the manner in which amendments are made by elected members during the course of a meeting at which a budget is voted upon; the guidance his Department has offered in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36906/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Local Government Act 2001, as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014, provides the legislative basis for the local authority budget process. Section 103 of the 2001 Act provides for the local authority budget meeting and states that a local authority may amend the draft budget by resolution, and may adopt the budget with or without amendment.

The Local Government (Financial and Audit Procedures) Regulations 2014 (as amended) take account of the relevant provisions in the Local Government Act 2001 and the Local Government Reform Act 2014 in relation to the budget process for those authorities with municipal districts. These regulations provide a definition of General Municipal Allocation and set out the timeline for submission of the draft budgetary plan to members of Municipal Districts and the timeline for finalisation of a draft budgetary plan.

Guidelines provided by my Department (via Circular Fin 05/2014) set out the process as provided for in the legislation, further information on the budget strategy and draft budgetary plan, as well as clarifying the application of fairness and equity as it applies to the allocation of the General Municipal Allocation to municipal districts.

It is a matter for each local authority to determine its own spending priorities in the context of the annual budgetary process having regard to both locally identified needs and available resources. The elected members of a local authority have direct responsibility in law for all reserved functions of the authority, which includes adopting the annual budget, and are democratically accountable for all expenditure by the local authority. Local authorities are required to adopt budgets which are sufficient to meet the expenditure arising in the year in accordance with the terms of section 10A of the City and County Management Act 1955.

Departmental Staff Data

263. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the number of staff from his Department currently seconded to other Depart-

ments or agencies in the Civil Service per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36964/16]

264. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the number of staff from his Department who have appealed against secondment per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the appeals mechanism involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36980/16]

265. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the number of staff from his Department currently seconded to a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36996/16]

266. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the number of staff from his Department currently seconded from a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37012/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 263 to 266, inclusive, together.

Information in relation to the number of staff from my Department seconded to other departments or agencies in the Civil Service per annum from 2010 to 2016 is set out in the table.

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
22	22	18	13	16	12	13

There have been no appeals against secondment in this period.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Circular 03/2013 sets out the details of a Staff Exchange Scheme between the Civil Service and the Private Sector, along the lines of the Temporary Staff Transfer Scheme provided for previously under Department of Public Service Circular 10/1979. A copy of Circular 03/2013 can be found on www.circulars.gov.ie.

No staff from my Department have participated in such a scheme and there were no secondments under the scheme from external organisations to my Department in the years 2010 to date.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

267. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he will provide data (details supplied) on the projected cost of construction of social housing, excluding in all cases the cost of land procurement. [37043/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): In relation to information sought for averages of various social housing costs, the following are the relevant figures based on current unit cost ceiling data prepared from tender returns utilised within my Department.

- average cost per square meter of social housing construction in Dublin = €2,046;
- average cost per square meter of social housing construction outside of Dublin = €1,524.

The average cost of construction of various housing units including all works within the site curtilage and a contribution towards development of common areas of the overall development (footpaths, roads, lighting etc), are as follows:

- 2-bed social housing unit in Dublin = €191,850;
- 2-bed social housing unit outside of Dublin = €141,445;
- 3-bed social housing unit in Dublin = €205,250;
- 3-bed social housing unit outside of Dublin = €154,560.

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

268. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if there are any legal restrictions that preclude the State from providing public housing in the form of long-term rental to all persons regardless of income. [37044/16]

269. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the research that has been conducted by his Department into the possibility of the State providing affordable public housing in the form of long-term rental to all persons, regardless of income. [37045/16]

285. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he has considered revising upwards the income limits under which persons can apply for social housing, in view of the considerable rise in housing rents and the current Central Bank rules governing mortgage approval. [37333/16]

286. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he has considered changing the income limits for social housing for the area of the southern division of Cork County Council, in view of the fact that it is largely part of the same housing market as Cork city. [37334/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 268, 269, 285 and 286 together.

The overall strategic objective of Government housing policy is to enable all households to access good quality housing appropriate to their household circumstances and in sustainable communities of their choice. The main focus of social housing supports is on meeting the most acute housing needs among the population, within the resources available. Thus, State-funded housing supports will continue to be targeted at those people who are unable to provide for their accommodation from their own resources, as measured by their annual net income.

The Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011 prescribe maximum net income limits for eligibility for social housing supports in each housing authority, in different bands according to the area, with income being defined and assessed according to a standard Household Means Policy.

The income bands and the authority area assigned to each band were based on an assessment of income needed to provide for a household's basic needs plus a comparative analysis of the local rental cost of housing accommodation across the country. The limits also reflect a blanket increase of €5,000 introduced prior to the new system coming into operation, in order to broaden the base from which social housing tenants are drawn and thereby promote sustainable communities.

I am satisfied that the current income limits generally provide for a fair and equitable system of identifying those households unable to provide accommodation from their own resources. However, these limits will continue to be kept under review by my Department, as part of the broader social housing reform agenda set out in the Social Housing Strategy 2020-Support, Supply and Reform and Rebuilding Ireland-Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness.

Action 4.6 of Rebuilding Ireland provides for the introduction of a new pilot affordable rental scheme to enhance the capacity of the private rented sector to provide quality and affordable accommodation for households currently paying a disproportionate amount of disposable income on rent. The objective of the scheme is to provide long-term affordable residential accommodation for low to moderate income key-worker households in urban areas of high demand and provide an economic incentive to increase supply of rental accommodation. Consideration of the pilot affordable rental scheme is being progressed within the context of the comprehensive strategy for the rental sector which is due for publication before the end of 2016. Consideration of relevant research in the field forms an inherent part of the development of the Strategy.

I am mindful that we need to consider every policy instrument at our disposal to tackle the many challenges in the housing market. In this context, I expect that the recently announced changes to the Central Bank rules governing mortgage lending will ease the burden on those trying to secure their own home for the first time.

Social and Affordable Housing

270. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if builders contracted to build social housing units pay VAT on the materials used in construction; and if this cost is then included in the estimate of costs of unit construction. [37046/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): Taxation policy is a matter for the Minister for Finance. Nevertheless, my Department understands that VAT is charged on the supply of materials used in construction of residential properties, including those used for the purposes of social housing. Tenders awarded by local authorities for the provision of social housing include all costs associated with their procurement contracts.

Commercial Rates Valuation Process

271. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the powers that the chief executive of a local authority has to designate property rateable; if the chief executive of Clare County Council has discretion in a case (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37057/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): Local authorities are under a statutory obligation to levy rates on any property used for commercial purposes, in accordance with the details entered in the valuation lists prepared by the independent Commissioner of Valuation under the Valuation Acts 2001 to 2015. Those Acts determine properties that can, and cannot, be considered for rating purposes. The Commissioner for Valuation has responsibility for valuation matters, including determination under those Acts of relevant property for the purposes of rates.

The valuation determined by the Commissioner is fixed on a property and generally does not change from year to year, unless the valuation is revised or revalued in the normal course of that office's work. Part 6 of the Valuation Act 2001 provides that a revision of the valuation of a particular property may be carried out if a "Material Change of Circumstances" has taken place since the property was last valued. In such cases, the occupier of the premises can apply to the Valuation Office for a revision of valuation. The application and management of this process is a matter for the Commissioner of Valuation and the Valuation Office.

The Valuation Acts 2001 to 2015 come under the remit of my colleague, the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality.

Local Authority Housing Provision

272. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the locations of the 15 social houses which are currently being constructed in County Louth; and if these 15 houses are new and additional houses or if they are replacement dwellings for social houses which have been demolished. [37116/16]

273. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the proposed social housing construction which is planned for County Louth over the term of the action plan for housing; and the locations of this social housing. [37117/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 272 and 273 together.

In relation to the 15 social houses referred to in Question 272, 14 units have been completed under the regeneration of Coxes Demesne, Dundalk and a further unit will be delivered under the CAS programme by the year end in Drogheda. In addition, Louth County Council has acquired 24 properties under CPO and a further 49 through general acquisitions. Works are required to be carried out on these units and these works range from minor repairs to more extensive works requiring special adaptations to meet the needs of the identified tenants.

Contractors were appointed and are on site and works are due to be completed before Christmas on the rehabilitation of Woodlands Halting Site. Work is also due to get underway in the near future on 3 social housing units at Bothar Brugha in Drogheda. Louth County Council is also in the process of procuring a design team for a development of approximately 15 houses in Father Finn Park in Louth Village and is also extensively involved in the development of social housing in Dunleer through the PPP bundles.

It should be noted that there has been significant liaison with the various Approved Housing Bodies who are constructing social housing in the Louth area. Indeed, a range of projects are currently at the various stages of approval, including Clontygora Phase 2; College Manor, Dundalk; Castlecourt, Castlebellingham; Coulter Place, Dundalk; Liscorrie, Drogheda; Riverside Court, Drogheda; Clos Na Manach, Carlingford; and Scarlet St, Drogheda. There are many other projects in earlier stages of discussion.

Wind Energy Guidelines

274. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government when new wind farm planning guidelines to assist the proper planning of wind power projects will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37181/16]

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

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

A public consultation process was also initiated on these proposed draft revisions to the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines, which ran until February 2014. The Department received submissions from 7,500 organisations and members of the public during this public consultation process.

In light of the commitment in the Programme for A Partnership Government to finalise the Guidelines and on-going policy and legal developments in this area, my Department is continuing to advance work on the Guidelines and related matters in conjunction with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, in order to bring the various issues to a conclusion as early as possible. It is intended to make a statement on the matter before the end of the year, outlining the timelines for the implementation of the various elements.

Proposed Legislation

275. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his plans to update guidance and legislation in respect of funfairs and theme parks, particularly in view of an accident taking place in a well known venue in the UK. [37206/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department is currently reviewing its role in relation to its responsibility for the aspects of legislation relating to regulation of fairground equipment and funfairs in section 239 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, particularly in respect of the specific legislative provisions relating to fairground equipment and also more general issues in relation to safety at funfairs, theme parks and community events. The issues of legislative change and updated guidance will be considered in light of this review.

Local Authority Funding

276. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the funding that has been provided to County Louth over the previous three years 2014 to 2016 by project name, location and funding amount in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37221/16]

277. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the applications submitted for funding projects from Louth County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016 in tabular form; and if the applications were successful. [37237/16]

278. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the funding for projects in 2017 in County Louth to be funded by his Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37253/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 276 to 278, inclusive, together.

My Department has a broad business agenda, including supporting citizens in safe and sustainable communities through the provision of access to good quality housing, fostering community development in partnership with local government, supporting and enabling responsive local government and protecting and improving water resources. In order to deliver on this agenda, my Department allocates significant resources to a wide range of organisations, including local authorities, dedicated agencies and non-statutory bodies.

Across all schemes and funding sources the funding my Department provided to Louth County Council in 2014, 2015 and to the end of October 2016 is set out in the table.

Year	Louth County Council
2014	€ 24,827,303.62
2015	€ 29,533,062.56
To End Oct 2016	€ 22,620,652.29

The figures include my Departmental Vote as it is currently configured, the Local Government Fund and the Environment Fund to September 2016, before responsibility for that fund transferred to the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

If the Deputy wishes to put down a more specific question concerning funding for a specific purpose or project from my Department, including funding which may not be drawn down until 2017, I will endeavour to provide the information sought.

Local Authority Funding

279. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the funding that has been provided to County Meath over the previous three years 2014 to 2016 by project name, location and funding amount in tabular form. [37269/16]

280. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the applications submitted for funding and projects from Meath County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016, in tabular form; if the applications were successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37285/16]

281. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the funding for projects in 2017 in County Meath to be funded by his Department by project name, location and funding amount in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37301/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 279 to 281, inclusive, together.

My Department has a broad business agenda, including supporting citizens in safe and sustainable communities through the provision of access to good quality housing, fostering com-

munity development in partnership with local government, supporting and enabling responsive local government and protecting and improving water resources. In order to deliver on this agenda, my Department allocates significant resources to a wide range of organisations, including local authorities, dedicated agencies and non-statutory bodies.

Across all schemes and funding sources the funding my Department provided to Meath County Council in 2014, 2015 and to the end of October 2016 is set out in the table.

Year	Meath County Council
2014	€ 20,109,398.72
2015	€ 29,007,585.88
To End Oct 2016	€ 24,548,339.23

The figures include my Departmental Vote as it is currently configured, the Local Government Fund and the Environment Fund to September 2016, before responsibility for that fund transferred to the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

If the Deputy wishes to put down a more specific question concerning funding for a specific purpose or project from my Department, including funding which may not be drawn down until 2017, I will endeavour to provide the information sought.

Social and Affordable Housing Eligibility

282. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the schemes that exist to assist persons whose incomes are marginally above the income limits for social and affordable housing, but for whom being in a position to save for a large enough deposit under the current Central Bank mortgage rules would be impossible; and the way in which such persons could obtain secure housing. [37330/16]

284. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if it is currently within the gift of local authorities to offer loans or mortgages to applicants seeking housing; if not, if his Department has considered supporting or facilitating such loans or mortgages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37332/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 282 and 284 together.

The lack of a sufficient supply of homes to meet demand has led to the current pressures in the housing market, making it difficult for first-time and other buyers to access housing at affordable levels.

The Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness outlines the Government's commitment to develop a fully functioning housing market that meets the housing needs of all, by overcoming the current supply shortfall and increasing the national supply level to over 25,000 new homes per year by 2021. Rebuilding Ireland takes a holistic approach in addressing the many interacting structural constraints affecting the housing market by including actions to streamline the planning system, remove infrastructure blockages and support the delivery of affordable housing. These measures should help make new developments economically viable in areas where supply constraints and price pressures are particularly acute.

Earlier this month, I announced details of 23 Major Urban Housing Development Sites with the potential to deliver up to 30,000 additional homes on existing zoned lands and close to the

key areas of demand over the next 3-4 years. These sites will be highlighted as exemplars for the co-ordination and delivery of plan-led housing development and active land management.

In order to quickly get key sites moving, a €200 million Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF) has been established. Twenty-one local authorities, working in conjunction with housing providers, submitted proposals for funding which are currently being evaluated. Successful bid proposals will be announced in December.

Separately, the National Treasury Management Agency and Ireland Strategic Investment Fund are currently exploring opportunities to support the delivery of housing-related on-site enabling infrastructure in large-scale priority development areas with a view to kick starting the development process.

Given the particular challenge faced by first-time buyers in accessing the housing market, my colleague, the Minister for Finance recently announced a Help-to-Buy initiative as part of Budget 2017. The Help-to-Buy initiative has been designed to complement the structural measures announced in Rebuilding Ireland, by providing immediate and targeted support for first-time buyers of new homes in meeting their deposit requirements, greater certainty regarding the pool of available purchasers is provided to the housebuilding sector, encouraging the construction of new housing units.

The combined effect of these and other actions under the Plan will help reduce costs and deliver more housing at affordable prices, where it is most needed.

In addition, there are currently two house purchase loan offerings available to lower income first time buyers from local authorities.

The first is a standard annuity mortgage available from all local authorities. A first time buyer unable to get a loan from a building society or a bank, may be eligible for a mortgage from the local authority concerned to purchase a new or second hand property or build their own home. The loan can be up to 97% of the price of the house subject to a maximum loan of €200,000. A local authority mortgage is an annuity mortgage with variable interest rates so repayments will go up and down in line with interest rate changes. The relevant terms and conditions applying to local authority housing loans are set out in the Housing (Local Authority Loans) Regulations 2012. Key eligibility criteria provide that a loan applicant must be a first time buyer and must be able to show their local authority that they cannot get a loan from a bank or building society. Also, the gross income (before tax) of a single income household in the previous year must be €50,000 or less and the combined gross income (before tax) of a two income household in the previous year must be €75,000 or less. Prospective applicants should contact their relevant local authority for further information.

The second option is the Home Choice Loan, a Government backed mortgage for first time buyers. The relevant terms and conditions applying to the Home Choice Loan are set out in the Housing (Home Choice Loan) Regulations 2009. First time buyers can apply for a Home Choice Loan to purchase a new or second hand property or build their own home. Home Choice Loan provides up to 92% of the market value of a property purchased, subject to a maximum loan amount of €285,000. The loan is a normal capital and interest bearing mortgage which is repaid on a monthly basis. Home Choice Loan offers one variable interest rate. The rate is currently set at 3.25% variable, APR 3.30%. Further information is available at <http://www.homechoiceloan.ie>.

To support local authorities in operating their housing loan schemes in a consistent and efficient manner, the Housing Agency provides a central underwriting service to local authorities. The credit underwriting process considers the impact that family circumstances may have on

the loan applicant's capacity to make loan repayments. The final decision on loan approval is a matter for the relevant local authority and its credit committee on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with the relevant statutory Credit Policy that underpins the scheme and aims to ensure prudent lending.

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

283. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his plans for any future affordable housing schemes. [37331/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Government's Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, which is available at the website www.rebuildingireland.ie, sets out a practical and implementable set of actions that aim to increase the supply of homes to 25,000 units per annum by 2020, thereby creating a functioning and sustainable housing system. Action 4.6 of Rebuilding Ireland provides for the introduction of a new pilot affordable rental scheme to enhance the capacity of the private rented sector to provide quality and affordable accommodation for households currently paying a disproportionate amount of disposable income on rent.

The objective of the scheme is to provide long-term affordable residential accommodation for low to moderate income key-worker households in urban areas of high demand and provide an economic incentive to increase supply of rental accommodation.

Consideration of the pilot affordable rental scheme is being progressed within the context of the comprehensive strategy for the rental sector which is being advanced under action 4.1 of Rebuilding Ireland, and which is due for publication before the end of 2016.

Question No. 284 answered with Question No. 282.

Questions Nos. 285 and 286 answered with Question No. 268.

Housing Assistance Payments Administration

287. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his plans to provide, in legislation or otherwise, for applicants on housing lists to obtain HAP, housing assistance payment, from the local authority of which they are an applicant, to obtain a property to rent within the jurisdiction of another local authority and that HAP payments be directed towards this, particularly in neighbouring local authorities such as Cork City Council and Cork County Council. [37335/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): The implementation of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme is a key Government priority and the accelerated roll-out of the scheme on a national basis is an important early action for completion in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness. HAP is now available to all qualified households in 19 local authority areas, with over 15,500 households currently being supported by the scheme and over 10,000 separate landlords and agents providing accommodation to those households. HAP will be available from 1 December 2016 in the following nine further local authorities - Cavan, Kerry, Laois, Leitrim, Longford, Roscommon, Westmeath, Wexford and Wicklow. A breakdown of the number of households supported by HAP in each local authority area at the end of Quarter 3, 2016 is available on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/>

social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision.

The flexibility of HAP as a form of social housing support is one of the scheme's key elements and an important benefit envisaged for many households with a housing need. The movement of households, including movement between local authority areas, for the purposes of employment, further education or other reasonable reasons is facilitated for households under the scheme, while retaining HAP support. The movement of HAP approved households between neighbouring local authority areas has been facilitated to date in a small number of cases. However, the phased implementation of the HAP pilot scheme has afforded my Department opportunity for learning and it is in this context that the need for greater ease in the provision of flexibility of movement of HAP households between local authority areas has been identified. This matter is under consideration and the options to facilitate such movements, while remaining cognisant of the Ministerial direction in relation to transfers to other forms of social housing, are being explored within my Department with input from those local authorities where the scheme is operational.

My Department continues to keep the operation of the HAP scheme under review. In general, I am satisfied with how the HAP scheme is operating and I consider it to be a key vehicle for meeting housing need and fulfilling the ambitious programme under Rebuilding Ireland.

Regeneration Projects Funding

288. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he will provide continued funding to the Ballymun social regeneration fund for 2017 and beyond; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37346/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department has recently agreed with Dublin City Council to continue to fund social regeneration community initiatives in Ballymun from the Exchequer at the existing current annual level of €1.7 million in 2017. However, with the physical regeneration of Ballymun now complete, it has been agreed between my Department and Dublin City Council that for 2018 and subsequent years, the Exchequer element for social regeneration initiatives in Ballymun will decrease annually by 25%, with the difference being made up by the Council. Accordingly, the overall level of support for social regeneration initiatives in Ballymun will not be affected and will be fully funded by Dublin City Council by 2021.

Planning Issues

289. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the guidelines local authorities are using in assessing solar farm planning applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37442/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): There are no specific planning guidelines in place in respect of solar farms. Proposals for individual solar farm developments are subject to the statutory requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, in the same manner as other proposed developments. Planning applications are made to the relevant local planning authority with a right of appeal to An Bord Pleanála. Under the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, each planning authority's development plan must set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area concerned. Section 10 of the Act requires a development plan to include, inter alia, objectives for the provision or facilitation of the provision of

infrastructure, including energy facilities and many local authorities have developed renewable energy strategies for their areas in this context.

In making decisions on planning applications, planning authorities and the Board must consider the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, having regard to the provisions of the development plan, any submissions or observations received and relevant Ministerial or Government policies, including any relevant guidelines issued by my Department. Planning authorities must then make their own decision based on the specific merits or otherwise of individual planning applications.

I am satisfied that the planning code is sufficiently robust to facilitate the assessment of individual planning permission applications for solar farm developments. However, the matter will be kept under review, in consultation with my colleague, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, and his Department - which leads on renewable energy policy - in the context of the Government's White Paper on Energy Policy, entitled Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future, which was published in December 2015, the development of a Renewable Electricity Policy and Development Framework and the launching of a new subsidy support scheme for renewable electricity by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, expected in late 2017.

Foreshore Licence Conditions

290. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if the planning and environment regulations regarding environmental impact assessments in the regulatory framework here has been amended to comply with the EU directive, as was indicated by the previous Minister (details supplied), to remove obstacles to a foreshore licence application by providence resources to drill on the Kish Bank; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37449/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): The European Union (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Planning and Development) Regulations 2014 and the European Union (Environmental Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment) (Foreshore) Regulations 2014 gave further effect to Directive No. 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (the EIA Directive). The regulations were signed on 26 November 2014 and amend the Planning and Development Act 2000, the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 and the Foreshore Act 1933. Among other matters, the regulations corrected a fault in Ireland's transposition of the EIA Directive insofar as it relates to deep drilling activities. The Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment has primary responsibility for the regulation of petroleum activities and I understand he also made regulations to amend relevant legislation in this regard.

The European Union (Environmental Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment) (Foreshore) Regulations 2014 provide that, where an application comes before me for a foreshore licence in respect of a petroleum project, it is not necessary for me carry out an environmental impact assessment of the project if the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment has already carried out an environmental impact assessment of the project, or intends to do so. In effect, the regulations streamline the regulatory regime such that a single environmental impact assessment of petroleum projects is carried out by the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

No application for a foreshore licence in respect of oil and gas exploration at Kish Bank is

currently on hands in my Department.

Non-Principal Private Residence Charge Collection

291. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the liability due by a person that has not paid the non-principal private residence charge since it was first introduced; the amount due for each year; the amount of late payment fees or additional charges that have been added to this; the total amount that is due by any person who has not made any payment to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37451/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Local Government (Charges) Act 2009, as amended, provides the legislative basis for the Non-Principal Private Residence Charge. The NPPR Charge, which has since been discontinued, applied in the years 2009 to 2013 to any residential property in which the owner did not reside as their normal place of residence. The self-assessed charge is set at €200 per annum and liability for it falls, in the main, on owners of rental, holiday and vacant properties. It is a matter for an owner to determine if he or she has a liability and, if so, to declare that liability and pay the Charge and any late payment fees applicable. Under the Act, it is a function of a local authority to collect Non-Principal Private Residence Charges, and late payment fees due to it and all Charges and late payment fees imposed and payable to a local authority are under the care and management of the local authority concerned. Section 6 of the 2009 Act, as amended, provides that the owner of a liable property who fails to pay the Charge, in addition to him or her being liable to pay the Charge, is liable to pay to the relevant local authority a €20 late payment fee in respect of each month or part of a month in which the Charge, any late payment fee, or any part of such Charge or fee, remains unpaid.

Part 12 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 also deals with the collection of undischarged liabilities relating to the NPPR Charge. The Act provided for a period from 2 March 2014 to 31 August 2014 during which time no new late penalties were applied to existing liabilities. If payment was not made in full or if settlement terms were not agreed by the end of that period, an additional late payment fee of €120 per liability date applied on 1 September 2014. As the Charge applied in each of the years from 2009 to 2013, there were five liability dates - 31 July 2009 and 31 March for each of the years 2010 to 2013. In addition to this late payment fee to be applied per liability date, the entire NPPR liability is then increased by a factor of 50% and frozen; the legislation does not provide for further penalties to apply after this date.

The table outlines the liabilities of property owners who have not discharged their NPPR Charge. No additional late payment fees apply in subsequent years as the liability is frozen as of 1 September 2014.

Liability Year	Liability if Payment was made on or before 31 August 2014	Additional Late Payment Fee post 31 August 2014	Liability if Payment made on or after 1 September 2014
2009	€1,260	€810	€2,070
2010	€1,100	€730	€1,830
2011	€860	€610	€1,470
2012	€620	€490	€1,110
2013	€380	€370	€750
Total	€4,220	€3,010	€7,230

Private Rented Accommodation

292. **Deputy Josepha Madigan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the current regulations applicable to property renters and the further regulations planned with regard to the negative implications upon housing supply of peer-to-peer accommodation rental companies (details supplied). [37454/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Residential Tenancies Act 2004, as amended by the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2015, regulates the landlord-tenant relationship in the private rented residential sector and sets out the rights and obligations of landlords and tenants.

Minimum standards for rental accommodation are prescribed in the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2008, as amended by the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) (Amendment) Regulations 2009, made under section 18 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992. The Regulations specify requirements in relation to a range of matters, such as structural repair, sanitary facilities, heating, ventilation, natural light and safety of gas and electrical supply. With very limited exemptions, these regulations apply to local authority and voluntary housing units as well as private rented residential accommodation. To ensure that the standards reflect the requirements of a modern rental market, a review of the Standards Regulations has been initiated. The review is at an advanced stage with new regulations currently being finalised.

Pillar 4 of Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, which deals with the Rental Sector, commits to developing a comprehensive strategy for the sector in Q4 2016. The strategy will be structured around 4 key areas: security, standards, supply and services. In terms of supply, the strategy will focus on maintaining existing levels of rental stock and encouraging investment in additional supply. All the main issues that affect the availability of dwellings in the rental market, including the issue of short-term lettings, will be considered during the development of the strategy, which will be informed by submissions received from the recent public consultation process that concluded on 7 November. The overarching objective of the strategy will be to increase supply and support the development of a stable, strong and viable rental sector offering true choice for households, investment opportunities for providers and reflecting the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords.

In the context of the recent determination by An Bord Pleanála in relation to the exclusive use of an apartment as a commercial letting through Air BnB, I have asked my Department to examine the decision, which is of course primarily a matter for planning authorities to determine, and consider the appropriate steps, including the provision of statutory planning guidelines, to provide clarity and consistency of approach by all planning authorities in terms of planning requirements for such commercial lettings. In this regard, I will provide guidance to local authorities by way of circular letter before the end of the year.

Health and Safety Regulations

293. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the body responsible for the investigation of accidents at funfairs (details supplied). [37465/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): Section 239 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 places a statutory duty on organisers of funfairs and owners of fairground equipment to take such care as is reasonable for

ensuring that persons at a funfair do not suffer injury or damage by reason of dangers arising from the funfair or associated activities. This legislation also requires that the owner of fair-ground equipment shall not make it available to the public unless such equipment has a valid certificate of safety.

The organiser of a funfair is required to give notice of the event to the relevant local authority and such notice is to be accompanied by a valid certificate of safety.

In circumstances where the above provisions in relation to notice and valid certificates of safety have not been complied with, the legislation provides that the relevant local authority may serve notice requiring the cessation of the fairground/funfair operations.

The planning legislation does not assign responsibility to a specific body to investigate accidents at funfairs; however, provisions in criminal justice and safety, health and welfare at work legislation provide a range of responsibilities and roles for investigation of accidents.

Question No. 294 answered with Question No. 261.

Local Authority Housing Maintenance

295. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the number of voided properties which have been refurbished and relet by each local authority from 2013 to date in 2016. [37512/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): The routine turnaround of vacant social housing stock is a matter for each local authority. However my Department in 2014 introduced a new target-driven and cost effective Voids Retrofitting Programme. The key objective of this revised programme is to return targeted vacant stock to a lettable, energy efficient condition at a reasonable cost. My Department's funding is to support the authorities in tackling those houses that may require a greater level of remediation than the normal level of pre-letting repairs that is the responsibility of local authorities as part of their ongoing repair and maintenance of local authority housing. Funding is given on the condition that the re-letting of vacant social housing units is achieved with minimal delay.

The table sets out the details in tabular form the numbers returned to productive under the programme in 2014 and 2015 and details of the allocations for 2016.

Local Authority	No of Units returned 2014	No of Units returned 2015	Allocations Approved(Units) 2016
Carlow	42	28	8
Cavan	23	28	16
Clare	65	96	79
Cork City	212	281	255
Cork County	155	199	106
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	5	24	19
Donegal	167	146	134
Dublin City	467	787	574
Fingal	165	139	171
Galway City	24	25	22
Galway County	76	59	49
Kerry	79	103	103

Questions - Written Answers

Local Authority	No of Units returned 2014	No of Units returned 2015	Allocations Approved(Units) 2016
Kildare	49	20	26
Kilkenny	25	23	16
Laois	43	12	12
Leitrim	15	9	47
Limerick	98	52	18
Longford	16	22	31
Louth	18	21	8
Mayo	80	86*	26
Meath	59	54	66
Monaghan	21	13	47
Offaly	35	55	44
Roscommon	34	36	80
Sligo	29	39	133
South Dublin	92	27	75
Tipperary	86	115	122
Waterford	42	56	86
Westmeath	56	74	57
Wexford	20	24	23
Wicklow	35	43	10
TOTAL	2,333	2,696	2,463

Local Authority Housing Maintenance

296. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the average time taken by each local authority to refurbish and relet properties including houses purchased by local authorities. [37513/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): The time taken by local authorities to refurbish and re-let properties varies significantly depending on the condition of each property and whether it is an existing social house that is being refurbished after becoming vacant, or a newly acquired, second-hand house. In the latter category, local authorities acquire houses that range in condition from those that require minimal refurbishment prior to re-letting, to those that may be largely derelict and require extensive refurbishment and building works. It is appropriate that local authorities have the scope to acquire all types of second-hand properties, from those that can be made available for early letting to those that require considerable refurbishment. Given the range of different scenarios that are faced by local authorities when acquiring houses, my Department does not collect statistics on the time they take for refurbishment. In all scenarios, it is important that local authorities undertake the works as swiftly as possible and my Department continues to provide the necessary funding to support such situations.

Statistics in relation to re-letting times for existing social houses that are refurbished after becoming vacant are published by the National Oversight & Audit Commission and the most recently available statistics, in respect of 2015, are available at the following link:<http://noac.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2015-PI-Report.pdf>.

These statistics show the average time from date of vacation of a dwelling to the date when a new tenancy had commenced. This is different from the time taken to refurbish a dwelling and other factors will impact on the time taken to re-let a social house, in particular the possibility

of offers for houses being refused.

Local Authority Housing Data

297. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the number of properties purchased by local authorities in each year since 2010 to date in 2016; and the numbers for each local authority. [37514/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under my Department's Social Housing Capital Investment Programme, funding is provided to local authorities to deliver additional social housing stock through new construction projects and through the acquisition of new and previously owned houses/apartments. Details on properties purchased by local authorities for letting to those on their social housing waiting list are available on my Department's website at the following link: http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/attachments/1c1-la-acq-by-area_4.xlsx.

Information on quarter three of 2016 is currently being finalised and will be published shortly, while details for the entirety of 2016 will be available in early 2017.

Departmental Reports

298. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the reports commissioned by his Department since 2006 which while completed or in final draft form have not been published; the reason they have not been published; the expected publication date; the cost to date of each such report; if tenders were invited; if it is not intended to publish any such report the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37547/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): The information sought by the Deputy in respect of the period since March 2011 is set out in the table. This information is not readily available for the period prior to March 2011. However, if the Deputy wishes to put down a question in relation to a specific report, I will endeavour to provide the information sought.

Consultant/Author etc.	Name/Description of Report/Review/Study	Reason Not Published/Expected Publication Date	Tenders Invited	Cost to Date
ARUP Consulting Engineers	Study in respect of provision of fire detection and alarms systems in dwellings.	Not intended for publication. It is a technical report, to inform work in the Department.	Yes	€29,935
Barrow Archaeological Services	Archaeological reports on Met Éireann site at Valentia.	Not intended for publication as it is a technical report relating to a site on Valentia Island where Met Éireann are building an Air Monitoring Facility.	Yes	€1,210
Behaviour & Attitudes Ltd.	Market Survey to determine weather forecast consumption behaviour of the Irish public.	Report for internal purposes, primarily to inform strategic business decisions.	Yes	€19,865

Questions - Written Answers

Consultant/Author etc.	Name/Description of Report/Review/Study	Reason Not Published/Expected Publication Date	Tenders Invited	Cost to Date
Deloitte	Business Case Review for the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP).	Not intended for publication. Undertaken as part of technical work to update financial modelling related to the preparation of the original business case.	Yes	€28,939
Dr. Dagmar Stengel	Best practice in relation to the sustainable exploitation and management of intertidal seaweed resources.	Not intended for publication. Informative research sought to address a gap in knowledge at the time.	Yes	€14,391
Flynn Furney Consultants Ltd.	Environmental Management Services re: review of CEMP at Valentia Site (Method Statement).	Not intended for publication as it is a technical report relating to a site on Valentia Island where Met Éireann are building an Air Monitoring Facility.	Yes	€3,167
Glas Ecology	Environment Management Plan (Breeding Chough and Peregrine Survey, Valentia Island, Co. Kerry).	Not intended for publication as it is a technical report relating to a site on Valentia Island where Met Éireann are building an Air Monitoring Facility.	Yes	€4,920
Glas Ecology	Environment Management follow up Report (Breeding Chough and Peregrine Survey, Valentia Island, Co. Kerry).	Not intended for publication as it is a technical report relating to a site on Valentia Island where Met Éireann are building an Air Monitoring Facility.	Yes	€1,599
Housing & Sustainable Communities Ltd.	Toolkit for Local Authorities on regeneration.	Not intended for publication. This was a report intended to provide assistance to Local Authorities in drawing up proposals for the regeneration of their areas.	No. Report provided by Housing & Sustainable Communities Ltd in their role to advise on Department policy and Local Authority implementation of housing-related functions.	€12,300
Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency	Review of leasing model.	Not Intended for publication. Report for internal use only.	No. Report provided by the Housing Agency in accordance with their statutory functions under the Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency (Establishment) Order 2012.	€1,937
Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency	Review of CALF assessment process.	Not Intended for publication. Report for internal use only.	No. Report provided by the Housing Agency in accordance with their statutory functions under the Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency (Establishment) Order 2012.	€11,675
Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency	Business Process Design of the Housing Assistance Payment.	Not Intended for publication. Report for internal use only.	No. Report provided by the Housing Agency in accordance with their statutory functions under the Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency (Establishment) Order 2012.	€54,938
Indecon	Assessment of Potential Merits of New Initiative re Purchase of Local Authority Houses by Existing Tenants.	This report is available on request from the Department.	Tenders were not sought. The report was produced pro-bono by Indecon.	Nil (report produced on a pro-bono basis)

Consultant/Author etc.	Name/Description of Report/Review/Study	Reason Not Published/Expected Publication Date	Tenders Invited	Cost to Date
IT Executive Focus	Review of the Structure and Delivery Model of the ICT Services for the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.	Internal Management Report. Not intended for publication.	Yes	€55,289
Malachy Walsh & Partners	EIS Screening Report for site at Valentia.	The report is not intended to be published as it is a technical report relating to a site on Valentia Island where Met Éireann are building an Air Monitoring Facility.	Yes	€6,336
MartinPlan Consulting	To consider the implications of the C-50 judgment in the context of waste water discharge licensing and to make any necessary recommendations.	Report forms part of an ongoing deliberative process.	No, due to timeframe and specific expertise required.	€1,750
Munster Archaeology	Report on archaeological investigation/survey of Met Éireann site at Valentia.	The report is not intended to be published as it is a technical report relating to a site on Valentia Island where Met Éireann are building an Air Monitoring Facility.	Yes	€47,289
National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI)	Audit reports for ISO9001:2008 in 2011 and 2012.	Not intended for publication. These reports are for internal use only as an input for ongoing development of a Divisional Quality Management System.	No. The NSAI was used as it is Ireland's official standards body.	€6,699
Steering Group on Fire Safety Review (Chaired by Martin Riordan)	Review of Fire Safety arrangements in multi-unit developments where concerns arise regarding non-compliance with statutory requirements.	Date of publication to be decided. The report remains under consideration pending clarification on a number of issues.	Yes (procurement managed by Kildare County Council).	€34,905
Userneeds	Usage survey on the Met Éireann website.	Internal Management Report. Not intended for publication.	No. Provided as a free sample.	Nil
Version 1	Evaluation of ICT Disaster Recovery configuration and capability.	Internal Management Report. Not intended for publication.	Yes	€9,363

Library Services

299. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the issues raised regarding staffless hours in libraries across the country, including the fact that the Local Government Management Agency report on the pilot project in libraries in counties Offaly and Sligo showed small numbers of staffless hours usage; the way in which he is certain that the provision of capital funding for local authorities to introduce staffless hours is in fact in the best interests of the communities affected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37571/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon

Coveney): ‘My Open Library’ is an initiative under Opportunities for All, the national public library strategy 2013-2017 and is part of a strategy to address customer demand. It provides additional opening hours from 8am to 10pm, seven days-per-week, ensuring access to library services for users who cannot avail of them during regular staffed hours.

On foot of a successful initial trial of the service in Tullamore, Banagher and Tubbercurry libraries from November 2014, it is now planned to roll-out the service across a further 23 pilot library branches from January 2017. I am satisfied that the learning captured to date justifies extending the pilot phase. The extended pilot phase will inform and shape the future development and implementation of the service across the broader library network, working through any service delivery issues that might arise in the meantime.

‘My Open Library’ has operated very successfully to date and the data captured by local authorities support this position. Library usage and number of items borrowed has increased significantly. In Offaly, for example, some 1,700 people have registered to use the service since January 2015, with a 91% increase in ‘My Open Library’ use in Tullamore and Banagher so far in 2016. This equates to almost 20,000 visits during the ‘My Open Library’ hours.

Feedback from users has been very positive. ‘My Open Library’ has made community spaces and collections available to library members and communities, providing access to commuters, students and families at times when the library would be otherwise unavailable. Each library is now open to the community for 98 hours per week, an increase from 47 hours and 14 hours per week in Tullamore and Banagher, respectively, since the introduction of the service.

Planning Issues

300. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his views on proposals contained in section 2 of the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Bill 2016 which will dilute the powers of local authorities with regard to the granting of planning permission for large-scale residential developments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37602/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Bill 2016, which is currently progressing through the Houses of the Oireachtas, proposes that, for a temporary period of time until the end of 2019 - with the possibility to extend that period by a further 2 years to coincide with the timeframe for the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness - planning applications for large-scale housing developments, comprising 100 housing units or more or 200 or more student accommodation bed spaces, shall be made directly to An Bord Pleanála.

The proposed streamlined planning procedures are intended to provide greater certainty for developers in terms of the timelines for planning decision-making, while also facilitating the earlier provision of much needed housing supply and helping to address the current housing supply shortage situation.

In the course of the deliberations on the Bill in the Seanad which are still ongoing, concerns have been expressed regarding the alleged dilution of the role of local authorities and elected members under the proposed new procedures, which I have noted. Similar concerns have also been expressed to me by the Association of Irish Local Government.

In this connection, I wish to outline that, under the proposed new procedures, applications for planning permission in respect of large-scale housing developments will only be consid-

ered on lands that have already been zoned for residential development in the relevant city or county development plan, as determined by the elected members in the process of the adoption of the development plan. This remains a reserved function of the elected members and will not change under the new procedures.

Furthermore, it is intended under the proposed new procedures that local authorities will be centrally involved in the pre-application consultation consideration of proposed large-scale housing developments with the developers in question and An Bord Pleanála. When a planning application in respect of a large-scale housing development is subsequently submitted to the Board, local authorities will be further required to submit a report - including making recommendations indicating their view on whether proposed development should be granted or refused permission - to the Board as part of the proposed new arrangements.

Taking account of the concerns expressed to date and the respective reserved and executive functions of local elected members and the local authority executive, I have indicated that I am supportive of tabling a Government amendment to the proposed new arrangements so that elected members are informed of any strategic housing developments proposed for their local areas at an early point in the process thereby facilitating them to make submissions on any such proposed developments. This would enhance the involvement of elected members in the proposed new procedures relating to large scale housing developments, giving them an opportunity to input to the process and to represent the views of their constituents in accordance with their democratic mandate. I am proposing an amendment to the Bill to this effect at Report Stage in the Seanad later today.

I will continue to engage with members of both Houses on all provisions of the Bill as it progresses through both Houses so that the measures contained in it are pragmatic and workable, while also ensuring that local authorities and elected members are involved in, and can input to, the proposed new procedures.

Departmental Bodies Expenditure

301. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the total grant aid paid to An Taisce by his Department in each year from 2010 to 2016, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37607/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): The table sets out details of funding to An Taisce from my Department over the period in question:

Funding to An Taisce

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
€	€	€	€	€	€	€
0	0	0	0	275,492	278,000	358,758

In addition, An Taisce is in receipt of funding from the Environment Fund. Responsibility for the Environment Fund transferred to the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment on 22 July 2016 as part of the transfer of functions between the two Departments.

Rental Accommodation Scheme Administration

302. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his views on a rental accommodation scheme whereby contracts are offered on a month-to-month tenancy (details supplied). [37615/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) involves a three way contractual relationship between the landlord, the tenant and the housing authority. There are two types of contractual arrangements which may be entered into between landlords, housing authorities and tenants under the Scheme - one is known as a Tenancy by Tenancy agreement and the other is known as an Availability Agreement.

Under the Tenancy by Tenancy arrangement a Residential Tenancy agreement is completed by the landlord, the housing authority and the tenant. In this specific arrangement, there is no on-going availability agreement between the landlord and the housing authority - the arrangement continues to exist for as long as the existing tenant resides in the property. However, the tenancy contract between the landlord and the tenant is subject to the provisions and protections of the Residential Tenancies Act and can therefore endure for an unrestricted period. When the tenant leaves the property the contractual relationship between the landlord and the local authority comes to an end.

Under the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 all tenants who are allocated RAS accommodation after 1 April 2011 are deemed to have their housing need met and will no longer remain on the main social housing waiting list. However, it is recommended that local authority allocation schemes provide a “transfer pathway” for RAS tenants, where RAS households can apply to transfer to other forms of social housing support, and many tenants have availed of the transfer option and have moved on to other forms of social housing support.

Local authorities apply the same differential rent scheme to all of their tenants regardless of whether the property provided is owned by the local authority, or secured for social housing use under other arrangements such as a long term lease or rental accommodation agreements. When a tenant’s income increases due to increased level of employment, including full-time employment, their differential rent will increase in accordance with the local authority’s rent scheme. While differential rent can exceed market rent for high income households under some local authorities’ rent schemes, an increase in a tenant’s income has no direct effect on their tenancy arrangement. In such a case, it is open to the tenant to leave local authority housing and find alternative housing in the private market; however, this is a matter for the tenant and they are under no onus to do so.

Similarly, when a RAS tenancy ends and the landlord does not wish to renew the tenancy agreement, the household remains a local authority tenant and the onus is on the local authority to find alternative accommodation for them.

Departmental Legal Cases

303. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if his Department, or the agencies that report to his Department, entered into any non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements with any organisation due to court action or a threatened court action; and if so, the persons or groups with which these agreements exist. [37627/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): The information requested is being compiled insofar as my Department is concerned, and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible. The information in relation to agencies under the aegis of my Department is an operational matter for each Agency. Arrangements have been put in place by each Agency to facilitate the provision of information by State Bodies directly to members of the Oireachtas. The contact email address for each agency is as below:

Agency	Email address
An Bord Pleanála	Oireachtasqueries@pleanala.ie
Ervia, Gas Networks Ireland	oireachtas@ervia.ie
Housing Sustainable Communities Agency	publicreps@housingagency.ie
Housing Finance Agency	oireachtas.enquiries@hfa.ie
Irish Water	oireachtasmembers@water.ie
Irish Water Safety	oireachtas@iws.ie
Local Government Management Agency	corporate@lgma.ie.
Residential Tenancies Board	OireachtasMembersQueries@rtb.ie
Pobal	oireachtasqueries@pobal.ie

Control of Dogs

304. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he will intervene with the Kilkenny County Council executive to remove the clause in the public dog pound tender requiring applicants to have two similar contracts in view of the fact this clause would exclude every organisation from applying; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37641/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the Control of Dogs Acts, local authorities have responsibility for operating and managing dog control and licensing services in their administrative areas, including the management of dog pounds or shelters and my Department has no involvement in this process. In this regard, section 15(2) of the 1986 Act empowers local authorities to enter into arrangements with any person for the provision and maintenance of dog pounds or shelters and for the exercise by any such persons of the functions of the local authority under the Act in respect of the acceptance, detention, disposal and destruction of stray or unwanted dogs.

Furthermore, section 15(3) of the 1986 Act empowers local authorities to enter into arrangements with any other local authority, or with the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ISPCA), or with a person connected with animal welfare, for the exercise of all or any of its functions, other than its functions under section 17 or section 30 of this Act.

The procurement of any service in that regard, therefore, is a matter for the local authority, Kilkenny County Council, and the management and operation of such pounds or shelters are matters solely for the relevant local authority.

Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme

305. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government further to Question No. 254 of 22 November 2016, the basis on which he supported the payment of statutory redundancy, by approving amendment of the LCDP financial guidelines, to employees made redundant as a result of reorganising and replacing the LCDP

scheme in 2015, but has not supported the making of ex gratia payments to former employees where the companies had no funds to make such payments; if money was provided in the 2016 or the 2015 Vote for his Department to allow for such ex gratia payments; if an amendment of the law would be required for the purpose; if he is in compliance with a Labour Court recommendation (details supplied) to enter into meaningful discussions with workers and their union representatives regarding the issue; if he is in compliance with any agreement or understanding on the matter between the parties to the Haddington Road agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37758/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): I refer to the reply to Question No 254 of 22 November 2016, regarding the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP).

My Department has no role in the internal operations of any private organisations, and therefore does not have a role in relation to staff or employment matters, which are for the Board of the company, as the employer, to manage. Section 2(3) of the Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007, specifically provided that:

“The Minister shall not be, or be deemed to be, an employer, within the meaning of the Terms of Employment (Information) Acts 1994 and 2001, by virtue of the provision of funding to a person or persons under any scheme”. Each funding Department is responsible for its funding and contractual arrangements with the Local Development Companies (LDCs).

However, the Government recognises that, like all other sectors of our economy, the community and voluntary sector has had to deal with reduced funding and financial shortages in recent years and issues have arisen around the capacity of the sector to pay enhanced redundancy payments.

Having considered the outcome of the competitive process for the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), and the resulting impact for a number of LDCs who failed to secure SICAP contracts, it was agreed in 2015 that, as part of the closing arrangement for LCDP, provision would be made to allow for certain redundancy costs to be charged to LCDP funding, from within the voted Programme allocation, subject to written agreement to the limits of spend. Sixty Six employees, equating to 52 full time equivalent employees, benefitted from this approach.

Separately, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform provided limited funding to my Department’s vote in 2014, 2015 and 2016 for a redundancy scheme to compensate certain former community workers who lost their jobs as a result of reductions in programme funding from 2009. My Department understands that the employers involved fulfilled their statutory redundancy obligations to the employees concerned. Some of the employees in question subsequently made claims for enhanced redundancy payments through the Labour Relations Commission and the Labour Court and non-binding Labour Court recommendations, to provide additional benefits, were made in certain cases.

My Department has received comprehensive legal advice in relation to the establishment of the enhanced redundancy scheme subsequently proposed by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. It has been in the context of the legal issues identified that discussions between my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Attorney General’s Office have taken place. Consideration of the matter will be finalised in light of the outcome of these consultations.

306. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the status of the appointment of additional special advisers by him and Ministers of State in his Department. [37888/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): I have appointed two Special Advisers in accordance the terms and conditions set out in the Instructions to Personnel Officers – Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil.

Minister of State Damien English has not appointed any Special Advisers nor has Minister of State Catherine Byrne, who has shared responsibilities between my Department and the Department of Health.

Details of Special Advisers appointed are available on the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform website at the following link: <http://www.per.gov.ie/en/special-advisers-pay/>.

Artists' Remuneration

307. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will liaise with the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to examine the supports for working artists in the social protection system; and if the Government will relax activation rules for working artists to allow them to support themselves as they produce the art and cultural pieces for which Ireland is rightly proud. [37065/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The jobseeker's benefit and jobseeker's allowance schemes provide income support for people who have lost work and are unable to find alternative full-time employment. The 2016 Estimates for my Department provide for expenditure this year on the jobseekers' schemes of €2.8 billion.

It is accepted that periods of unemployment are a normal feature of the acting and artistic professions and people in these professions can qualify for a jobseeker's payment when they are unemployed. Jobseeker's payments compensate for periods of involuntary unemployment only and it is not the function of my Department to provide income support through the jobseeker's schemes to any group, including artists during periods of unemployment, which are voluntary.

For this reason, social welfare legislation provides that all jobseekers must satisfy certain qualifying conditions in order to be entitled to an unemployment payment including, being available for full-time work and be genuinely seeking work. All unemployed persons should avail of reasonable employment opportunities and artists are treated no differently to any other unemployed person.

The jobseeker's allowance scheme can provide income support to artists. For instance artists including self-employed artists who satisfy the scheme's conditionality and the means test can qualify for a jobseeker's allowance payment. Artists who are working part time and are categorised as casual jobseeker's allowance recipients or those who are self-employed and in receipt of jobseeker's allowance are not currently activated by my Department.

I have had discussions with my colleague the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in relation to supports for working artists and on foot of these our respective officials are in further discussions. The Arts Council, of course, is the main mechanism, through which the Government directs funding to the arts and to artists and the 8% increase in its annual budget will allow the Council to enhance support to artists and arts organisations around the country on both a small and large scale, from locally-based groups to the Abbey Theatre.

It should be noted that in Budget 2017 funding increases across the arts and cultural bodies under the remit of the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs were announced including:

- an extra €5m for the Arts Council - an 8% increase;
- €2m extra for the Film Board;
- an extra €1m for Culture Ireland;
- an additional allocation of €3.5m for the national cultural institutions; and
- a new funding stream of €5m for the implementation of a Culture 2025/Ireland 2016 Legacy Programme.

All of this represents real and substantial funding increases across the arts and cultural area and has been welcomed across the sector. It also re-affirms the commitment of this Government to progressively increase funding for the arts as the economy improves, as set out in the *Programme for a Partnership Government*. These increases will have a positive and distinct impact on arts and cultural provision around the country, especially for artists and other creative workers.

Back to Education Allowance Eligibility

308. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will amend the back-to-education allowance to cover part-time education as those persons who are currently receiving jobseeker's allowance or benefit and wish to study part-time courses in a specific subject due to the unavailability of full-time courses within a reasonable travel distance do not receive adequate support (details supplied). [37525/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The objective of the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) is to assist those who are distant from the labour market acquire the necessary education to improve their chances of becoming independent of the social welfare system. The BTEA scheme is aligned with the student support schemes under the Department of Education and Skills. The Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) grant payable by the Department of Education and Skills represents the primary support for persons pursuing education. In general, most BTEA customers pursuing full-time course will also have certain registration and related college fees paid by SUSI.

The Part-Time Education Option (PTEO) allows a jobseeker to retain their Jobseeker's Allowance or Benefit and attend a part-time day or evening course of education or training. The participant must continue to meet the conditions for Jobseeker's Allowance or Benefit. This means that they must be able to show they are actively looking for and willing to take up work and that the course is likely to improve their chances of getting employment. If work is offered while on the course they will be expected to accept the job offer.

The Department of Social Protection does not pay any course fees or relocation costs for full-time or part-time studies.

One of the measures announced in Budget 2017 is a new €500 annual Cost of Education Allowance to be made available to full time Back to Education Allowance participants with children. This allowance will incentivise people with children to participate in full time second and third level education and is in line with the Programme for Government commitment to

support low-income families. This will be payable for the 2017/2018 academic year.

Carer's Allowance Payments

309. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on a carer's allowance will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36851/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Carer's allowance (CA) is in payment to the person concerned since 13 May 2010 in respect of one care recipient. I confirm that my Department received an application for CA from him on the 15 September 2016 in respect of a 2nd care recipient resident at a different location from the first.

The application was referred to a local social welfare inspector (SWI) on 12 November 2016 to assess the level of care being provided, assess means and confirm that all the conditions for receipt of carer's allowance are satisfied. Once the SWI has reported, a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy .

Invalidity Pension Applications

310. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a claim for invalidity pension will be finalised in respect of a person (details supplied). [36872/16]

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

The department received a claim for IP for the lady concerned on 12 April 2016. In order to establish medical suitability, forms for completion issued to her on 18 April 2016. Despite the issue of reminders, the completed medical forms were not returned to the department until 14 October 2016.

Following consideration of all the available evidence, the lady concerned has been refused IP on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme are not satisfied. She was notified on the 24 November 2016 of this decision, the reasons for it and of her right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan

311. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Social Protection the way in which he plans to address the cost of disability in view of research released by his Department which indicates that persons with disabilities face higher deprivation rates and consistent poverty than the general population, and associated with this, that they and their children are more at risk of experiencing multiple quality of life challenges than any other social group here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36874/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): I presume that the Deputy is referring to a recently published research briefing entitled “Social Risk and Social Class Patterns in Poverty and Quality of Life in Ireland, 2004 – 2013” that summarises the findings from a report examining poverty and deprivation trends over the ten-year period 2004 to 2013 for such groups as lone parents, people with a disability and children. The report is an output of the Department of Social Protection’s and the Economic and Social Research Institute’s research programme on monitoring poverty trends.

The briefing states that comprehensive measures such as adequate income support, inclusive labour markets and access to quality services are needed to address the complexity of the challenges facing such vulnerable groups. It adds that previous research has shown that social transfers are effective at reducing poverty in Ireland and that there may be limited scope for further improvement in this area. The briefing does not propose the introduction of a cost of disability or identify it as a measure to address consistent poverty. Rather, the briefing identifies the need for broader integrated actions and interventions such as those outlined in the updated National Action Plan for Social Inclusion.

The primary role of the social protection system centres on providing income support and assistance with taking up employment where this is appropriate; it is not the function of the income support system to address the additional costs associated with a disability. Accordingly, I have no plans to establish a cost of disability payment within the social protection system.

In any event, people with disabilities are not a homogeneous group and as such would have widely differing needs with the result that the extra costs of disability would not therefore arise to the same extent in all cases. There is no single comprehensive payment available in respect of the additional costs of disability. However, some of these additional costs are addressed across schemes provided by a number of agencies such as the health service and also the Revenue Commissioners through certain tax reliefs and other supports.

I hope that clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

School Meals Programme

312. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Social Protection if an application by a school (details supplied) under the schools meals programme has been received; when a decision will be made on this application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36893/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The school meals programme provides funding towards the provision of food to schools and organisations benefitting over 200,000 children at a total cost of €42 million in 2016.

As part of Budget 2017, I announced an additional €5.7 million for school meals which will benefit over 50,000 children providing breakfasts and lunches. Of these, some 35,000 extra breakfasts will be provided in non-DEIS schools from September 2017 and will be expanded in future years. This is the first time in many years that increased payments will be provided to schools outside of DEIS.

The school referred to by the Deputy, made an application for school meals funding on 16 November 2016. As the school is not a DEIS school it cannot be considered for funding for the current academic year.

Officials in my Department are engaging with colleagues in the Department of Education and Skills in examining options regarding the provision of the additional funding to schools for

the next school year. Priority will be provided to those schools where there is most need.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Rural Social Scheme Eligibility

313. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Social Protection if the terms and conditions of new rural social scheme participants under the expanded scheme will be the same as on the existing scheme; if it is intended to pay the full rate rural social scheme payment to all participants as pertained up to the period of the last Government; if it is intended to introduce a cap on the years a participant can partake in the scheme; if so the reason for this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36899/16]

338. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Social Protection his plans to change the eligibility criteria for the rural social scheme, including the length of time a person is allowed to be on the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37440/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 313 and 338 together.

The RSS provides opportunities for farmers and fishermen and women who are currently in receipt of specified social welfare payments to work to provide certain services of benefit to rural communities. Deputies on all sides of the House are fully aware of the positive benefits derived from schemes like the Rural Social Scheme. While communities benefit from the skills and talents of local farmers and fishermen, participants also have the opportunity to improve existing skills, or develop new skills, while performing valuable work in their local communities. Community groups have benefitted from the many projects undertaken through the scheme with minimal cost to the Exchequer. The scheme has also played an important role in sustaining rural communities.

As part of the social welfare budget package for 2017, I announced an increase of €5 a week in the personal rate of payment for rural social scheme (RSS) participants from March 2017. I also announced an additional 500 places on the scheme to be rolled out in 2017. This will increase the overall number of places to 3,100. My Department intends allocating these places as early as possible in 2017, taking into account a number of factors. These include the number of places already allocated, the demand for places in particular areas, work opportunities available and the numbers of farmers and fishermen and women in receipt of income support.

Eligibility for participation on the scheme will continue to remain limited to those in receipt of certain specified social welfare payments and all participants must be also actively engaged in farming or fishing. In future, all new entrants to the RSS will have to be over 25 years of age and, in addition, a 6 year overall participation limit will be introduced on the scheme. This will ensure that there will be a throughput of places available and that younger people will have an opportunity to explore other training or education options before a long term work programme. Almost 50% of the current participants have been on the RSS for over 10 years.

It is proposed to allow the existing cohort of RSS participants to remain on the scheme as long as they continue to satisfy the eligibility conditions of the scheme and the new conditions outlined above will only apply to new RSS entrants.

The rate of RSS payment is currently linked to the participant's primary social protection payment with a minimum weekly rate of €210.50 increasing to €215.50 from March 2017. Participants may receive extra allowances in respect of qualified adult dependent and qualified

child dependents. It is proposed to continue to pay RSS participants in this manner.

Disability Allowance Payments

314. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will review the delay in payment of disability allowance to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36935/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): This man has been awarded disability allowance with effect from 13 January 2016. The first payment will be made by his chosen payment method on 14 December 2016.

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

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

315. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Social Protection when documentation with regard to a carer's allowance appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) will be sent to the appeals section for consideration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36942/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I confirm that my department received an application for carer's allowance from the person concerned on 28 July 2016.

The application was refused on the grounds that the person concerned was not providing full-time care and attention as required.

She was notified on 10 October 2016 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

The person concerned has appealed this decision to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO).

All the necessary papers have been submitted to the SWAO for determination on 25 November 2016. The SWAO will be in touch with her in relation to the progress of the appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance Data

316. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Social Protection the amount of payments issued through the supplementary welfare allowance scheme, broken down between exceptional needs payment and urgent needs payment, and further broken down into the payments by each office which issued the payments in each of the years since 2008. [36943/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) scheme, the Department may make a single exceptional needs payment (ENP) to help meet essential, once-off and unforeseen expenditure which a person could not

reasonably be expected to meet out of their weekly income.

The Government has provided €30.3 million for exceptional and urgent needs payments in 2016. SWA legislation also provides for assistance in the form of an urgent needs payment (UNP) which can be made to persons who would not normally be entitled to SWA but who have an urgent need which they cannot meet from their own resources or an alternative is not available at that time. The person may be required to pay the money back in respect of a UNP at a later date in certain circumstances.

Details of the number of payments under the ENP and UNP schemes for the years 2008 and to October 2016 are set out in table 1. While statistics are maintained relating to payments under the ENP and UNP schemes, they are not maintained on the number of payments made by each office. Details of the combined number of payments under the ENP and UNP schemes by county are provided for 2013 to date in 2016 in table 2. This detailed information is not available for 2008 to 2012.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Table 1: Number of ENPs and UNPs from 2008 to end October 2016

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016 (Oct)*
Exceptional Needs Payments	259,338	235,877	217,100	225,026	196,193	132,630	106,911	95,868	73,328
Urgent Needs Payments	532	810	900	594	644	360	228	344	207

Note: 2016 figures may be subject to change.

Table 2: Number of ENPs and UNPs by County from 2013 to end October 2016

County	2013	2014	2015	2016 (October)*
Carlow	1,889	1,249	1,130	890
Cavan	1,056	786	620	479
Clare	1,842	1,596	2,150	1,717
Cork	10,315	9,693	8,943	8,528
Donegal	1,786	1,549	1,580	1,278
Dublin	60,091	46,651	37,776	25,118
Galway	4,022	2,658	2,153	1,376
Kerry	2,369	2,047	2,220	2,065
Kildare	6,590	4,361	3,835	3,004
Kilkenny	2,618	2,132	1,707	964
Laois	2,648	3,396	3,344	2,905
Leitrim	733	815	714	548
Limerick	4,864	4,339	4,345	3,756
Longford	1,021	1,099	1,048	991
Louth	1,706	1,503	1,563	1,286
Mayo	2,810	1,603	1,877	1,777
Meath	4,055	3,125	2,800	2,332
Monaghan	593	495	728	787
Offaly	1,221	1,269	1,201	825
Roscommon	1,504	843	833	586

Questions - Written Answers

County	2013	2014	2015	2016 (October)*
Sligo	1,797	1,494	1,751	1,800
Tipperary	7,108	5,760	5,289	3,344
Waterford	2,412	2,584	2,269	1,950
Westmeath	2,128	2,239	2,453	2,315
Wexford	2,192	1,309	859	643
Wicklow	3,620	2,544	3,024	2,271
Total	132,990	107,139	96,212	73,535

Note: 2016 figures may be subject to change.

Departmental Staff Data

317. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of staff from his Department currently seconded to other Departments or agencies in the Civil Service per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36971/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The number of staff from my Department currently seconded to other Departments or Agencies, including staff seconded to wholly funded state bodies delivering public services, each year from 2010 to date is outlined in the table:

Year	Number of Officers seconded to other Depts. or Agencies
2010	7
2011	13
2012	17
2013	17
2014	20
2015	21
2016	24

Departmental Staff Data

318. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of staff from his Department who have appealed against secondment per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the appeals mechanism involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36987/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I am not aware of any staff in my Department having appealed against secondment in the years 2010 to 2016.

Departmental Staff Data

319. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of staff from his Department currently seconded to a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37003/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): There are no staff from my De-

partment currently seconded to firms in the private sector.

Departmental Staff Data

320. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of staff from his Department currently seconded from a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37019/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): There are no officers in my Department currently seconded from firms in the private sector.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

321. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of a review in respect of a person (details supplied) under the invalidity pension scheme. [37024/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The department received a claim for invalidity pension (IP) from the gentleman concerned on the 03 August 2016. He was refused IP on the grounds that, based upon the evidence supplied, the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. He was notified on the 17 October 2016 of this decision, the reasons for it and of his rights of review and appeal. He requested a review of this decision and submitted further medical evidence in support of his request. Following a review of all the information available it has been decided that there is no change to the original decision. He was notified on 25 November 2016 of the outcome of the review and of his right to appeal the decision to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office within 21 days.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Job Vacancies

322. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection if his attention has been drawn to complaints from companies concerning the effectiveness of an online vacancy and job-matching service (details supplied), specifically the low number of applicants yielded from the advertisement of opportunities on the site; the process by which notifications of new vacancies are communicated to his Department's officials for the purpose of matching candidates to positions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37036/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Jobsireland.ie is a free online jobs site that enables employers to post job opportunities and jobseekers to search and apply for these opportunities online. The new service has been available since 28th July 2016, replacing an older site that enabled jobseekers to search for job opportunities based on job type and location, but did not facilitate employers to search for suitable jobseekers on the site – they had to rely on candidates finding and applying for a job from among the many thousands hosted on the system.

Accordingly, the Department commissioned the development and implementation of a new service that would enable both employers and jobseekers to search for each other using competencies and skill sets as well as the traditional job-type classifications. As part of the new ser-

vice, candidate profiles will be automatically matched to job specifications posted by employers with both candidate and the employer notified when a suitable match is found. Candidates can also use the site to apply for the jobs advertised. The system will also integrate with the Department of Social Protection's Intreo service and will include other new features such as allowing jobseekers to post CVs and video profiles if they wish.

The service is being implemented on phased basis which means, unfortunately, that there is some service disruption while work is ongoing. There have also been some teething problems with the first phase implementation, but the Department is working with the supplier to resolve these and improve and add new functionality over the coming weeks and months.

A significant upgrade was implemented on the weekend of 26/27 November. This upgrade has resolved many of the teething issues and is now expected that service performance will improve markedly.

Employers or any person experiencing difficulties with the website can contact the Department's National Contact Centre on 1890 800 024 for assistance. Additional resources have been assigned to expedite queries.

Community Employment Schemes Eligibility

323. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Social Protection if the age limits for community employment schemes are currently being reviewed; if any decision has been taken, if a review is in place; and if a person (details supplied) will receive a reduction in payments if they have to give up their community employment scheme when they reach 59 years of age which is when the current community employment scheme finishes. [37047/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): My Department provides a range of activation supports and programmes catering for long-term unemployed jobseekers and those most distant from the labour market. This includes programmes such as Community Employment (CE).

As the Deputy will be aware, CE schemes provide part-time temporary work in their local communities, including opportunities for training and development as a stepping-stone back to employment, for people in receipt of a range of social welfare payments, including those on a long-term jobseeker's payment.

These schemes help to break the cycle of unemployment and improve a person's chances of returning to the labour market. My Department is also conscious of the valuable contribution the schemes are making in the provision of services to individuals and communities across Ireland.

With the ongoing welcome reductions in the live register, issues such as the appropriate level of expenditure, the number of places and the criteria for participation on employment schemes, including CE, are all being considered. I hope to be in a position to bring a Memo to Government on these matters in the coming weeks. If there are any changes to be made to the CE scheme, consultations with stakeholders will be facilitated.

The CE participant referred to in your question commenced on Community Employment on the 20th September 2010. To date he is over 6 years on CE and his participation is due to finish on the 22nd September, 2017. At that stage he will have received his full CE participation eligibility of 7 years which is inclusive of the extra disability year. When he finishes his CE participation he will revert to his disability related payment.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Magdalen Laundries

324. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Social Protection the pension scheme entitlements available to former residents of the Magdalen laundries; and if such payments impact on any other social protection payments, such as the fuel allowance or the household package. [37058/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Department of Social Protection processes an ex-gratia payment/administrative scheme, under the recommendations of the Magdalen Commission Report of Mr Justice John Quirke, on behalf of the Department of Justice and Equality. This scheme provides for payments equalling the maximum rate of State pension (contributory), currently set at €233.30 per week, to eligible customers aged over 66 years. For eligible customers who have yet to reach the pension age, a minimum payment of €100 per week applies. These payments are not payable in addition to existing welfare benefits but rather as a payment sufficient to top this up to the applicable rate. In calculating the payment due to a customer, secondary benefits payable by this Department are not taken into account.

In addition, regulations also provide that payments under the Magdalen Scheme will be disregarded for means purposes if the customer is being means tested for any welfare assistance payments and that also includes means tests for fuel allowance or household benefits in some instances.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

325. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the appropriate payment available to a person (details supplied) previously in receipt of the one parent family allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37165/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The person concerned is currently in receipt of a Supplementary Welfare Allowance payment at the maximum statutory rate for an adult and two qualifying children. The person concerned submitted medical certs but is not entitled to an illness benefit payment as he does not satisfy the qualifying criteria in the governing contribution year.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

326. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a person in low paid employment can qualify for the back-to-school clothing and footwear allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37168/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The back to school clothing and footwear allowance (BSCFA) is a non-statutory scheme which provides a once-off payment to eligible families to assist with the extra costs of clothing and footwear when children start

school each autumn. BSCFA payments have issued to over 150,000 families in 2016 at a cost of over €39 million.

A person may qualify for payment of BSCFA in respect of a qualified child if they are in receipt of a qualifying payment, or participating in an approved employment scheme, or attending a recognised education and training course, and have household income at or below certain set levels. BSCFA qualifying payments that support low income working families include family income supplement and the back to work family dividend.

Further information is available on my Department's website at the following link:

<http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Back-to-School-Clothing-and-Footwear-Allowance.aspx>

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Overpayments

327. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will review the recovery of debt in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37172/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): My Department is in contact with this lady with regard to the recovery of the debt. On 16 November 2016, the debt recovery officer outlined a number of recovery options to this lady and is awaiting a response.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

328. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application under the disability allowance scheme in respect of a person (details supplied). [37184/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): I confirm that my Department received an application for disability allowance from this man on 7 November 2016. On completion of the necessary investigations on all aspects of the claim a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome. The processing time for individual disability allowance claims may vary in accordance with their relative complexity in terms of the three main qualifying criteria, the person's circumstances and the information they provide in support of their claim.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Funding

329. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Social Protection the funding that has been provided to County Louth over the previous three years 2014 to 2016 by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37228/16]

330. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Social Protection the applications

submitted for funding projects from Louth County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016 in tabular form; and if the applications were successful. [37244/16]

331. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Social Protection the funding for projects in 2017 in County Louth to be funded by his Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37260/16]

332. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Social Protection the funding that has been provided to County Meath over the previous three years 2014 to 2016 by project name, location and funding amount in tabular form. [37276/16]

333. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Social Protection the applications submitted for funding and projects from Meath County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016, in tabular form; if the applications were successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37292/16]

334. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Social Protection the funding for projects in 2017 in County Meath to be funded by his Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37308/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 329 to 334, inclusive, together.

The information as requested by the Deputy is not readily available. A request to gather the information as requested by the Deputy has been made. The Department will contact the Deputy directly when the request for information has been completed.

JobPath Implementation

335. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason those referred to JobPath are no longer eligible for a community employment scheme; his views on the impact that this may be having on the viability of community employment schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37337/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): My Department provides a range of activation supports catering for long-term unemployed jobseekers and those most distant from the labour market. These supports include the JobPath service and employment programmes such as the Community Employment (CE) scheme.

The JobPath service is provided for jobseekers only, whereas CE schemes provide part time temporary work in communities for people in receipt of a range of social welfare payments including jobseekers.

JobPath aims to place people into full-time sustainable employment. The period of engagement with the service for any individual is typically 52 weeks. During that time they receive intensive individual support to help them to overcome barriers to employment. During the year if a person is placed into a job they will continue to receive support for at least three months and up to an additional twelve months while in employment.

CE schemes are a stepping stone back to employment but are not full time sustainable jobs. People who have completed their year long engagement with JobPath may, if eligible, apply to partake in a CE Scheme after they have been assessed by a departmental case officer.

In general, people are not allowed participate in two separate schemes at the same time.

Given the need to manage the allocation of places to all schemes in an effective manner, the Department does not facilitate or encourage jobseekers to leave one scheme early in order to take up a place on another.

The welcome reduction in the unemployment rate to 7.5% (Oct 2016), which has fallen from a peak of 15% (Feb 2012) is a factor in recruitment to all programmes never the less despite this reduction, the table below shows the number of people on CE schemes is relatively stable. In addition, as participation on JobPath is limited in most cases to 12 months, people on JobPath are becoming available to other schemes as their period of engagement with JobPath comes to an end.

Number of CE participants and supervisors: for the period 2015 and 2016:

	CE Participants	CE supervisors
Oct 2015	22,488	1,388
Oct 2016	22,040	1,387

It should be noted that CE Schemes are not restricted to those in receipt of a jobseeker's payment. If there is a CE scheme experiencing particular difficulties in recruitment, the sponsor should contact their local DSP office so that the matter can be reviewed.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Labour Activation Measures

336. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Social Protection the details of the pre-activation supports announced in budget 2017 for persons with a disability; the way the money will be allocated; the schemes to which the money will be allocated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37363/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Budget 2017 included a new measure for a "pre-activation" programme for people with disabilities. The programme will bring participants with a disability who are not ready for work without further assistance, closer to the labour market through engagement in training and personal development activities. Its focus will be on young people with disabilities (aged 16 – 26) who require that additional help to assist in their transition from school to post-school life. It is envisaged that the programme will support community and voluntary groups to deliver a range of activities such as the development of participant's soft skills, (for example using public transport independently), work preparation, placements and sampling that are designed to assist people with disabilities to obtain and sustain employment.

The operational arrangements of this programme are currently being assessed and will take into account the recommendations of a working group established under the Comprehensive Employment Strategy chaired by the NDA and comprising of the Departments of Education and Skills, Health and Social Protection, together with the HSE. The group was established to develop an effective co-ordinated policy approach and interdepartmental protocols to assist individuals with disabilities, including those who require a high level of support, to obtain and retain employment. This working group is due to report by the end of the year and this will assist in determining decisions relating to the provision of services of this nature at a national level.

Disability Allowance Applications

337. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of a disability allowance application in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37431/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): I confirm my Department received an application for disability allowance (DA) on 24 May 2016. In order to determine the circumstances of this lady, her file was forwarded to her local Social Welfare Inspector (SWI). The SWI will arrange to meet with the person in question as soon as possible.

A decision on her entitlement to DA will be made on receipt of the Social Welfare Inspector's report. The person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Question No. 338 answered with Question No. 313.

Departmental Staff Recruitment

339. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there has been no social protection inspector in Tuam since August 2016; if his attention has further been drawn to the difficulty this is causing for staff and customers (details supplied); the measures he will take to address this situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37443/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): There are two Social Welfare Inspector posts in Tuam and they cover the whole North Galway area. A vacancy in one of the posts arose as a result of the transfer of an Inspector to Galway City in August 2016.

My Department, like all Government Departments and agencies, is required to operate within a staff ceiling figure and a commensurate administrative staffing budget.

Within these constraints, my Department is focusing on prioritising the filling of critical posts. The staffing needs for all offices of my Department are continuously reviewed, taking account of workloads, management priorities and the competing demands arising, to ensure that the best use is made of all available resources with a view to providing an efficient service to those who rely on the schemes operated by the Department.

However, it has not been possible to date to fill all posts that have become vacant, including this post in Tuam. This position is under ongoing review.

The most urgent and longest outstanding claims in Tuam are being prioritised at present. If a customer is under financial pressure while awaiting a decision on a claim, it is open to them to contact the local Community Welfare Officer regarding Supplementary Welfare Allowance.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Jobseeker's Allowance Appeals

340. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an

appeal on a decision on a jobseeker's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37470/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 22 November 2016. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When these papers have been received from the Department, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral appeal hearing.

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

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

341. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an appeal on an application for a carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37485/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Carer's allowance was awarded to the person concerned on 23 November 2016 and the first payment is due to issue to their nominated post office on 1 December 2016. Arrears of allowance due from 11 February 2016 to 23 November 2016 have issued by cheque.

The person concerned was notified of these details on 23 November 2016.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Insurance Payments

342. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will permit self-employed persons to make voluntary contributions to enable them to claim jobseeker's payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37488/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Self-employed people, who earn €5,000 or more in a contribution year, are liable to pay PRSI on a compulsory basis at the Class S rate of 4%, subject to a minimum annual payment of €500. This provides them with access to the following benefits: State pension (contributory), widow's, widower's or surviving civil partner's pension (contributory), guardian's payment (contributory), maternity benefit, paternity benefit and adoptive benefit. In line with the commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government to support entrepreneurship, I announced, in Budget 2017, the extension of cover for invalidity pension to the self-employed on the same basis as employees, with effect from December 2017. Gaining access to invalidity pension will provide the self-employed with a much stronger safety net to protect them in the event of long-term incapacity for work. I also announced that the self-employed will have access to the treatment benefit scheme which provides partial dental, optical and aural services to qualified people, from March 2017. Treatment benefit entitlements will be extended further from October 2017 for both the self-employed and employees through the provision of additional dental and optical benefits. There will be

no change in the PRSI contribution rate payable by the self-employed in 2017. In 2017, my Department will carry out detailed work to establish how to provide a better safety net for self-employed workers who become unemployed. Payment of contributions by the self-employed on a voluntary basis for benefits for which they are not covered for was examined by the Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare. In their report published in 2013, the Group concluded that extension on a voluntary basis, through either an 'opt in' or 'opt out' basis, could lead to the selection of bad risks and would undermine the social solidarity and contributory principles that underline the social insurance system. This recommendation will be further considered in the examination to be conducted by the Department. The outcome will be considered in a Budgetary context.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

343. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on a carer's allowance appeal will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37523/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As a result of an appeals officer's decision, the person concerned was awarded carer's allowance on 15 November 2016.

The first payments were issued to her nominated bank account on 24 November 2016.

Arrears of allowance due from 29 October 2015 to 23 November 2016 have also issued.

The person concerned was notified on 15 November 2016 of this decision.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits Data

344. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of applications for invalidity pension, partial capacity benefit, family income supplement and domiciliary care allowances his department received in 2015 and to date in 2016; the number of those applications that have been approved, pending or refused in each of those years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37530/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The information requested by the Deputy is detailed in the table.

Invalidity Pension					
Period	Registered	Awarded	Disallowed	Pending	
2015*	9,454	7,691	5,070	1,559	
31 October 2016	7,657	6,231	3,388	2,003	
Partial Capacity Benefit					
Period	Registered**	Awarded	Cancelled	Disallowed	Pending
2015*	964	775	79	38	72
25 November 2016	1,054	687	52	86	229

Family Income Supplement (New Claims)				
Period	Registered	Awarded	Disallowed	Pending***
2015*	31,191	21,779	9,208	1,984
31 October 2016	24,165	15,064	7,446	3,639

Family Income Supplements (Claim Renewals)				
Period	Registered	Awarded	Disallowed	Pending
2015*	42,714	31,130	11,538	741
31 October 2016	41,985	29,614	11,687	1,425

Domiciliary Care Allowance				
Period	Registered	Awarded	Disallowed	Pending
2015*	6,422	4,186	2,102	1,346
31 October 2016	6,255	4,081	1,440	2,059

*Pending claims at 31 December 2015.

**Partial Capacity Benefit is an administrative scheme and as such some claims registered are not uniquely identifiable, therefore the number received has been calculated as the number of claims processed in the periods reported on.

***Partial Capacity Benefit Claims still Pending from Illness Benefit Customers not included.

Departmental Reports

345. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reports commissioned by his Department since 2006 which while completed or are in final draft form have not been published; the reason they have not been published; the expected publication date; the cost to date of each such report; if tenders were invited; if it is not intended to publish any such report the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37554/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The information requested is currently being compiled within my Department and will be made available to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Jobseeker's Benefit Applications

346. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Social Protection his Department's position in relation to the three day waiting period from the date of the first application of jobseeker's benefit, in which no moneys are back dated when the application is processed; if he has future plans to backdate applications from the original application date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37576/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Waiting days have been a long standing feature of the jobseeker's schemes and are a feature of similar social security schemes in many countries. The application of a three-day waiting period avoids the disproportionately high administrative costs involved in processing large numbers of claims of a very short duration. The waiting day rule is not applied in every case. For instance, a "period of interruption of employment" exists where a person is unemployed or sick for any three days (consecutive or not) within six days. Where a person is subject to intermittent spells of unemployment it would

clearly be unreasonable to impose the three waiting days for each such claim.

Accordingly legislation enables, by means of a “linking rule”, the aggregation of spells of unemployment so that the waiting period is confined to the first three days of the aggregate period of interruption of employment. Specifically, this linking rule provides that any two such periods of unemployment not separated by more than 26 weeks are treated as one such period. Consequently, where a person makes a repeat claim for jobseeker’s benefit within 26 weeks of their previous claim, the repeat claim links to the earlier claim and no waiting days apply.

I would emphasise that people who need financial support are not left without such support during ‘waiting’ days. A person who has no other income may claim supplementary welfare allowance in respect of the days in question.

While schemes and procedures are under continuous review, I have no plans at present to change the waiting days rule in respect of the jobseeker’s schemes.

Disability Allowance Applications

347. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will expedite an application for a disability allowance in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37590/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): This lady has been awarded disability allowance with effect from 5 October 2016. The first payment will be made by her chosen payment method on 30 November 2016. Arrears of payment due will issue as soon as possible once any necessary adjustment is calculated and applied in respect of any overlapping payments or in respect of outstanding overpayments (if applicable).

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Staff Recruitment

348. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will reinstate a social welfare inspector for the Tuam area as a matter of urgency (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37598/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): There are two Social Welfare Inspector posts in Tuam and they cover the whole North Galway area. A vacancy in one of the posts arose as a result of the transfer of an Inspector to Galway City in August 2016. My Department, like all Government departments and agencies, is required to operate within a staff ceiling figure and a commensurate administrative staffing budget.

Within these constraints, my Department is focusing on prioritising the filling of critical posts. The staffing needs for all offices of the Department are continuously reviewed, taking account of workloads, management priorities and the competing demands arising, to ensure that the best use is made of all available resources with a view to providing an efficient service to those who rely on the schemes operated by the Department.

However, it has not been possible to date to fill all posts that have become vacant, including this post in Tuam. This position is under ongoing review.

The most urgent and longest outstanding claims in Tuam are being prioritised at present. If

a customer is under financial pressure while awaiting a decision on a claim, it is open to them to contact the local Community Welfare Officer regarding Supplementary Welfare Allowance.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Appeals

349. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will expedite an appeal for a person (details supplied). [37601/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 15 November 2016. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When these papers have been received from the Department, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral appeal hearing. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy. If you require further assistance following the outcome of the appeal please do not hesitate to contact Philip in my office.

Disability Allowance Appeals

350. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will expedite an appeal application for a disability allowance in respect of a person (details supplied). [37608/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): This man has been awarded disability allowance with effect from 11 May 2016. The first payment will be made by his chosen payment method on 4 January 2017. Arrears of payment due will issue as soon as possible once any necessary adjustment is calculated and applied in respect of any overlapping payments or in respect of outstanding overpayments (if applicable). I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Non-Disclosure Agreements

351. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Social Protection if his Department, or the agencies that report to his Department, entered into any non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements with any organisation due to court action or a threatened court action; and if so, the persons or groups with which these agreements exist. [37634/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The agencies under the aegis of my Department are the Citizens Information Board, the Pensions Authority, the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman, the Pensions Council and the Social Welfare Tribunal. The subject matter of the question from the Deputy relates to non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements between my Department or its agencies with any organisation, such agreements having been entered into due to court action or threatened court action. The Deputy's question seeks the names of the persons or groups with which such agreements (if any) exist. Non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements can be a feature of settlements across a wide range of areas of liti-

gation. The essence of such agreements is that they are confidential and not to be disclosed to third parties. Therefore, I do not think it would be appropriate to name individuals or organisations with whom any such agreements may be in place.

It is noted that the Deputy's question is open-ended as to timescale. It would not be feasible to engage in an analysis of all the legal cases in which my Department and its agencies have ever engaged to seek to determine (even on an anonymised basis) the number of such agreements.

Carer's Benefit Eligibility

352. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a review of eligibility for carer's benefit can be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37638/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As the Deputy will be aware the Carer's benefit is a payment for insured people who have recently left the workforce and are providing full-time care and attention to certain people who require that level of care. A person can be considered to be providing full-time care and attention where they are engaged in employment, self-employment or on training courses outside the home for a maximum of 15 hours per week, provided that they can show to the satisfaction of a deciding officer that adequate care has been provided for the care recipient in their absence and that their earnings from employment or gross income from self-employment less expenses necessarily incurred, does not exceed €332.50 weekly.

I confirm that my Department received an application for carer's benefit from the person concerned on 4 July 2016. The application was refused on the grounds that the person concerned was engaged in employment outside the home with earnings in excess of €332.50 per week.

She was notified on 12 November 2016 of this decision, the reasons for it and of her right of review and appeal.

If she has now reduced her hours of employment to the extent that her earnings are less than €332.50 weekly, she should forward evidence of this and her entitlement can be re-examined.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pensions

353. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Social Protection if any provision is made or can be made to persons in receipt of a British state old age pension which real value has declined dramatically since Brexit, and that had this pension taken into account during a means test for benefits here. [37646/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Social Assistance payments act as a safety net for people who have insufficient income and who do not qualify for a contributory payment. The use of a means test is to ensure that scarce resources are directed to those in greatest need. Payments from the United Kingdom (UK) are assessed as income under current legislation. In assessing means derived from payments received from non-European Monetary Union (EMU) States, the Department uses the conversion mechanism provided for under Article 107 of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 574/72 on Social Security for Migrant Workers. The

exchange rates for converting sterling and other non EMU currencies are published quarterly in the Official Journal of the European Union. The Department obtains this rate at the beginning of each quarter and uses it in all conversions during the course of that quarter irrespective of whether the value of the currency concerned rises or falls in that period.

It is open to any person in receipt of a social assistance payment to request that his/her entitlement be reviewed if they wish. It is important to note, however, that any such review will involve a full reassessment of all of the customer's means to ensure that the person continues to receive the correct payment in line with their overall entitlement and such reviews cannot of their nature just focus on the income derived from the UK. When conducting such a review, the conversion rate used is that applicable to the date of last increase in the sterling payment of the UK State Pension or the rate applicable in the subsequent quarter if that rate has been published by the date of the decision and is more favourable to the customer.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Payments

354. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will review the decision not to continue payment of disability allowance to a person (details supplied); and if an oral hearing will be arranged. [37762/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Following a review of the entitlement of this lady, disability allowance (DA) was disallowed with effect from 3 November 2016 as she was deemed to have means in excess of the statutory limit for her circumstances. Disability allowance is a means tested scheme and the way means are assessed is laid down in social welfare legislation. There is no discretion allowed as deciding officers are obliged to follow the legislation when assessing means. In summary, any income, with some exceptions, belonging to the person and her spouse/partner or co-habitant is assessable as means for disability allowance purposes.

The person in question has been advised of her right to appeal this decision to the social welfare appeals office.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

355. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a disability allowance will be approved in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37765/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): My Department has no record of an application for disability allowance having been made by this lady. If the person in concerned wishes to make an application, she should fully complete and submit an application form (DA1) so that her eligibility may be determined.

If she has submitted an application for DA in the last few days, there is no need to reapply and my Department will be in touch with her in due course.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Ministerial Advisers Appointments

356. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of the appointment of additional special advisers by him and Ministers of State in his Department. [37894/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): There have been no additional special advisers appointed by me.

Consular Services Provision

357. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a person (details supplied) who is being detained in York County Prison, Pennsylvania, USA, will be deported; and if his Department is providing them with consular assistance. [36875/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My Department is aware of the case to which the Deputy refers. However, the Deputy will appreciate that, where we do not have the consent of the individual concerned, it is not the Department's practice to share information about a consular case with a third party or to place it on the public record.

Departmental Staff Data

358. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of staff from his Department currently seconded to other Departments or agencies in the Civil Service per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36966/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): There are currently 12 staff on secondment from my Department to other Departments or agencies, within the timeframe requested. The details are outlined in the table. In addition my Department also has a number of officers who are serving as Seconded National Experts with the European Institutions.

Number	Grade	Body	Year of start of secondment
1	Counsellor	D/Taoiseach	2013
11	CounsellorThird Secretary	D/TaoiseachD/Finance	2014
121	CounsellorFirst Secretary-Clerical Officer	D/FinanceD/TaoiseachPresident's Office	2015
11111	CounsellorAssistant PrincipalThird SecretaryHEO-Clerical Officer	D/PERD/PERIDA IrelandGovernment Press OfficePresident's Office	2016

Departmental Staff Data

359. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of staff from his Department who have appealed against secondment per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the appeals mechanism involved; and if he will make a statement

on the matter. [36982/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): There were no such cases in my Department.

Departmental Staff Data

360. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of staff from his Department currently seconded to a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36998/16]

361. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of staff from his Department currently seconded from a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37014/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 360 and 361 together.

My Department actively facilitates staff who wish to undertake secondments in other relevant organisations, including in other Government Departments and the Oireachtas, as well as the UN and EU institutions. In recent years, we have also operated an exchange scheme with the IDA. In keeping with this policy, and in line with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's Staff Exchange Scheme between the Civil Service and the private sector, my Department last year agreed to a temporary exchange of personnel with a private sector organisation, Avolon Holdings, a leading global aviation firm. An experienced officer from my Department and an official from Avolon Holdings were selected to participate in this staff exchange scheme for a six-month period in 2015.

Middle East Peace Process

362. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the extent to which he and his EU and UN colleagues continue to focus on the Arab-Israeli situation with a view to reducing the extent to which the ongoing contentious issues remain; if any efforts continue to address these issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37051/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Ireland remains active and engaged on the objective of trying to achieve a two state solution in the Middle East; few European countries are as consistently engaged on this issue as we are. There is an urgent need to find ways to end the occupation, and to achieve lasting peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

I have worked continuously to try and maintain the Middle East Peace Process on the international agenda, in particular at EU level, despite a wave of concurrent crises in the immediate neighbourhood, and have urged for stronger international actions. For example, the week before last I was in the Gulf, and I took that opportunity to discuss the MEPP with Foreign Ministers in Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

In Council Conclusions, EU Foreign Ministers have continued to call for the resumption of a political dialogue, which is the only solution to the current situation, and to offer both parties political, economic and security support in the event of a final peace agreement.

Ireland strongly supports the French efforts to rebuild momentum in the Middle East Peace Process, which has been in effective suspension since 2014. I attended the Paris Conference in June to this end, and my Department has engaged in official-level work on the foot of the French initiative. I hope that another conference can take place before the end of the year.

The Middle East Peace Process is a priority foreign policy for the Government, and I will continue to encourage the parties to this conflict to engage with it, and the international community to support it, as it remains the best way to end the occupation and create peace.

Middle East Issues

363. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if the international community has investigated the destruction of property owned by Palestinians on the West Bank or elsewhere in the region; if the replacement with Israeli settlements is in any way monitored and discouraged by the international community; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37052/16]

364. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the extent to which the international community might negotiate compensation for Palestinian settlements destroyed by the Israelis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37053/16]

365. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if the EU representative in Jerusalem has carried out an audit of the damage done by the Israelis to Palestinian property; when the result of such an audit might be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37054/16]

366. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the extent to which Palestinian schools, hospitals or other such structures funded by international aid, including EU aid, have been damaged by the Israeli authorities in the past five years; if restoration or restitution is possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37055/16]

389. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will along with his EU Council of Minister colleagues press the Israeli authorities for an immediate moratorium on demolitions and confiscations and request compensation for confiscated or demolished EU assets in area C of the West Bank; if he will raise the concern regarding the urgent spike in demolitions and confiscation of EU-funded structures in area C of the West Bank; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37659/16]

390. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will along with his Council of Minister colleagues mandate the European External Action Service, EEAS, to publish and proactively disseminate the biannual EU Representative in Jerusalem's, EUREP, report on demolitions and confiscations of EU-member state funded structures and put pressure on the EEAS to mandate the EU delegation in Jerusalem to step up its role in co-ordinating demarches with heads of missions after demolitions and urge continuing support for aid operations in area C financially; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37660/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 363 to 366, inclusive, and 389 and 390 together.

I would also refer the Deputy to my answers to Priority Question 25 (36375/16) and Question 55 (36124/16) on 23 November, which addressed this topic.

The issue of demolition by Israeli authorities of property of Palestinian residents and com-

munities, including homes, schools, water and power infrastructure, and animal shelters, is a serious and growing concern in the West Bank, in particular. This practice is unjust and illegal, and in most cases is intended to push the inhabitants from their homes and land in order to give it to Israeli settlers. This is wholly contrary to the protection that should be afforded a people under military occupation. Ireland and the EU have consistently opposed and condemned this practice for many years, but regrettably the tempo of evictions and demolitions has continued to increase markedly.

A growing aspect of this issue is the question of the demolition by Israel of humanitarian relief structures, including tents and water and power structures, funded by the EU or its member States. The issue of asking for compensation for confiscated or demolished EU assets in Area C of the West Bank is a matter that is currently under discussion at EU level. Ireland has argued for a stronger response to demolitions and confiscations and, in my view, the EU should request compensation in such instances. However, not all EU partners are of the same mind. Agreement on this point has not been reached, but I will continue to advocate for compensation.

Regarding the publication of the report by the EU Delegation to the West Bank and Gaza on demolitions and confiscations of EU-funded structures in Area C, the standard assumption is that such reports are not published, and they are prepared on this basis. I have no objection to this specific report being published, if agreed with EU partners. However, there is extensive information on demolitions and confiscations available through other sources.

Human Rights Cases

367. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to Article 155 of the Egyptian constitution which allows President Sisi, with his cabinet's approval, to issue pardons to prisoners; if his attention has further been drawn to the fact that President Sisi has used Article 155 four times in 2016, resulting in 859 prisoners being released, with the most recent pardon focussing on 82 young prisoners; and if he will explore the viability of this option for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37183/16]

377. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his Department has made contact with the Egyptian authorities with a view to seeking a presidential pardon for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37476/16]

380. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will increase pressure on Egyptian authorities to consider a person (details supplied) for the presidential pardon for young prisoners; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37517/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 367, 377 and 380 together.

At the outset, I would like to assure the Deputy that securing this citizen's return home to Ireland continues to be a top priority for the Government. The approach to this case is under continuous review and is informed and shaped by, inter alia, constant coordination and dialogue with Ibrahim's family and his legal representatives, by the experience and expertise of officials in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, by our consultations with other States who have had citizens in similar situations, and by advice from legal and human rights experts with knowledge of Egypt.

I can confirm that the Taoiseach wrote to the President of Egypt on 17 November to convey again the Irish Government's strong concerns about this case, and to reiterate our call for his

return to Ireland without delay. In his letter, the Taoiseach specifically requested that Ibrahim be considered for release under the ‘Youth Amnesty’ Scheme. On the same day, I contacted the Egyptian Ambassadors in Ireland and also discussed this issue and request with her.

Details of this amnesty scheme are opaque. The official Egyptian Government statement on the 17 November indicates that the 82 beneficiaries of the amnesty had received ‘final judicial verdicts’ and were being pardoned under Article 155 of the Egyptian Constitution.

Article 155 relates to the Presidential Pardon mechanism whereby the President has the power, having consulted with the cabinet, to set aside or mitigate sentences. Article 155 does not give the President the power to intervene in the judicial process or release prisoners who have not been convicted.

It is not clear if or how the current youth amnesty scheme may apply to detainees, such as our young Irish citizen, who have not been convicted of any offence.

Our Embassy in Cairo is seeking further information and clarification about the operation of this scheme.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade continues to engage with this citizen’s family and Irish-based lawyers, and has strongly advised them to liaise closely with his Egyptian legal team on this matter and to seek their advice and guidance on how the issue can best be pursued.

Data Protection

368. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on that fact that the mailing preference database operates on a radically different legal basis than the telephone preference service, particularly in view of the potentially significant penalties which might be levied on businesses for failing to respect marketing opt outs under the EU General Data Protection Regulation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37198/16]

375. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to address a legal lacuna in the treatment of a valuable regulatory data asset; if it will be addressed in the forthcoming data protection Bill as with the telephone preference service; if ultimate responsibility and authority for the mailing preference service database will be vested in an appropriate independent entity such as the communications regulator; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37362/16]

376. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to address a legal lacuna in the treatment of a valuable regulatory data asset; if it will be addressed in the forthcoming data protection Bill as with the telephone preference service; if ultimate responsibility and authority for the mailing preference service database will be vested in an appropriate independent entity such as the communications regulator; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37365/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 368, 375 and 376 together.

Responsibility for revising the legal basis of the telephone preference service and the mailing preference service to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation is a matter for the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

Departmental Funding

369. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the funding that has been provided to County Louth over the previous three years 2014 to 2016 by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37223/16]

370. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the applications submitted for funding projects from Louth County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016, in tabular form; and if the applications were successful. [37239/16]

371. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the funding for projects in 2017 in County Louth to be funded by his Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37255/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 369 to 371, inclusive, together.

My Department administers a number of funding programmes, including Ireland's official overseas development programme, Irish Aid. As part of Irish Aid, funding is provided through the annual Development Education Grants Scheme for projects aimed at promoting awareness of and engagement with global development and justice issues. Information on Development Education grants is available on the Irish Aid website www.irishaid.ie.

Smaller funding programmes include the Reconciliation Fund. Through the Fund, my Department awards funding to organisations and projects aimed at advancing peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, on a cross-border basis and between Ireland and Britain. Information on Reconciliation Fund grants awarded is available at www.dfa.ie/reconciliation.

The table below lists funding provided to projects in County Louth through the Development Education Grants Scheme and the Reconciliation Fund in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016.

Information on projects to be funded in 2017 is not yet available.

Applicant	Project name	Year submitted	Location	Funding approved 2014	Funding approved 2015	Funding approved 2016
Louth County Council	Youth Councils for Peace [2015]	2015	Dundalk, Co. Louth	-	-	-
Louth County Council	Youth Councils for Peace [2016]	2016	Dundalk, Co. Louth	-	-	€18,000
Development Perspectives	Insight (education project promoting awareness of global justice issues and engaging citizens in tackling these issues)		Drogheda, Co Louth	€45,000	€40,000	€40,000
Greenore Greencastle Community Association	Reconciliation Through Drama Commemorative Event	2015	Greenore, Co. Louth.	-	€10,000	-

Departmental Funding

372. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the funding that has been provided to County Meath over the previous three years 2014 to 2016 by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form. [37271/16]

373. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the applica-

tions submitted for funding and projects from Meath County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016, in tabular form; if the applications were successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37287/16]

374. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the funding for projects in 2017 in County Meath to be funded by his department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37303/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 372 to 374, inclusive, together.

My Department administers a number of funding programmes, including Ireland's official overseas development programme, Irish Aid. As part of Irish Aid, funding is provided through the annual Development Education Grants Scheme for projects aimed at promoting awareness of and engagement with global development and justice issues. Information on Development Education grants is available on the Irish Aid website www.irishaid.ie.

Smaller funding programmes include the Reconciliation Fund and the Emigrant Support Programme. Through the Reconciliation Fund, my Department awards funding to organisations and projects aimed at advancing peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, on a cross-border basis and between Ireland and Britain. Information on Reconciliation Fund grants awarded is available at www.dfa.ie/reconciliation.

The Department's Emigrant Support Programme supports Irish communities overseas by funding non-profit organisations and projects. From time to time funding is granted to an organisation based in Ireland for projects overseas which foster more strategic links with the global Irish and to support frontline welfare services that help the most vulnerable members of our overseas communities.

The table below lists funding provided to projects in County Meath through the Development Education Grants Scheme, the Reconciliation Fund and the Emigrant Support Fund in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016.

Funding information for 2017 is not yet available.

Applicant	Project name	Year submitted	Location	Funding approved 2014	Funding approved 2015	Funding approved 2016
Kells Literary and Cultural Festival Committee	Gallipoli 100	2014	Co. Meath.	€5,000	-	-
Kells Literary and Cultural Festival Committee	Hay Festival Kells, 2015	2015	Co. Meath.	-	€5,000	-
Kells Literary and Cultural Festival Committee	Kells 2016	2015	Co. Meath.	-	€10,000	-
Glór na nGael	Irish language projects abroad	2014	Co. Meath	€40,000	€35,000	€35,000

Question Nos. 375 and 376 answered with Question No. 368.

Question No. 377 answered with Question No. 367.

Child Abduction

378. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention

has been drawn to a case (details supplied); if he will intervene by contacting the Algerian authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37486/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The case referred to is a particularly devastating one for the parent left behind. Regarding any case of parental child abduction, my Department's general policy is to discuss and explore with the left behind parent possible mediation options; possible legal avenues to be pursued in the country where the child or children have been taken; and to seek to facilitate a welfare check on the child or children concerned.

Any case of parental child abduction is made far more complex and difficult to resolve should the country concerned not be a signatory to the Hague Convention on International Child Abduction.

Officials in my Department, both at our Consular Assistance team at HQ and at our Embassy in Berne, which is accredited to Algeria, have provided advice and information to the relevant Irish parent, since contact was first made, that is fully in line with Departmental policy.

My Department has also raised this case with the Algerian authorities on a number of occasions.

Both our consular assistance team and our Embassy in Berne will continue to liaise with the Irish citizen concerned and provide any consular support that they can, with a particular focus on the welfare of the children.

Consular Services Provision

379. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the action he has taken in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37487/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am very much aware of the consular case in the Philippines and the very difficult circumstances in which this individual and his family find themselves.

I have personally raised my concerns with senior Philippines Government contacts, including most recently in New York in September.

For any Irish citizen subject to criminal proceedings abroad, my Department officials will offer non-judgemental advice and any appropriate practical help that they can, irrespective of the alleged offence, and regardless of whether the individual is ultimately deemed to be innocent or guilty, is on remand or has already been sentenced by a court of law.

This present case is the subject of an ongoing legal process in the Philippines. The Irish citizen, who remains on bail, has filed an appeal with the Philippines Supreme Court against his conviction and sentence. I understand that my officials in Embassy Singapore, on foot of a request from the individual concerned, are examining whether it is possible to seek to have the appeal process expedited, on humanitarian grounds.

My Department officials at headquarters in Dublin, at our Embassy in Singapore, which is accredited to the Philippines, and our Honorary Consul in Manila, have all been engaged in the case, have provided consular assistance and have raised the individual's concerns with relevant authorities in Manila.

The citizen is in regular contact with my consular officials in Singapore and in Dublin. The Consul from our Embassy in Singapore met with the individual in person last month, officials from my Department have previously met with the wife of the individual concerned, and earlier this month officials from my Department met with a representative of the individual in Dublin.

I and my Department officials are continuing to give the matter priority attention.

Question No. 380 answered with Question No. 367.

Passport Data

381. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of passports issued in 2015 and to date in 2016; the amount of revenue generated through passports being issued; the amount of revenue generated through issuing the passport cards per month in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37531/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The number of passports issued in 2015 was 672,760 and this generated €42.3m in receipts. The number of passports issued to 28th November is 705,668 which generated a total of €42.2m in receipts. The receipts generated through passports cards per month in 2016 are as follows:

Month	Receipts generated
January	€87,925
February	€80,490
March	€71,970
April	€76,340
May	€129,105
June	€95,735
July	€70,165
August	€68,790
September	€63,750
October	€56,135

The revenue streams are appropriations in aid and are remitted directly to the exchequer.

The passport is a key travel and identity document. The processing of applications by the Passport Service involves the deployment of significant resources including to develop new business processes to modernise enrolment, checking and production systems and improve customer service. Software solutions and data analytics, including facial recognition, are also deployed to combat identity theft and maintain the integrity and high international reputation of the Irish passport.

The passport card is the latest initiative which gives adult Irish passport holders the option of a credit card-sized travel document for travel to 31 countries in total, including the EU/EEA plus Switzerland.

Departmental Reports

382. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the reports commissioned by his Department since 2006 which while completed or are in final draft form

have not been published; the reason they have not been published; the expected publication date; the cost to date of each such report; if tenders were invited; if it is not intended to publish any such report the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37549/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My Department is responsible for two Votes – Vote 28 (Foreign Affairs and Trade) and Vote 27 (International Cooperation).

The Department commissions external expertise where highly specialised skills are not available within the Department. Independent evaluation of programmes and analysis of issues by external experts has informed - and continues to inform - my Department's policies, allowing for more targeted use of resources and greater accountability in the allocation of budgets. From time to time a number of consultancies are occasionally engaged directly by our Missions abroad. During the course of their engagements, these consultants/experts may prepare reports as internal management tools for my Department.

Where appropriate, my Department publishes information on www.dfa.ie and www.iris-haid.ie in an open and accessible manner on a routine basis having regard to the principles of openness, transparency and accountability.

It was not possible in the time available to set out the numbers of reports commissioned by my Department since 2006 which were not published. The tables set out the details of unpublished reports commissioned since 2011.

Commission	Experts/Consultants	Report/Subject	Cost (€)	Date of publication
2011	Kevin Moore	Support to the Governments of Zambia and South Africa to develop Special Economic Zones for the promotion of inward investment and employment	17,861	Not Applicable – see footnote*
2011	Paul Sheane	Support to the Governments of Zambia and South Africa to develop Special Economic Zones for the promotion of inward investment and employment	9,965	*
2011	Stefanie Meredith	Review of Irish Aid Support for Product Development Partnerships in developing countries	10,100	*
2011	Samia Saad	Review of Irish Aid Support for Product Development Partnerships in developing countries	9,198	*
2011	Paud Murphy	Development Education Reviews - to examine the current funding support and engagement in each of the priority areas identified in the Development Education strategy (primary, post primary, third level, adult, community and youth work)	9,064	*
2011	80:20	Development Education Reviews - to examine the current funding support and engagement in each of the priority areas identified in the Development Education strategy (primary, post primary, third level, adult, community and youth work)	9,870	*

Commission	Experts/Consultants	Report/Subject	Cost (€)	Date of publication
2011	Eilis Murray	Development Education Reviews - to examine the current funding support and engagement in each of the priority areas identified in the Development Education strategy (primary, post primary, third level, adult, community and youth work)	6,068	*
2011	ISOS	Development Education Reviews - to examine the current funding support and engagement in each of the priority areas identified in the Development Education strategy (primary, post primary, third level, adult, community and youth work)	42,247	*
2011	Bernard McLoughlin	Review of the Irish Aid Centre, Dublin	6,143	*
2011	Cathal Higgins	Preparation of a report on the programme of education sector budget support towards school infrastructural development in Karamoja region and skills development in the oil sector (Uganda)	5,000	*
2011	Mike Williams	Review of Humanitarian Programme Plan for Irish Aid	18,742	*
2011	Humanitarian Policy Ltd	Review of Security Policy & Practice among Irish Aid Humanitarian Partners	33,930	*
2012	Cathy Roche	Review of the Our World Awards 2005-2011	6,300	*
2012	Fintan Farrelly	Review of the Irish Aid Strategic Environmental Partnership Programme	6,000	*
2012	Mike Williams	Review of Misean Cara	15,099	*
2012	Pham Quang Hoa	Local consultancy contract 'Review of P135 infrastructure projects funded by Irish Aid'	5,453	*
2013	Wright Consultancy Ltd	Gender Equality Audit	14,000	*
2013	Mary Jennings	Review of HRD (Human Rights and Democratisation) Scheme Irish Aid Palestine	15,500	*
2013	Gareth Williams	Review of Financial and Programme of the Camara Education Programme	20,000	*
2013	John Geraghty	Review of University College Cork's Programme of Technical Support Internships for Food Security	7,568	*
2013	Natural Research Institute	Review of Irish Aid Support to Fair and Ethical Trade Initiatives	19,292	*
2013	Pham Quang Hoa	Review Programme 135 (for Ethnic Minorities) of Irish Aid funded infrastructure projects	5,588	*
2013	Gareth Singleton	Review of Irish Forum for Global Health	8,395.27	*

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Commission	Experts/Consultants	Report/Subject	Cost (€)	Date of publication
2014	Gareth Singleton	Review of Royal College of Surgeons	25,756	*
2014	Tierney & Associates, Risk & Governance Consultants	Audit of grants awarded under Emigrant Support Programme	19,934	*
2014	Hogan Lovells, Washington	Review of tax, social insurance and health obligations and other conditions of service in respect of locally-recruited staff members at our missions in the United States	57,756	*
2014	Andy Pollak	Review of Irish Aid support for Initial Teacher Education	11,564	*
2014	ADETEF	OECD DAC EVALNET Study on Collaborative Partner- Donor Evaluation Work	25,000	*
2014	Tran Thi Ngoc Diep	Local input into Review of Irish Aid scholarship programmes	1,502	*
2014	Tom Collins	Feasibility Study - Celebrating and Sustaining Ireland's relationship with Africa	5,000	*
2014	ITAD Limited	Mid Term Review of the Civil Society Support Programme	68,135	*
2014	Cathy Gaynor/ Niamh O'Grady/ Gill Roe	Evaluability Assessment of the Programme of Strategic Cooperation	43,200	*
2014	Willis Risk Services (Ireland) Limited	Consultancy for insurance policy report and tender documentation for the Rapid Response Corps	6,150	*
2014	Mekong Dev Research Institute	Impact assessment of Irish Aid funded infrastructure projects under P135 in 2011 & 2012	43,912	*
2014	ASM (B) Ltd	Payroll System Audit	11,636	*
2015	ASM	Audit of grants awarded under Emigrant Support Programme	€9,800	*
2015	Peter McEvoy	Professional Services for the appraisal of Irish Aid fellowship Training Programme	16,560	*
2015	Coffey International Development Ltd	Review of the Irish Aid Programme Grant Mechanism	23,588	*
2015	Tran Thi Ngoc Diep	Local input into scoping study to explore Ireland's cooperation in the agriculture & agribusiness sector under the IDEAS programme	4,442	*
2015	Johnny O'Regan	Organisational Assessment of Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice	4,400	*
2015	ASM	The provision of audit services to examine grants awarded under the ESP	14,700	*
2015	Mazars	ICT Audit	27,552	*
2015	Crowleys DFK	Payment System Audit	19,004	*
2015	Gemma O Reilly	UNFCCC Reporting and Climate Finance Mapping 2015-2016	27,041.42	*
2015	Anne Nolan	Review of HSE MOU	8,100	*

Commission	Experts/Consultants	Report/Subject	Cost (€)	Date of publication
2015	Alasdair CollinsDP Evaluation	Evaluation of IDEA's (Irish Development Education Association) Capacity Development Programme 2013-2015	5,212	*
2015	Dr Mary Gannon	Evaluation of Worldwide Global Schools Programme 2013-2016	17,060	Publication expected in the coming weeks
2015	Cathal Reidy	A review of Ireland's Humanitarian Emergency Relief Supplies	36,290	*
2016	Sebastian Kevany	Review of Irish Aid-Clinton Health Access Initiative Partnership 2011-2015	21,368	*
2016	Emily Mates	Stock take of nutrition engagement	13,612.50	*
2016	Noel Casserly	UNFCCC reporting and Climate Finance Mapping 2015-2016	25,370.10	*
2016	Alasdair CollinsDP Evaluation	Evaluation of SUAS Global Citizenship Programme 2012-2015	10,879	01/12/2016
2016	Aine Fortune	Evaluation of the 80:20 programme	3,000- Irish Aid funded 1,200	15/12/2016
2017	Anne Nolan/Janet Gruber	Review of Global Health and HIV Review	42,000	*
2017	Technopolis	Review of Product Development Partners	19,000	*

*An internal management report and not for publication.

Unaccompanied Minors and Separated Children

383. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to the latest report by the Refugee Youth Service concerning migrants; if he has considered the detail of same; and the actions he will take as a result of its findings. [37580/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The report referred to by the Deputy deals with the situation of unaccompanied minors previously located in the Calais camp. The Refugee Youth Service makes a series of recommendations to the responsible French and British authorities. My Department has no responsibility or any oversight role with regard to the matters raised in this report referencing the French and British authorities.

The Deputy is aware that a number of Government Departments are, however, currently working together to advance the recently approved Dáil motion calling on Government to work with the French authorities to identify unaccompanied minors, previously in the Calais camp, who have expressed a wish to relocate to Ireland and not to go to the UK.

Irish Aid

384. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if Ireland donates UN specification-approved goods in kind to the central UN systems in lieu of part payment of Ireland's financial assessed contributions to the UN or as a component part of Ireland's overseas development aid programme. [37610/16]

385. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if Ireland donates Irish manufactured goods in kind that are consistent with UN prior-approved standards to UN humanitarian clusters; and if not, the reason for this. [37611/16]

386. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on whether it would be meritorious to assist indigenous Irish industry and businesses by donating Irish manufactured goods and products of UN-approved standards as a component of Ireland's overseas development aid programme.

[37612/16]

387. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if Ireland donated Irish manufactured goods and products to the UN, that would be considered as tied aid within the internationally accepted meaning of this term. [37613/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 384 to 387, inclusive, together.

Ireland provided a total €138.2 million in financial contributions to the UN Agencies and Funds in 2015. Of this, €129.4 million was in voluntary contributions and €8.8 million in assessed contribution.

It is not the Government's policy to donate goods in kind to the UN in lieu of part payment of Ireland's assessed contributions. However, Ireland does pre-position and stockpile humanitarian relief supplies in UN Humanitarian Response Depots (UNHRD) under the Rapid Response Initiative, which is managed by Irish Aid in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. These hubs are strategically located near crisis and disaster-prone areas, in Accra, Brindisi, Dubai, Panama City and Subang, in Malaysia to enable the rapid dispatch of supplies in case of a crisis.

The relief items stockpiled by Ireland in these hubs have been selected in close consultation with UN and NGO partners, which, distribute them in response to a crisis to those most in need to save and protect lives and alleviate suffering. They include UN standard-approved items which are most urgently needed by people in humanitarian crises or emergency situations. These include shelter items, such as family tents, tarpaulins, and rope; basic household items such as blankets, mosquito nets, cooking sets, solar lamps and family hygiene kits; and water and sanitation items such as soap, jerry cans, water tanks, latrine plates and spades. So far in 2016, we have airlifted over 350 tonnes of Ireland's stockpiled relief supplies into humanitarian crises in Ethiopia, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Niger, Nigeria, Iraq, and most recently in response to Hurricane Matthew in Haiti.

As well as storing the items in Depots, the UNHRD procures the relief items through a competitive tendering process which is regulated by the World Food Programme (WFP). The Government's policy for international development, *One World One Future*, reaffirms our commitment to providing "aid that is not conditional on procurement of goods and services from Ireland". Ireland's aid to developing countries is untied and our continued long term commitment to untied aid remains firm. I would strongly encourage all Irish manufacturers of humanitarian relief supplies to apply to become registered suppliers to the WFP Registered Supplier Roster and to register through the United Nations Global Marketplace.

Non-Disclosure Agreements

388. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his Depart-

ment, or the agencies that report to it, entered any non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements with any organisation due to court action or threatened court action; and if so, the persons or groups with which these agreements exist. [37629/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My Department has not entered into any non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements with any organisation arising from a court action or a threatened court action. As there are no agencies under the aegis of my Department, the issue of non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements related to agencies does not arise.

Questions Nos. 389 and 390 answered with Question No. 363.

Ministerial Advisers Appointments

391. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the appointment of additional special advisers by him and Ministers of State in his Department. [37890/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): This matter is currently being given due consideration in accordance with the D/PER Instructions to Personnel Officers – Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil.

Legislative Measures

392. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his Department will complete the statute law revision project which has completed the majority of its work but which still needs to review all primary legislation from 1950 to date and all secondary legislation from 1820 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36944/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Statute Law Revision Programme was initiated in 2003. It formerly operated within the auspices of the Office of the Attorney General and is now contained within the Government Reform Unit of my Department. Its purpose is to modernise and simplify the Statute book by removing spent and obsolete pieces of legislation, thereby reducing its size and thus making it more understandable and accessible to those who use it. There has been a particular need for such revision in Ireland because our unique legislative past has left us with a complex stock of legislation, with enactments from the Parliaments of Ireland, England, Great Britain and the United Kingdom as well as our own Oireachtas.

To date, the Oireachtas has passed five Statute Law Revision Acts as follows:

- The Statute Law Revision (Pre-1922) Act 2005, which repealed a selection of pre-1922 statutes;

- The Statute Law Revision Act 2007, which was a comprehensive revision of pre-1922 Public General Acts;

- The Statute Law Revision Act 2009, which revised all Private Acts up to and including 1750 and all Local and Personal Acts up to and including 1850;

- The Statute Law Revision Act 2012, which revised all Private Acts from 1750 to 1922 and all Local and Personal Acts from 1850 to 1922; and

- The Statute Law Revision Act 2015, which revoked Secondary Instruments made before 1 January 1821.

A sixth Statute Law Revision Bill, covering primary legislation enacted between 1922 and 1950, is currently progressing through the Houses.

The progress we have made with the Statute Law Revision Programme has been considerable. To date, over 60,000 pieces of legislation have been either expressly or implicitly repealed under the programme. Collectively this is the most extensive set of repealing measures in the history of the State and the most extensive set of statute law revision measures ever enacted anywhere in the world. I propose, however, in view of the progress made, to pause the Statute Law Revision Programme at this time in order that my Department can progress other priorities.

Departmental Staff Data

393. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of staff from his Department seconded to other Departments or agencies in the Civil Service per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36970/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Please see below in tabular form the number of Department of Public Expenditure and Reform staff seconded to other departments or agencies in the civil service per annum 2010 to 2016. The table comprises staff in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the National Shared Services Office and the Office of Government Procurement.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform was established in 2011. Since 2013, Economists recruited to the Irish Government Economic & Evaluation Service are recruited to as Department of Public Expenditure and Reform staff and seconded to other civil service Departments under the IGEES scheme these secondments are reflected in the figures below.

The National Shared Service Offices was established in 2013

The Office of Government Procurement commenced operations in 2014.

Year	Department	Number of staff seconded to other Depts. Or agencies in the civil service
2011	DPER	1
2012	DPER	3
2013	DPER	5
	NSSO	2
2014	DPER	5
	NSSO	1
	OGP	0
2015	DPER	17
	NSSO	5
	OGP	0
2016	DPER	19
	NSSO	9
	OGP	3

Departmental Staff Data

394. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of staff from his Department who have appealed against secondment per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the appeals mechanism involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36986/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform was established in 2011. No staff from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform have appealed against secondment from 2011 to 2016.

Departmental Staff Data

395. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of staff from his Department seconded to firms in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37002/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform was established in 2011. There have not been any staff seconded from the Department to a private sector firm between 2011 and 2016.

Departmental Staff Data

396. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of staff from his Department seconded from firms in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37018/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform was established in 2011. There have been no staff seconded from a private sector firm between 2011 and 2016.

Lansdowne Road Agreement

397. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will address a matter (details supplied) concerning the application of the Lansdowne Road agreement to a public servant due to retire in May 2017. [37041/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I refer the Deputy to my reply to PQ No. 32140/16 on 25 October 2016.

PQ No. 32140/16 [25 October 2016, Séamus Healy]

To ask the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if, in view of the fact that the FEMPI Act 2013 pay reductions for serving higher earners, over €65,000 per annum will be restored in two stages, the first half of the reduction will be restored on 1 April 2017, the second half of the reduction will be restored on 1 January 2018, the equivalent pensioner will receive an increase equivalent to that of serving peer on those dates; if by 2 January 2018 all public service pensioners with full service will have had their pensions restored to 50% of the salary

of serving peer; if the traditional principle of parity of public service pension increases with pay increases of serving peer will be honoured by the Government into the future; his views on whether pension restorations are particularly urgent in view of the much reduced life expectancy of older persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

REPLY:

The Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) 2013 Act provided for a “grace period” by which the retired counterparts of public servants in grades affected by the 2013 pay cuts already receive pensions unaffected by those pay cuts. This means that persons retiring since 1 July 2013 from grades affected by the pay cuts on that date were awarded, and are paid, pensions based on the higher “pre-cut” salaries; in like manner, the pensions of equivalent earlier retirees, who retired before 1 July 2013, are unaffected by those 2013 pay cuts. I should also point out that, neither of the two direct salary reductions in the public service under the FEMPI legislation, occurring in 2010 and 2013, or the reduction effected under the FEMPI 2009 Act through the imposition of the Pension Related Deduction on remuneration of public servants, were passed on to the pensions of same-grade retirees.

Public service pensioners have been impacted by another FEMPI measure, the Public Service Pension Reduction (PSPR). The PSPR reduces the pay-out value of pensions with pre-PSPR values above specified thresholds in a progressively structured way which has a proportionately greater effect on higher value pensions. At all times, public service pensions up to a value of €12,000 have been unaffected by PSPR, while a higher exemption threshold of €32,500 has applied to pensions awarded from 1 March 2012 onwards.

PSPR is being significantly reversed in three stages under FEMPI 2015, with PSPR-affected pensioners getting pension increases via substantial restoration of the PSPR cuts on 1 January 2016, 1 January 2017 and 1 January 2018. When fully rolled-out from 1 January 2018, the changes will mean that all public service pensions with pre-PSPR values of up to €34,132 will be fully exempt from PSPR, while those pensioners not fully removed from the reach of PSPR will, in the majority of cases, benefit by €1,680 per year. The cost of these changes is estimated at about €90 million on a full-year basis from 2018.

As we move beyond FEMPI and PSPR restoration towards more normal pay and pension setting conditions in the public service, the issue of how to adjust the post-award value of public service pensions through appropriate pay or other linkages will be considered by Government.

Civil Service Reform

398. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his proposals for the position of staff officer in the Civil Service, particularly in the context of the proposals contained in the Haddington Road agreement; the consultations he has had; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37185/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Discussions on the merging of the Staff Officer grade with that of Executive Officer are the subject of current discussions with the relevant civil service union interests. The outcome to this process has yet to be concluded between the management and union sides.

Departmental Funding

399. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the funding that has been provided to County Louth over the previous three years, from 2014 to 2016, by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37227/16]

400. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the applications submitted for funding projects from Louth County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016 in tabular form; and if the applications were successful. [37243/16]

401. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the funding for projects in 2017 in County Louth to be funded by his Department, by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37259/16]

402. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the funding that has been provided to County Meath over the previous three years, from 2014 to 2016, by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form. [37275/16]

403. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the applications submitted for funding and projects from Meath County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016, in tabular form; if the applications were successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37291/16]

404. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the funding for projects in 2017 in County Meath to be funded by his Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37307/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 399 to 404, inclusive, together.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Government's Capital Plan was announced on 29 September, 2015 and outlined exchequer capital spending of €27 billion over the next six years. In the 2016 Summer Economic Statement, the Government committed to additional capital investment of €5.14 billion over the period of the plan. Individual Ministers will be able to advise on the range of projects and initiatives in County Louth and County Meath that are being funded under the Capital Plan by the relevant line Departments.

In relation to my Department, in reply to your questions 37227 and 37275, the Office of Public Works (OPW) has provided funding for projects in County Louth and County Meath over the past three years and details of these projects are set out in the tables.

Louth County Council

	2014	2015	2016 (to 24/11/16)
Blackrock- Flood Relief Minor Works	€27,000		
Carlingford- Flood Relief Minor Works	€9,990		
Ballagan- Flood Relief Minor Works	€1,502		
Annagassan- Flood Relief Minor Works-	€10,726		€10,800
Whitestown- Storm Damage Works	€50,884		
Blackrock Sea Wall- Storm Damage Works	€11,703		
Gyles Quay- Storm Damage Works	€32,200	€25,411	
Cruisetown-Storm Damage Works	€11,354	€23,969	
Annagassan- Storm Damage Works	€4,357		

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	2014	2015	2016 (to 24/11/16)
Corstown, Dunany- Storm Damage Works	€7,968		
Omeath- Storm Damage Works	€23,154		
Coastal minor works Baltray Report			€16,937
Coastal minor works Bellurgan		€9,000	€45,000
Seabank Flood Relief Minor Works		€13,381	
Total to Louth Council	€190,838	€71,761	€72,737

Meath County Council

Project	2014	2015	2016 (to 24/11/16)
Fee for facilities provided at Hill of Tara	€18,500		€20,000
Ashbourne State Ceremonial Event			€55,012
Contribution to proposed road works		€21,000	
Northlands Bettystown-Flood Relief Minor Works			€65,872
Ashbourne Flood Relief Minor Works			€58,983
Laytown/Bettystown coastal storm damage		€75,000	
Laytown/Bettystown coastal storm damage		€51,792	
Total to Meath County Council	€18,500	€147,792	€199,867

In relation to Parliamentary Questions 37243, 37259, 37291 and 37307, the OPW will respond directly to the Deputy in the next ten days.

Flood Relief Schemes Applications

405. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the local authority or the private householder has responsibility for completing the application form for the minor flood mitigation works and coastal protection scheme, and attaching a detailed design of the proposed remedial works along with a costing for the proposed work, and for ensuring the remedial works they commission comply with planning legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37329/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Seán Canney): Local flooding issues are a matter, in the first instance, for each local authority to investigate and address.

The Office of Public Works' (OPW) Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme is not a grant scheme for individual homeowners or private property owners. It is a scheme under which the OPW may provide funding assistance and support to local authorities to undertake viable, cost effective, localised and small scale flood relief works in their administrative areas. The maximum funding available for any one project under the scheme is €450,000. It is the local authority which must complete and submit the funding application form under the Scheme and, in doing so, must have carried out the necessary preparatory work and preliminary investigations and costings. While individual property owners may benefit from the works, the local authority must be the promoter and proposer of the project and will be fully responsible for the implementation of the works and ensuring that all relevant and necessary statutory consents are applied for and received. When funding is approved under the scheme, the progression of any works is the responsibility of the local authority.

Public Sector Pensions

406. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on whether it is fair and equitable that retained fire fighters pay pension-related deductions under the same model as other public sector workers, despite the fact the pension benefits they accrue through serving in the fire service are significantly lower than their counterparts. [37494/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The public service Pension-Related Deduction (PRD) is provided for under the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2009. PRD applies to the pay, including any non-pensionable pay elements, of pensionable public servants. Specifically, section 2(1)(b) of the Act provides that any public servant who is a member of a public service pension scheme or who is entitled to benefit under such a scheme or receives a payment in lieu of membership of such a scheme is subject to PRD. PRD is applied equally across all public servants liable to the deduction irrespective of the individual pension terms that apply to those public servants.

I understand from my colleague the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government that retained firefighters have historically qualified on retirement for a one-off, non-recurring gratuity calculated at one eighth of their annual retainer payment multiplied by the number of years of actual service, up to a maximum of four times the annual retainer. To qualify for the gratuity, a retained firefighter must have a minimum of two years' service. The maximum gratuity payable is four times the annual retainer and retained firefighters do not pay any contribution to that gratuity.

Retained firefighters in place in 2008 and those hired thereafter until the end of 2012 were given the option of joining the Local Government Superannuation Scheme and receiving a pension and retirement lump sum based on their pensionable remuneration and length of service. All retained firefighters appointed after 1 January 2013 must join the Single Public Service Pension Scheme.

The payment of the one-off gratuity at retirement to those retained firefighters who are not members of the Local Government Superannuation Scheme or the Single Public Service Pension Scheme constitutes a payment in lieu of pension scheme membership of the pension scheme and, as such, gives rise in principle to PRD exposure.

A gratuity arrangement of this kind, by way of payment in lieu of pension, is not unique to retained firefighters. It should also be noted that a significant amelioration of PRD is provided for under the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2015. This amelioration means that, from 1 January 2016, all persons with annual public service earnings of up to €26,083 are exempt from PRD, and from 1 January 2017, this exemption threshold will rise to €28,750.

Public Sector Pensions

407. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the reason the 2009 legislation does not provide for the application of a separate set of thresholds for individual employments but rather one set of thresholds for the totality of the public service remuneration in a given year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37497/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): It is assumed that the Deputy is referring to the public service Pension-Related Deduction (PRD), which

applies to the pay of pensionable public servants under the terms of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2009.

The exemption thresholds and rate bands for PRD have always applied to the total public service pay of affected public servants, not to the pay associated with individual posts. A minority of pensionable public servants may be employed in two public service posts simultaneously, for example holders of two part-time jobs in teaching or in the health sector. In any such case, it is fair and reasonable that the combined pay from both employments is subjected to PRD on a basis which gives a monetary outcome equal to what would arise if the person received the same pay from just a single post.

It should also be noted that all PRD-impacted public servant persons are benefitting from a significant PRD amelioration provided for under the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2015. This amelioration means that, from 1 January 2016, all persons with annual public service earnings of up to €26,083 are exempt from PRD, and from 1 January 2017 this exemption threshold will rise to €28,750.

Flood Prevention Measures

408. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the trial on lowering water levels in Lough Allen undertaken by the Shannon flood risk State agency co-ordination working group; if there are any legal or statutory impediments to such measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37506/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Seán Canney): A decision was taken by the Shannon Flood Risk State Agency Co-ordination Working Group on 18 October 2016 to trial the lowering of the lake levels in Lough Allen to help mitigate potential flood risk for this Winter.

From the analysis completed, this may have a small positive impact on the extent of certain flood events that might occur during a Winter.

A number of meetings and contacts have taken place between the ESB, Waterways Ireland and the OPW over the past weeks to consider the requirements and potential implications of lowering late Autumn and Winter minimum lake levels in Lough Allen by approximately 0.7m. A key consideration in this process has been to ensure that any additional flows released out of Lough Allen, which would be required to draw levels in the Lough down to a lower level, must not cause flooding downstream of Lough Allen.

A protocol has been developed and is currently being finalised for the operation of the Belantra Sluices at the outlet of Lough Allen to reduce the levels in the Lough over this winter.

I am happy to say that the testing of the new regime has already begun, and the levels in the Lough were reduced to the new, lower minimum level in October this year, with releases having been made since then as and when possible to try and maintain this level.

While the impact of this initiative may be quite small, this demonstrates the continued commitment of the agencies to work in a coordinated way to explore all measures that may benefit the communities along the River Shannon.

Departmental Reports

409. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the reports commissioned by his Department since 2006 which while completed or are in final draft form but have not been published; the reason they have not been published; the expected publication date; the cost to date of each such report; if tenders were invited; if it is not intended to publish any such report the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37553/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In response to the Deputy's question, the table provides details of the reports commissioned by my Department since it was established in 2011 that have not been published.

Name of report	Reason why report has not been published to date	Expected publication date	Costs to date	Were tenders invited?	Reason why publication is not intended
Comparative Report on European National Identification Numbers	Publication pending the completion of the work of the PPSN Review Group	Not available	€37,500	Yes	Publication is pending the completion of the work of the PPSN Review Group
IPA - A critical review of the applicability of the performance related remuneration approach to the Irish Public Service	Report is at final stage of drafting.	Finalised report expected in December	None	A request for a quote issued directly to provider, in accordance with procurement procedures where research services provider is another public body	Decision in respect of publication will be made on receipt of final report.
Civil Service Disciplinary Code Review (action identified under Civil Service Renewal Plan)	Not for publication internal report only	N/A	€23,985	Yes	Report into internal civil service procedures- delivered by Clarion in May 2015.
Civil Service Disciplinary Code Review (action identified under Civil Service Renewal Plan)	Not for publication internal report only	N/A	€30,750	Yes	Legal review of internal civil service procedures- delivered by Byrne Wallace in March 2015
Business case to deliver a new shared service model to deliver learning and development for the Civil Service external expert advice sought to assess the costs, benefits, risks and implications associated to the components elements of the new model	New Civil Service Learning and Development model is still at project status. The considerations from the business case are still being evaluated.	N/A	€106,063	Yes	The nature of this report was to inform a new internal approach to the development of Civil Service staff and it was not commissioned with a view to publishing.
IT Capability Maturity Framework (IT-CMF)	Not for publication internal report only	November 2012	€30,750	Yes	Internal Report to inform the Public Service ICT Strategy
Baseline Research 2015 Usage, Resourcing and costs of ICT across selected Public Service Bodies	Not for publication internal report only	N/A	€148,780	Yes	Internal Report to inform the Public Service ICT Strategy

Questions - Written Answers

Name of report	Reason why report has not been published to date	Expected publication date	Costs to date	Were tenders invited?	Reason why publication is not intended
Develop and agree a service delivery model for Government ICT Shared Services	Not for publication internal report only	N/A	€339,188	Yes	Internal Report to inform the Public Service ICT Strategy
Appropriate HR Model for OGP	Not for publication internal report only	N/A	€17,589	Yes	Internal report
OGP Training & Organisation Development	Not for publication internal report only	N/A	€28,167	Yes	Internal report
OGP ICT Category Strategies (8 in total)	Not for publication internal report only	N/A	€188,190	Yes	Internal report
eInvoicing Scoping Project Report	Not for publication internal report only	N/A	€160,327	Yes	Internal report
Economic Assessment of Issues Raised in Relation to the Tendering Process for the Supply of Printing Devices	Report commissioned for and used in court proceedings	N/A	€37,957	No	Report submitted to court as intended
OGP Audit of Methodologies for 2013 Spend Data Analysis	Not for publication internal report only	N/A	€13,550	Yes	Internal report
eCatalogue Readiness Assessment Report	Not for publication internal report only	N/A	€17,500	Yes	Internal report
Strategic Market Assessment (Pharmaceutical)	Not for publication internal report only	N/A	€880,793	Yes	Internal report

Non-Disclosure Agreements

410. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his Department, or the agencies that report to it, entered any non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements with any organisation due to court action or threatened court action; and if so, the persons or groups with which these agreements exist. [37633/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In response to the Deputy's question, neither my Department nor any of the bodies under its aegis have entered into any non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements with any organisations due to a court action or threatened court action.

Departmental Contracts

411. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the frequency that Government agency and Department contracts for taxi services are required to be renewed or reviewed; the regulations and guidelines his Department provides on such contracts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37680/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The regulations which govern the procurement of taxi services by Government Bodies are contained in Statutory Instrument 284 of 2016. Regulation 33(2) states that "the term of a framework agree-

ment shall not exceed 4 years, other than in exceptional cases”.

The Office of Government Procurement established a Framework Agreement for taxi services in the Greater Dublin Area, which commenced on April 1st 2015. The Framework was established for an initial period of one year, renewable annually at the discretion of the Contracting Authority to a maximum duration of 4 years. The Framework was subsequently extended by one year from April 1st 2016. A decision has not been finalised in regard to the possibility of a further extension from April 1st 2017. The OGP, prior to publishing a tender for taxi services to replace the existing Framework, will engage with market operators to ensure that any future tender competitions are appropriate to the market.

Ministerial Advisers Appointments

412. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the appointment of additional special advisers by him and Ministers of State in his Department. [37893/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The appointment of all Special Advisers in my Department are made in accordance with the instructions to Personnel Officers “Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil”. I intend to bring a memo to cabinet in due course to allow for the appointment of a special adviser to Min of State Murphy to assist him in his duties, particularly in relation to Brexit and policy challenges it poses across Government.

Post Office Network

413. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if further consideration will be given to the proposals to enable post offices provide additional services; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36929/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Michael Ring): The final report of the Post Office Network Business Development Group, which was published in January of this year, made a number of recommendations to support the future sustainability of post offices. These include recommendations in relation to the renewal of the post office network, the development of a basic payment account, the provision of motor tax services, and the creation of hubs around which local economic and social activity could revolve. The report also recommended that An Post should, following appropriate consultation with postmasters and others, review and amend the five-year strategy for the post office network.

The *Programme for a Partnership Government* commits to acting on the recommendations in the report of the Post Office Network Business Development Group. A number of Working Groups have been established to progress the recommendations, including through the establishment of a Network Renewal Implementation Group, which is being independently chaired by Mr Bobby Kerr. This Group is examining the number and spatial distribution of post offices, branch modernisation, the streamlining of products and services, postmaster payments and contracts, and training and qualifications for post office employees. I anticipate that this work will conclude in the next couple of weeks.

I have separately established the Post Office Hub Working Group to identify potential models under which the post offices could act as community hubs, especially in rural areas. I have

chaired a number of meetings of this group since July. The Group has concluded its deliberations and is currently finalising its report. In addition, my officials have been examining the potential for the post offices to deliver other services, including motor tax and financial services.

I intend to report to Government on these matters in the coming weeks.

Departmental Funding

414. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the rationale for the allocation of €2.175 million for the building of a centre (details supplied); her views on whether the allocation of funds represents good value for money; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37715/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The project to which the Deputy refers is a project being promoted by a local authority. In July 2015, my Department received a formal request for a grant from the local authority in question. In February 2016, my Department offered a capital grant in principle to the local authority of up to €2 million as a contribution towards the cost of construction of the building. The offer is subject to the standard conditions that apply to all capital grants and these must be met in advance of payment of the grant. Under the provisions of the Public Spending Code, published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the onus to ensure compliance with the Code, including obtaining value for money, falls in the first instance on the project promoter, in this case the local authority. I can assure the Deputy that my requirements of the Code before releasing any funding.

Departmental Funding

415. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the funding available in 2017 for the development of new walking routes; the method by which this will be disbursed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36890/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department administers the Walks Scheme, under which landholders receive modest payments to maintain sections of National Way Marked Ways and other priority walks that traverse their lands.

A total of 39 trails are currently covered by the scheme, and the number of participants receiving payments under the scheme currently stands at 1,912.

Payments in 2016 to participants who maintain sections of trail that traverse their lands will be in the region of €1.8 million. These payments are disbursed through the Local Development Company network.

The *Programme for a Partnership Government* includes a commitment to double the number of walks and to increase the number of walks covered by the Walks Scheme. My officials will be working towards this objective in 2017. However, due to the consultations required with landholders, the significant increase in the number of walks covered by the scheme is more likely to come to fruition in 2018. I would, therefore, anticipate that the funding required in 2017 will be in the order of €2 million.

Scéimeanna Teanga

416. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht, Gnóthaí Réigiúnacha, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil plean teanga aontaithe ag a Roinn leis an Údarás Rialála Carthanas; mura bhfuil, cén fáth nach bhfuil, go mór mór nuair a chuirtear san áireamh nach féidir le carthanas clárú leis an údarás i nGaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thobh. [36894/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Seán Kyne): Eisíodh litir faoi alt 11d'Acht na dTeangacha Oifigula 2003 chuig An Rialálaí Carthanas ag iarraidh go n-ullmhófaí dréachtscéim teanga agus go gcuirfear ar aghaidh í le daingniú faoin 15 Nollaig 2015. Cé nach bhfuil an scéim teanga daingnithe fós, comhairlítear dom go bhfuil iarrachtaí maithe á ndéanamh ag an Údarás chun seirbhísí Gaeilge a chur ar fáil don phobal. Tá obair sa treis idir oifigigh mo Roinne agus oifigigh an Údaráis agus tá an cheist faoi chlárúcháin i nGaeilge nótaíte sa chomhthéacs sin. Tá mé dóchasch go mbeidh dréachtscéim á cur faoi mo bhráid le daingniú go luath an bhliain seo chugainn.

Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme

417. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the status of an application for funding by a person (details supplied) under the turf cutting compensation scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36908/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): An application for compensation under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme has been received by my Department from the individual referred to in the Deputy's Question. The qualifying criteria for the scheme are that:

- The claimant must have a legal interest in one of the 53 raised bog special areas of conservation - ownership or turbarry right;
- The claimant must have been the owner or entitled to exercise turbarry rights on the land in question on 25 May 2010;
- The turbarry on the site must not be exhausted;
- The claimant must have been cutting turf on the land in question during the relevant five year period; and
- No turf cutting or associated activity is ongoing on the property.

My Department is examining the application in view of the qualifying criteria for the scheme. I am advised that officials from my Department have been in contact with the solicitors acting for the applicant and have requested that they provide further evidence to support the application. I am also advised that an inspection of the bog plot in question is to be undertaken.

Once the relevant information is supplied and the inspection complete, my Department will be in a position to process the application further.

Commemorative Events

418. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the plans that have been put in place to commemorate the centenary of the death of John Redmond in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36936/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Government will continue to mark significant events throughout the Decade of Centenaries and will be guided by the Expert Advisory Group on Commemorations in developing its commemoration programme for the second half of the Decade. The programme will be based on the inclusive, open and consultative approach that has worked so well this year. As part of this process, consideration will be given to how the centenary of the death of John Redmond in 2018 might be appropriately marked.

Departmental Staff Data

419. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the number of staff from her Department currently seconded to other Departments or agencies in the Civil Service per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36959/16]

420. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the number of staff from her Department who have appealed against secondment per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the appeals mechanism involved; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36975/16]

421. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the number of staff from her Department currently seconded to a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36991/16]

422. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the number of staff from her Department currently seconded from a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37007/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 419 to 422, inclusive, together.

The Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs was established on 9th June 2016. The Department has responsibility for all the matters that previously came within the remit of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, which was itself established on 2nd June 2011, and in addition is also responsible for certain functions transferred from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and from the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

The information sought by the Deputy is provided in the table in respect of the period from 2011 onwards. During that period, there were no members of staff from my Department seconded to or from a firm in the private sector, nor was any staff member refused a secondment during this period, hence there were no appeals in this regard.

I am advised that the following number of staff from my Department have been seconded to other Departments or agencies in the civil service from 2011 to 2016.

Year	Number of staff seconded to other Departments or agencies
2011	1
2012	3
2013	8
2014	13
2015	11
2016	12

World Heritage Sites

423. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the Government's plan to pursue more applications for UNESCO world heritage status for more of Ireland's national landmarks (details supplied). [37066/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Question No. 175 on 20 October 2016.

Irish Language

424. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the way she will work with her colleague the Minister for Education and Skills to ensure that parents can access second level education through Irish, especially in areas with proven demand for gaelscoileanna. [37067/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Seán Kyne): I refer the Deputy to replies to previous Parliamentary Questions in relation to this matter. As stated in these replies, the question of access to second-level education through Irish is primarily a matter for the Department of Education and Skills.

In the context of its responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030*, however, my Department works in close cooperation with a number of key stakeholders, including the Department of Education and Skills. In that regard, my Department maintains regular contact with these stakeholders with regard to progressing the implementation of a number of important measures, including educational measures, under the 20-Year Strategy.

Given the critical role of education in achieving the objectives detailed in the 20-Year Strategy, I can assure the Deputy that this close co-operation will continue to be a priority and I look forward to continuing with the very positive engagement with my colleague, Richard Bruton, TD, Minister for Education and Skills, in relation to these matters. Indeed, I was particularly pleased to participate with the Taoiseach and Minister Bruton at the launch on 28 October last in An Cheathrú Rua of the new *Policy on Gaeltacht Education*, which sets out how the education system will contribute to supporting and promoting the future use of Irish as a living indigenous language in the Gaeltacht. The Deputy will be aware that this policy, which was the subject of an extensive consultation process in which my own Department worked closely with the Department of Education and Skills, has been widely welcomed.

Gaeltacht Policy

425. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if the Government will provide extra funding to Irish speaking gaeltacht areas to encourage greater use of the language and better economic prospects for those living in Gaeltacht areas. [37068/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Seán Kyne): I refer the Deputy to previous replies given to Parliamentary Questions in relation to this matter. As stated in these replies, by way of supporting the maintenance and development of the Irish language as a community and household language in the Gaeltacht, the implementation of the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030* is recognised as a key priority in the *Programme for a Partnership Government*. Other measures outlined in the Programme include: - a focus on job creation in the Gaeltacht, through Údarás na Gaeltachta;

- encouraging the attendance by children in Irish-medium pre-schools or naíonraí in Gaeltacht areas;

- recognising the importance of the status of Irish as a full working language of the EU institutions and working towards ending the derogation, as circumstances allow; and

- increasing the investment in the Irish language.

The Deputy will be aware that my Department, together with Údarás na Gaeltachta, administers a range of schemes, programmes and initiatives targeting language and economic development in Gaeltacht areas. Further details are available on my Department's website at www.ahrrga.gov.ie and on the Údarás na Gaeltachta website at www.udaras.ie.

The Deputy may also be aware that in order to further underpin the implementation of the 20-Year Strategy and the language planning process, as set out in Acht na Gaeltachta 2012, a specific allocation of €1m was provided in the current year. As announced in Budget 2017, this allocation is being increased to €1.25m for next year and will further enable my Department, acting in co-operation with Údarás na Gaeltachta and relevant stakeholders at community level, to implement a range of specific and practical measures aimed at both supporting the implementation of the Strategy, as well as the language planning process in Gaeltacht areas.

In relation to the economic development of the Gaeltacht, as Minister of State with responsibility for the Gaeltacht, I very much appreciate the importance of job creation in helping to retain sustainable communities in Gaeltacht areas. In that context, I wish to acknowledge the very important enterprise and employment function of Údarás na Gaeltachta as the regional economic agency for the Gaeltacht. In its regional enterprise role in the Gaeltacht, Údarás na Gaeltachta, in conjunction with Enterprise Ireland and the IDA, will continue to work towards attracting investment to the Gaeltacht, in addition to supporting micro-enterprises and developing the skills base in the Gaeltacht. In order to enable Údarás na Gaeltachta to fulfil its job creation and job retention role in the Gaeltacht, an overall allocation of capital funding totalling €6.687m has been provided by the Exchequer to Údarás in 2016, in addition to its own resources from the sale of assets and investments. I have also secured €2.4m in additional capital for an tÚdarás in 2016. This additional funding will allow an tÚdarás to progress a number of capital projects on hand, thereby protecting existing jobs and assisting in the creation of new jobs in the Gaeltacht. In addition, as announced in Budget 2017, an increased capital funding baseline of €6.687m will be provided by the Exchequer to Údarás in 2017.

Arts Promotion

426. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the way in which the Government plans to ensure arts funding is used to ensure minority and new Irish voices are heard as part of cultural output. [37069/16]

435. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if she will work with the Minister for Health to develop and roll out an arts and health strategy across acute and children's hospitals and across the community health sector; and the other innovative approaches being considered to use the arts as a means to promote well-being across society. [37080/16]

437. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the action she is taking with her Government colleagues to systematically address social, geographic and economic barriers to full participation in the artistic and cultural life of the country, particularly for children and young persons. [37082/16]

453. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the way in which she plans to create an environment in the arts that is more welcoming to young persons with special educational needs; if specific funding will be provided to programmes to promote the inclusion of young persons with special educational needs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37098/16]

454. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if she will consider subsidising the costs of participation for young persons in the arts to promote inclusion from all economic backgrounds; if specific funding will be provided to programmes to promote the inclusion of young persons from various economic backgrounds; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37099/16]

455. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the way in which she plans to create a more inclusive environment in the arts for children from immigrant families; if more multilingual arts programmes will be available to children; if specific funding will be provided to programs to promote the inclusion of young persons from various cultural backgrounds; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37100/16]

477. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if she has had discussions with the Minister for Health with regard to setting up a specific funding stream for creative therapies, such as music therapy, which would be funded through her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37479/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 426, 435, 437, 453 to 455, inclusive, and 477 together.

Under the Arts Act 2003, primary responsibility for the promotion and support of the arts, including music, throughout the country is devolved to the Arts Council. In this regard, I secured significant additional funding for the Arts Council as part of Budget 2017. This will see an increase in the Arts Council allocation in 2017 of €5m, or 8%, and will assist the Council in implementing its 10-year strategy *Making Great Art Work* (2016-2025). This strategy places specific emphasis on the need to plan and provide for children and young people. The 5 high-level values of the strategy include a commitment to excellence, as well as respect for diversity of artistic practice, of public engagement, and of social and cultural traditions. The strategy also commits to working to achieve full implementation of the *Arts in Education Charter*. The *Programme for a Partnership Government* committed to the publication of *Culture 2025* as a priority and the draft framework policy *Culture 2025/Éire Ildánach* was forwarded to the

Oireachtas Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in July.

The *Culture 2025/Éire Ildánach* framework policy sets out:

- a series of high-level objectives under the heading of *Enrich, Engage, Participate* to establish Government vision in relation to culture and society in Ireland;

- a set of key values including the intrinsic value of culture, the right to participate in the cultural life of the nation, and the role of culture in fostering a more sustainable future in Ireland; and

- a series of priority measures for implementation across Government and public bodies.

I understand that the Committee is currently preparing a report on the draft framework policy, which I look forward to receiving.

In the meantime, I believe that it is important to continue momentum in terms of delivery of the priorities set out in the framework policy and to build on the positive legacy of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme.

My Department has, therefore, been developing a cross-Government initiative to mainstream culture and creativity in the life of the nation and to promote individual, community and national wellbeing. This will focus on boosting cultural provision and participation in communities and harnessing the goodwill and engagement generated by the commemorative programme this year. It will also act as the main vehicle to take forward the priorities identified in *Culture 2025*.

I have secured funding of €5m in Budget 2017 to underpin this new initiative and I intend to announce further details in the coming weeks.

All these initiatives provide platforms to deepen engagement across all of the sectors referred to in the Deputy's Questions.

Arts Funding

427. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs her plans to support the development of the creative industries sector; if she has reviewed the report from the previous Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation on the hearings in relation to examining the potential for job creation, innovation and balanced economic development in the creative economy; and if she will implement the recommendations of the report in tandem with the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. [37070/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department appreciates the importance of the cultural and creative industries to Ireland and is aware of the report referred to in the Deputy's Question. In this regard, my Department provides significant support for arts and film through the Arts Council and the Irish Film Board, as well as through its capital supports for the development of arts and cultural infrastructure. I am keenly aware of the potential of the creative sector to contribute to sustainable jobs growth and my Department continues to work with other Departments, in particular with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, across a range of areas as set out in the Action Plan for Jobs. Much of this work responds to relevant issues identified in the report referred to, particularly in relation to the audio-visual sector and maximising the contribution of this sector to the Irish economy. Earlier this month, I announced the commissioning of an

economic analysis of our screen-based creative industries. This study will examine the economic impact and potential of the Irish film, TV and animation sector. A steering group led by my Department, with representatives of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, the Irish Film Board and the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland will liaise with the consultants on this project. This economic analysis will consider the scale and economic contribution of the screen-based creative industries and examine its potential to expand further. The study, when complete, will help to inform Government strategies and initiatives as we seek to enhance Ireland's reputation as a home of creative talent.

The creative industries are of significant relevance in the development of Ireland's first national cultural policy. The draft framework policy *Éire Ildánach/Culture 2025* was forwarded to the Oireachtas Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in July.

I believe that it is important to continue momentum in terms of delivery of the priorities set out in the framework policy and to build on the positive legacy of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme. My Department has, therefore, been developing a cross-Government initiative to mainstream culture and creativity in the life of the nation and to promote individual, community and national wellbeing. This will focus on boosting cultural provision and participation in communities, harnessing the goodwill and engagement generated by the 2016 commemorative programme, and acting as a vehicle to take forward the priorities identified in *Culture 2025*.

Rural Development Programme Projects

428. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if her Department has contacted the Irish League of Credit Unions and the Credit Union Development Association regarding the submission her Department received from Irish Rural Link seeking the establishment of a working group with their participation to investigate the establishment of a local public banking network here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37071/16]

436. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the discussions her Department has had with the Minister and Department of Finance regarding the establishment of a pilot local public bank in the midlands region; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37081/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 428 and 436 together.

The *Programme for a Partnership Government* contains a commitment to investigate, amongst other options, the German Sparkassen model for the development of local public banks that operate within well-defined regions. My Department's officials have been provided with details of a proposal based on the Sparkassen model by Irish Rural Link, who have also presented the proposal to the Department of Finance.

Senior officials from my Department recently met with their counterparts in the Department of Finance and have agreed to develop a work programme to examine the potential of the Sparkassen model and other models of local public banking, as referenced in the *Programme for a Partnership Government*. No discussion has taken place regarding the establishment of a pilot public bank in the midlands, or any other particular region.

The officials will meet again in January and hope to be in a position to conclude their work around the middle of next year. As part of their work, they will engage with relevant stakehold-

ers, as required.

Cultural Policy

429. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if she has had any engagement with stakeholders in the music industry in terms of the establishment of a music industry task force, with wide representation and which would examine a range of issues including the impact of intellectual property and copyright legislation and enforcement in both the music and technology industries, supports for the business of music education and a dedicated office similar to the Irish Film Board for the music sector. [37072/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Intellectual property rights, including copyright law, are a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, and I understand that she is reviewing copyright legislation at present.

The Government appreciates the importance of the cultural **and** creative industries to Ireland, including the music industry. Under the Arts Act 2003, primary responsibility for the promotion and support of the arts, including music, throughout the country is devolved to the Arts Council. I secured significant additional funding for the Arts Council in Budget 2017, delivering an increase of €5m, or 8%, in the Council's 2017 allocation. This will enable the Council to enhance support to artists and arts organisations around the country, including musicians, in line with its strategy, *Making Great Art Work*, which prioritises support for the artist and public engagement.

In addition, my Department, through its Culture Ireland programme, provides supports for Irish artists and musicians to travel abroad and develop their careers. I am pleased that I secured a significant increase in the baseline funding for Culture Ireland from €2.5m in 2016 to €3.5m in 2017.

My Department also provides support for music through its funding of the Music Capital Scheme, which is delivered by Music Network, as well as providing significant funding to Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, the largest organisation in the State involved in the preservation and promotion of Irish traditional music.

The IMRO report, entitled *The Socio-Economic Contribution of Music to the Irish Economy*, highlights the impressive contribution the music industry makes to the Irish economy. The report contains a broad range of recommendations for which several Ministers have responsibility. The broader issue of cultural policy is also considered in the draft framework policy *Éire Ildánach/ Culture 2025*, which was forwarded to the Oireachtas Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in July. I will be happy to consider any response which the Committee makes to the draft document.

Arts in Education Charter

430. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if she has liaised with the Minister for Education and Skills on the development of contemporary art education at primary and secondary level in Irish schools. [37074/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather

Humphreys): 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 development of Ireland's first national culture policy - *Éire Ildánach/Culture 2025* - will also be relevant in terms of acknowledging the importance of supporting cultural engagement in education.

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 some funding to assist with implementation of initiatives of the Charter, which has included the development of the Arts in Education Portal that now serves as an effective key communications and information channel for both education and arts sectors.

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 10-year strategy *Making Great Art Work (2016-2025)* places specific emphasis on the need to plan and provide for children 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.

2016 has seen steady progress with the implementation of the *Arts in Education Charter*, overseen by the High Level Implementation Group chaired by Prof. John Coolahan, I am confident that the foundation has been firmly laid for the roll-out of further initiatives to improve the delivery of contemporary arts in education at all levels over the coming months and year.

Cultural Policy

431. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs her plans to develop a national cultural strategy up to 2025. [37075/16]

440. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the progress she has made towards the strategy outlined in Culture 2025; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37085/16]

442. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the extent to which she will develop Irish culture reflecting national and multicultural identity in a readily recognisable fashion, capable of being used as a major brand image at home and abroad; if in the context of Culture 2025 or otherwise, the extent to which she will do this through the arts, education and the community; the extent to which she will contribute to the economy by expanding job opportunities created through this medium, in view of the extent of the contribution from the philanthropic and voluntary sectors; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37087/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 431, 440 and 442 together.

I published the draft framework policy *Culture 2025/Éire Ildánach* in July this year, which was submitted to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs for input.

The *Culture 2025* framework policy sets out:

- a series of high-level objectives under the headings of *Enrich, Engage, Participate* to establish Government vision in relation to culture and society in Ireland;

- a set of key values, including the intrinsic value of culture, the right to participate in the cultural life of the nation and the role of culture in fostering a more sustainable future in Ireland; and

- a series of priority measures for implementation across Government and public bodies.

I understand that the Committee is currently preparing a report on the draft framework policy, which I will consider when received.

In the meantime, I believe that it is important to continue momentum in terms of delivery of the priorities set out in the framework policy and to build on the positive legacy of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme.

My Department has, therefore, been developing a cross-Government initiative to mainstream culture and creativity in the life of the nation and to promote individual, community and national wellbeing. This will focus on boosting cultural provision and participation in communities and harnessing the goodwill and engagement generated by the commemorative programme this year. It will also act as the main vehicle to take forward the priorities identified in *Culture 2025*, including those in relation to the importance of culture in promoting Ireland's image on the world stage.

I have secured funding of €5m in Budget 2017 to underpin this new initiative and I intend to announce further details in the coming weeks.

Arts Council

432. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs her plans to develop musical education and make instruments available to young persons and the general population through facilitating schools, youth groups and libraries in enhancing their music resources and the provision of access to musical training and instruments for the benefit of local communities. [37076/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Under the Arts Act 2003, primary responsibility for the promotion and support of the arts, including music, throughout the country is devolved to the Arts Council. In Budget 2017, I secured significant additional funding for the Arts Council of €5 million, an increase of 8%. The Arts Council's 10-year strategy *Making Great Art Work* sets out how it will lead the development of the arts in Ireland over the next decade and commits to working to achieve full implementation of the *Arts in Education Charter*, which is a joint initiative of my Department, the Department of Education and Skills, and the Arts Council. Musical education in schools is, of course, primarily a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Education and Skills.

My Department also provides funding for an annual scheme to assist in the purchase of musical instruments by talented individuals and groups. Under the Music Capital Scheme, which is managed by Music Network, grants are made available to groups to support the purchase of musical instruments. Further details are available on the website of Music Network at <http://www.musicnetwork.ie/>

My Department also provides funding to Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (CCÉ) for its work in the protection and promotion of Irish traditional music and culture. This year, funding of €1,448,000 will be provided to CCÉ by my Department. CCÉ provide weekly classes in a variety of traditional instruments, singing, and dance through its network of centres and branches all over the country as well as summer schools. CCÉ maintains a full schedule of educational events, such as lectures, exhibitions, workshops and concerts, sometimes in conjunction with the Fleadhanna Cheoil.

Artworks Sales

433. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if she has examined any proposals to facilitate on a national basis the use of vacant retail premises by exhibiting artists, based on successful schemes such as space invaders in County Galway which uses empty retail units to support local artists. [37077/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I am aware and supportive of the use of vacant premises by artists and arts organisation and I understand that a number of such buildings are currently being utilised by arts organisation across the country. In general, I would consider that local approaches driven by artists, local arts officers and the owners of vacant buildings are best suited to respond to the specific local circumstances involved and provide the most effective outcomes.

In terms of investment by my Department, I have launched a new €9m investment scheme for arts and cultural centres to run over the next three years, focussed on securing and enhancing our arts and culture infrastructure. The scheme will target investment at a range of different facilities, including arts centres, theatres, galleries and museums, as well as creative spaces. The closing date for receipt of applications was in September and applications received are now undergoing evaluation. Awards will be announced in the near future.

I will also be announcing shortly a subset of the scheme with grants of up to €20,000 for community or voluntary organisations. The details of this funding stream are being finalised and will open for applications in the near future. I will consider how best this scheme could assist with the provision or enhancement of artist studio space.

Planning Issues

434. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if her Department will examine a nationwide plan for the development of village design statements that would ensure all future planning and development takes full cognisance of the historic character and protects the character and heritage of villages. [37078/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Question No 185 of 20 October 2016.

Question No. 435 answered with Question No. 426.

Question No. 436 answered with Question No. 428.

Question No. 437 answered with Question No. 426.

438. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the plans in place to ensure the better integration of the arts into education and broadening the focus on science, technology, engineering and maths into science, technology, engineering, arts and maths; her plans to expand the ambition and resourcing of the arts and education charter; and her further plans to continue to work with the Department of Education and Skills to further enhance the position of arts subjects within the curriculum at primary and secondary level. [37083/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): 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, the *Programme for a Partnership Government* commits to the continued implementation of the *Arts in Education Charter*. The implementation of Ireland's first national framework policy *Culture 2025/Éire Ildánach* and the associated Ireland 2016 Legacy Programme will also be relevant in terms of acknowledging the importance of supporting cultural engagement across wider policy areas. I will be making a further announcement in this regard in the coming weeks.

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 some funding to assist with implementation of initiatives of the Charter, which has included the development of the Arts in Education Portal that now serves as an effective key communications and information channel for both education and arts sectors.

The Teacher Artist Partnership Initiative has also received funding to enable the continuing professional development of teachers to be expanded beyond its initial pilot programme level of 2015.

The National Arts in Education Day, held in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham with over 200 attendees from both education and artistic fields, has been heralded as another successful element of the *Arts in Education Charter* and a second National Arts in Education Day is planned for May 2017.

Direct support for the arts is primarily a matter for the Arts Council operating under the provisions of the Arts Act 2003. The Arts Council's 10-year strategy *Making Great Art Work (2016-2025)* places specific emphasis on the need to plan and provide for children 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 both primary and post-primary schools. 2016 has seen steady progress with the implementation of the *Arts in Education Charter*. I am confident that the foundation has been firmly laid for the roll-out of further initiatives to improve the delivery of arts in education at all levels and across the wider curriculum.

Cultural Policy

439. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if she will urgently begin preparation of a global arts forum for Ireland, similar to

the structure of the global Irish economic forum which would highlight indigenous talent and map a strong and healthy future for arts and culture at home and abroad. [37084/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department, through its Culture Ireland programme, supports Irish artists to present their work worldwide. This serves to raise the global awareness of the strong reputation of the Irish arts sector, generate new career opportunities for Irish artists and develop new audiences abroad for Irish artists.

My Department continues to work with the Global Irish Network, which has to date made many significant achievements in relation to highlighting Ireland's creativity on the world stage. I consider that this is the most appropriate vehicle in which to highlight the achievement of Irish creativity as part of a wider cross-sectoral partnership. Most notable in terms of this collaborative approach have been *Irish Design 2015*, with which my Department had a significant engagement in relation to the international programme, and the *Imagine Ireland* programme in 2011.

This model of supporting major arts initiatives internationally continued this year with the *I am Ireland* programme, the international arts element of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme, which includes over 550 separate performances and exhibitions with a special focus in key territories - United States, Great Britain, Canada and Australia. This programme reflects that interest in Irish artistic excellence continues to grow internationally and recognises that this centenary year offers a unique opportunity to build on Ireland's cultural connections and share the talents of Irish artists through many special and diverse events around the world.

I anticipate that my Department will be closely involved with the Second Global Irish Civic Forum, which the Minister of State for Diaspora Affairs and International Development, Joe McHugh, TD, has convened to meet in Dublin Castle on 2-3 February 2017. The Civic Forum seeks to bring together representatives of the multitude of organisations working with the Irish diaspora around the world to share ideas and to discuss issues of common concern. I understand that it is proposed that the Forum will look at a number of issues of interest to Irish communities around the world, including culture and the role of cultural heritage in engaging with our global Irish.

Question No. 440 answered with Question No. 431.

Arts Funding

441. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs her plans to increase the amount of capital funding available for arts institutions and projects in view of the challenges facing organisations in maintaining and expanding operations. [37086/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Direct funding from my Department for arts primarily relates to capital funding for individual projects, as well as the promotion of Irish arts and culture abroad through Culture Ireland. A small number of summer schools and similar events receive funding from my Department. Details of these are on my Department's website at www.ahg.gov.ie.

Budget 2016 included over €48 million for the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme, including almost €31 million for major capital works, additional funding for an inclusive and wide-ranging national and international commemorative programme, including State events, local community initiatives, a wide range of arts and cultural projects, and €3 million earmarked for

Culture Ireland's international programme for 2016 and the Abbey Theatre. Investing in our cultural infrastructure is hugely important; arts and cultural centres not only enrich local communities, they also help to drive economic growth.

With regard to Budget 2017, the approved allocations will include:

- an additional €5 million for the Arts Council, an 8% increase in its annual budget;
- increased funding for all of the National Cultural Institutions;
- an increase of €2 million for the Irish Film Board and €1 million for Culture Ireland;
- an additional €1 million to the Heritage Council; and
- funding of €5m for the implementation of a *Culture 2025 /Ireland 2016 Legacy Programme*, which will allow me to build on the positive legacy of the Ireland 2016 commemorations. I will be announcing details of this new initiative shortly.

All of this represents real and substantial funding increases across the arts and cultural area and has been welcomed across the sector. It also re-affirms the commitment of this Government to progressively increase funding for the arts as the economy improves, as set out in the *Programme for a Partnership Government*.

I have also launched a new €9m investment scheme for arts and cultural centres to run over the next three years, focussed on securing and enhancing our arts and culture infrastructure. The scheme will target investment at a range of different facilities, including arts centres, theatres, galleries and museums, as well as artists' studios and creative spaces. The closing date for receipt of applications was in September and applications received are now undergoing evaluation. Awards will be announced in the near future. I will also be announcing shortly a subset of the scheme with grants of up to €20,000 for community or voluntary organisations. The details of this funding stream are being finalised and will open for applications in the near future.

Question No. 442 answered with Question No. 431.

Artists' Remuneration

443. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the action she will take to address the issues of very low incomes among arts practitioners; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37088/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I have had discussions with the Minister for Social Protection in relation to the recognition of artists within the social protection system. Officials from our two Departments are tasked with investigating the issue and will report back in due course.

In relation to other supports, I secured a series of funding increases in Budget 2017 across the arts and cultural bodies under my remit. These include:

- an extra €5m for the Arts Council - an 8% increase;
- €2m extra for the Film Board;
- an extra €1m for Culture Ireland;
- a significant additional allocation of €3.5m for the national cultural institutions; and

- a new funding stream of €5m for the implementation of a *Culture 2025 /Ireland 2016* Legacy Programme, details of which I will be announcing shortly.

All of this represents real and substantial funding increases across the arts and cultural area and has been welcomed across the sector. It also re-affirms the commitment of this Government to progressively increase funding for the arts as the economy improves, as set out in the *Programme for a Partnership Government*. These increases will have a positive and distinct impact on arts and cultural provision around the country, especially for artists and other creative workers.

The Arts Council is the main channel through which the Government directs funding to the arts and to artists, and the 8% increase in its annual budget will allow the Council to enhance support to arts practitioners around the country, on both a small and large scale. The strategic context for the Arts Council's support of all art forms and arts practice is set out in its strategy *Making Great Art Work*. This sets out the Council's plans to lead the development of the arts in the decade to 2025. The strategy prioritises the professional artist, as well as public engagement, and outlines a range of actions that the Council will take to deliver on its vision.

Film Industry

444. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the support she provides for the indigenous film and television production sector; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37089/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Irish Film Board is the national development agency for Irish film making and the Irish film, television and animation industry. Its statutory remit is to assist and encourage the making of film in the State and the development of a film industry in Ireland. In Budget 2017, I secured an increase of €2 million for the Irish Film Board, representing a 14% increase in its annual budget. This increase in funding will allow the Board to invest more in Irish talent in the year ahead and it follows on from a very successful year for the Irish film sector, particularly the indigenous film sector, in 2016. 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.

In addition to the funding provided to the industry by the Irish Film Board, section 481 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 provides tax relief towards the making of film in Ireland. The twin approach of direct funding and tax expenditure measures maximises the benefits of Government's support to the audiovisual industry.

The Irish Film Board also supports the Irish screen industries at major international markets and festivals, promotes inward investment, promotes the use of Ireland as a location for international production and provides support for companies filming in Ireland. The Board liaises with IDA Ireland and Tourism Ireland to maximise 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.

Arts Council Funding

445. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the targets and key performance indicators included within the Arts Council fund-

ing process to ensure that funds are distributed among all socioeconomic sectors; and if targets are met and the results of these. [37090/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Under the Arts Act 2003, primary responsibility for the promotion and support of the arts, including music, throughout the country is devolved to the Arts Council. In this regard, I secured significant additional funding for the Arts Council as part of Budget 2017. This will see an increase in the Arts Council allocation in 2017 of €5m, or 8%, and will assist the Council in implementing its 10-year strategy *Making Great Art Work*(2016-2025). This Strategy places specific emphasis on the need to plan and provide for children and young people. The 5 high-level values of the Strategy include a commitment to excellence, as well as respect for diversity of artistic practice, of public engagement, and of social and cultural traditions. The Strategy also commits to working to achieve full implementation of the *Arts in Education Charter*.

Making Great Art Work will be implemented through three 3-year plans, starting in 2017. The first of these, the Three-Year Plan 2017-2019, is now published and describes the investment strategies, projects and programmes that the Council will prioritise, as well as the achievements and milestones it has set over this period.

Cultural Policy

446. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if she explored other methods of incentivising investment into the cultural sector apart from direct State funding; and if so, the details and timelines on these. [37091/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (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.

In terms of other capital investment requiring co-funding, my Department is currently assessing applications under 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.

Land Reclassification

447. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if it is her policy to inform landholders if their land is to be designated a special protection area, special area of conservation or natural heritage area; the other methods by which

the public are made aware of such proposed designations; the number of appeals received by the appeals advisory board, since the inception of these designations, against designation; the number of these that went to a full oral hearing; the number of cases in which the advice of the board was varied by her and the years in which this happened; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37092/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Ireland is committed to the implementation of the EU Nature Directives. To this end, Ireland has identified 439 sites for protection as special areas of conservation under the Habitats Directive and 154 sites for protection as special protection areas under the Birds Directive. In addition, there are 155 natural heritage areas designated under national legislation.

Legal protections, consistent with those set out in the relevant EU and national legislation, such as the requirement to obtain consent for certain activities, have applied to these sites since initially proposed for designation. Ireland's planning and environmental legislation have operated under these designations since the time the sites were first advertised for designation.

In advance of the designation of a site, my Department writes to all identified land owners with a legal interest in the site, outlining the intention to designate the site, the appeals process and how to get further information. Public notices in relation to the proposed designation are placed in the media. Government Departments, public authorities, State and semi-State agencies, and bodies representing environmental, farming and business interests, are also notified directly.

Since it began, the Designated Areas Appeals Advisory Board has received 990 appeals against the proposed designation of sites. Some 279 have progressed to a full oral hearing, with a recommendation made to the Minister. Of the remaining cases, 246 appeals remain to be heard and the remainder were either withdrawn or resolved with my Department without the Board's involvement. In 27 cases, the Minister either accepted the Board's recommendation in part or rejected the recommendation. In all other cases, the recommendation was accepted in full.

The 27 cases referred to occurred in the following years:

Year	No of cases
2003	2
2006	3
2007	4
2008	14
2009	4

National Monuments

448. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the criteria used for the tender that was put out with regard to the conservation of 14-17 Moore Street; the terms and conditions; if she will make these documents publicly available in view of the significant public interest; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37093/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department concluded a tendering process that was initiated when the property referred to by the Deputy was under lien by NAMA in order to get conservation work

underway as speedily as possible to prevent further deterioration to the fabric of the National Monument buildings.

The tenders sought were in respect of the proposals for the conservation and restoration of these buildings for which consent was given by my predecessor under section 14 of the National Monuments Acts in April 2014. I am arranging to have details of the consent forwarded to the Deputy. The works currently in progress are those approved by the High Court to preserve and protect the buildings for the time being.

Culture Ireland Grant Scheme

449. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the assessment process used to judge the grant applications by Culture Ireland for the supporting Irish culture on the world stage scheme announced in July 2016; the scoring mechanism; the total number of applications versus those that were awarded a grant; of those awarded a grant, the number that were previously funded by Culture Ireland and the number that were funded for the first time; if an appeals mechanism exists for unsuccessful applicants; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37094/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department's Culture Ireland grant funding scheme is designed to support the presentation and promotion of Irish arts internationally. The scheme is currently operated on the basis of three grant rounds per year. Applications are considered in relation to all forms of the arts as defined in the Arts Act 2003. The following basic eligibility requirements apply:

1. Applicant must be in respect of an Irish (or based in Ireland) professional artist or arts organisation;
2. The application must relate to the international presentation of non-commercial work;
3. The work to be presented must be an art form defined under the Arts Act 2003; and
4. The event must be accessible to an open public audience.

All applications are initially examined by the staff of my Department with responsibility for operating the Culture Ireland Programme to determine whether they meet the above eligibility criteria. Applications which meet the eligibility requirements are then commented upon by independent external experts in various art forms, drawn from a panel established on the basis of a recommendation by the Culture Ireland Expert Advisory Group (EAC) in 2014. The panellists act as an aid to the EAC, which is comprised of arts interests and representatives of relevant State bodies (see www.cultureireland.ie/about for details of the membership). The panellists' input ensures that there is specialist expertise in different art forms available as applications are being evaluated in line with the relevant criteria, which are set out as follows:

1. Artistic quality of work and track record of artist/company;
2. Profile of international venue/festival;
3. Financial and operational viability of the event (including artists' fees and level of support from presenter/venue/other partners);
4. Proven capacity of applicant to present work internationally; and
5. Wider promotional and media impact.

The Embassy network is also invited to give its views in relation to the local venue and promoter and whether there might be wider benefits for Ireland arising from a proposed event.

Taking account of Embassy and expert panel views, geographic priorities and strategic impact, recommendations on funding are submitted for consideration by the EAC, which in turn submits its recommendations for Ministerial approval.

In the 2016 summer round, 124 applications were received seeking funding in the amount of €1.4m. A total award of €626,000 was made to support 86 applicants, of which 45 had previously been awarded funding. The projects, which include artists and companies presenting circus, dance, film, literature, music, theatre and the visual arts, will enable Irish artists to showcase and export their work to over 28 different countries around the globe. Through this support, increasing numbers of worldwide audiences will experience the strength and diversity of Ireland's artistic excellence and Irish artists will develop relationships with their international counterparts and grow their career both at home and abroad.

A total of 169 eligible applications were received under the winter 2016 grant round, which is currently under consideration.

On average, Culture Ireland receives 450 applications annually, of which approximately 55% are successful. Unsuccessful applicants are provided with advice and feedback on their applications on request and officials are available to meet should an applicant wish to discuss an application. It is, of course, open to applicants who are unsuccessful to make subsequent applications under another grant round.

Cultural Policy

450. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the way in which she plans to create an environment in which the cultural sector can be supported through multiannual budgeting to allow a more strategic and sustainable focus, particularly among the State's cultural institutions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37095/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The *Programme for a Partnership Government* commits to progressively increase funding to the arts and the cultural sector as the economy improves. In this regard, additional funding has already been provided for 2017. However, I am well aware that an increase in public funding on its own will not be sufficient to allow the cultural sector to maximise its potential. Public funding must be prioritised and used in the most efficient and effective way possible.

One of the areas identified for future examination in the draft framework policy *Éire Ildánach/Culture 2025* is the issue of improving the funding structures for the sector, including issues around multi-annual funding, investment in capital infrastructure, cross stream funding and investment in regional and local services. These matters will be considered over the period of the *Culture 2025* strategy and in the context of public expenditure policy generally.

Digital Archiving

451. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if she will consider creating an enabling environment for digitisation of archives

and records across all levels in the State, including cultural institutions, Government bodies, educational institutions and so on; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37096/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Digitisation is a powerful tool to create new ways for people to interact with their cultural heritage. In recognition of its importance, the draft framework policy *Culture 2025/Éire Ildánach* includes “*Responding to the Digital Age*” as one of its 7 pillars.

The care and management of electronic records and the preservation of digital material is a challenge for the National Cultural Institutions, all of which have digitisation programmes in place. Developing approaches to digital records is particularly important for the National Archives. In 2015, the National Archives joined the Digital Preservation Coalition, an international advocate body for digital preservation, to better prepare itself for the development of a digital preservation strategy and to ensure it adopts the appropriate and relevant standards in this area.

As part of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme, my Department funded a number of specific digitisation projects in the National Cultural Institutions, including:

- the National Library project to digitise the personal papers of the signatories of the Proclamation;
- the National Archives projects to digitise the Chief Secretary’s Office: Movement of Extremists collection and the Dublin Metropolitan Police records leading up to Easter 1916; and
- the National Archives project to catalogue and prepare for digitisation the 1916 Property Loss Compensation Records and the Department of Finance Civil War Compensation files.

My Department has also supported digitising of the Irish film archive in the Irish Film Institute.

Furthermore, the Office of Government Chief Information Officer and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform are working with the National Archives and my Department on a strategy and associated plan in relation to the electronic management and preservation of digital records across the public service. I provided the National Archives with a special allocation of €150,000 in 2016 to commence work on this project and was pleased to further provide €320,000 to the Archives for 2017 to continue that important work.

All of these initiatives are aimed at providing the enabling environment to which the Deputy refers in her Question.

Budget 2017

452. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the projects her Department is prioritising in budget 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37097/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The total funding allocated to my Department in the Budget Estimates 2017 is €368.106 million. This provision allows for increases in funding across a range of arts and heritage bodies under my remit, as well as increases in a number of rural schemes.

Key initiatives for 2017 include:

- An additional €5 million for the Arts Council, an 8% increase in its annual budget;
- €2 million to allow for the opening of the newly restored historic wings at the National Gallery of Ireland and the opening of Killarney House on foot of significant capital investment by the State;
- An increase of €2 million for the Irish Film Board and €1 million for Culture Ireland;
- Boosts in funding for all of the National Cultural Institutions;
- An additional €1 million to assist the Heritage Council with its work;
- Funding of €5 million for implementation in 2017 of a legacy programme to the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme and reflecting the priorities in the draft framework policy *Éire Ildánach/ Culture 2025*;
- A trebling in funding for the Town and Village Regeneration Scheme (€12m in total for 2017);
- An additional €8 million for National Rural Development Schemes, including €5 million for the recently re-opened CLÁR Programme; and
- €40 million for the delivery of the LEADER Rural Development Programme in 2017.

Question Nos. 453 to 455, inclusive, taken with Question No. 426.

Arts Funding

456. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if she will outline her plans to increase funding in the arts over the lifetime of the Government; and her views on whether funding for the Arts Council and Irish Film Board should be doubled. [37101/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (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.

In Budget 2017, I secured significant additional funding for the Arts Council and the Irish Film Board. The increase in the Arts Council's allocation in 2017 is € 5 million, or 8%, and will assist the Council greatly in implementing its 10-year strategy *Making Great Art Work* (2016-2025).

In Budget 2017, I also secured an increase of €2 million for the Irish Film Board, representing a 14% increase in its annual budget. This increase in funding will allow the Board to invest more in Irish talent in the year ahead and follows on from a very successful year for the Irish film sector, particularly the indigenous film sector.

National Gallery

457. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if a group of new magnolia trees will be planted in the west corner of the lawn to complete the garden composition as per her predecessor's reply to Parliamentary Question No.

407 of 30 April 2014, with regard to the development of the National Gallery. [37119/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I have no responsibility for the day to day running of the National Gallery.

However, I have been informed that a planting of trees (a cluster of three) to the left of the entrance adjacent to Leinster Lawn will take place shortly, provided that the purchase and transport of the trees goes to schedule.

Hare Coursing Regulation

458. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if her attention has been drawn to two incidents in which a hare was mauled and suffered severe injuries at Ballinagar coursing, County Offaly and Loughrea coursing, County Galway; if she is still of the view that the sport is well regulated and that muzzling has prevented harm coming to hares in view of the video evidence continually surfacing of hares being injured; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37155/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Officials of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department attended the coursing meetings at Ballinagar and Loughrea referred to by the Deputy and are examining the video footage provided in relation to both meetings. This may result in discussions with the local coursing clubs and the Irish Coursing Club. I will be happy to release any reports of these meetings following completion of this process.

In August this year, my Department issued licences under the Wildlife Acts to the Irish Coursing Club, covering its affiliated coursing clubs, to capture and tag hares for use at regulated hare coursing meetings for the 2016/17 coursing season, which extends from the end of September 2016 to the end of February 2017.

There are 26 conditions in total associated with the licences issued to the Irish Coursing Club. These conditions, which have been developed and refined over a number of years, cover a wide range of issues, including prohibition on coursing hares more than once a day or coursing sick or injured hares, the need for adequate escapes for hares during coursing and releasing hares in daylight hours after meetings.

The muzzling of greyhounds at coursing meetings is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. It is my understanding that the Irish Coursing Club has implemented mandatory muzzling of greyhounds at regulated coursing meetings since the early 1990s. The muzzling of greyhounds appears to have proven effective in reducing the number of hare injuries and deaths at coursing meetings. For example, the percentage of hares released back into the wild after coursing meetings last season was 99.33%.

Architectural Heritage

459. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if she will establish a heritage buildings commission with responsibility for the listing of buildings of special architectural or historic interest here which are at risk (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37156/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My role, as Minister, with regard to the protection and management of our ar-

chitectural 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.

Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, provides for the protection of 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. Inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures places a duty of care on the owners and occupiers of protected structures and also gives planning authorities powers to deal with development proposals affecting them and to seek to safeguard their future. As Minister, I draw on information provided by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, maintained by my Department, to recommend structures for inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures. However, the final decision is a reserved function of the planning authority.

Under Section 54 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, a planning authority may add to or delete from its Record of Protected Structures, a structure, a specified part of a structure or a specified feature of the attendant grounds of a structure. Such a structure, specified part of a structure, or specified feature remains on the Record of Protected Structures until such time as the planning authority deletes it. Provision is made in the Act for the carrying out of works to protected structures either by way of planning permission or on the foot of a declaration received from a planning authority that certain works that would not materially affect the character of a structure are exempted development. There is a duty of owners and occupiers to protect structures from endangerment. Where structures become endangered or unauthorised development has been or is being carried out, the planning authority has the powers to take appropriate action.

There is 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, such as the Structures at Risk Fund and the Built Heritage Investment Scheme.

I do not consider that any useful purpose would be served by the setting up of a commission to identify buildings at risk. The management of endangerment is a statutory function already undertaken by planning authorities. The publication of general lists of structures at risk might, in fact, have the adverse effect of drawing attention to the vulnerability of particular structures, which may be unsecured or inadequately secured and may typically contain valuable historic and artistically important fixtures and features, as well as lead, copper and other metals for which there is an illegal market.

Legislative Measures

460. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs her role and procedure in making a preservation order on a historical site and area; and if she will consider the need for legislation allowing her the power to designate a site, area or building as a national monument. [37157/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Section 8 of the National Monuments Act 1930 (as amended) provides for the making of a preservation order where it appears to the Minister that a monument which, in her/his opinion is a national monument, is in danger of being or is actually being destroyed, injured or removed, or is falling into decay due to neglect. The expressions “monument” and “national

monument” are also both defined in the Act.

The drafting of a Bill to revise, consolidate and update the current national monuments legislative code is at an advanced stage. It is intended that the Bill will provide for the establishment of a Register of Monuments, which will identify national monuments in accordance with clear criteria that would also be set out in the legislation.

Departmental Functions

461. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if the reorganisation of her Department to include regional and rural affairs has been completed (details supplied); if so, the resources and staffing that have been made available to accommodate these new and important responsibilities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37163/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Supporting the economic and social development of rural Ireland and strengthening regional development are key priorities for the Government. Actions to support these objectives will be delivered across a range of Departments and agencies. The Taoiseach has assigned responsibility to me for providing greater co-ordination and prioritisation across Government of the work that will impact on rural Ireland. Minister of State Michael Ring has also been assigned responsibility for Regional Economic Development at my Department.

A new Division has been established in my Department to co-ordinate my own Department’s work on regional and rural affairs and to oversee and monitor initiatives across other Departments to support rural development. The Division is headed by an Assistant Secretary and includes staff who have been re-assigned from the rural development area of the former Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. I have also secured additional posts to deal with new responsibilities under my Department’s remit, such as the post office network and working with Local Authorities to prepare for the roll-out of rural broadband.

The Taoiseach has also asked me to develop an Action Plan for Rural Development which will act as an overarching structure for the co-ordination and implementation of initiatives across Government which will benefit rural Ireland.

The Action Plan is currently being finalised and I intend to publish it in the coming weeks.

Record of Protected Structures

462. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if protection will be provided to a heritage feature (details supplied) in the Laimbe area of the Rath Cairn Gaeltacht, County Meath; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37171/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Heritage features of the nature referred to by the Deputy are protected by their inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS), which is the responsibility of the local authority to maintain. Inclusion on the RPS also gives planning authorities powers to deal with development proposals affecting them and to seek to safeguard their future.

My Department’s National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) records heritage features of the nature referred to. In the county in question, the NIAH recorded 42 such fea-

tures.

The NIAH survey can be viewed on www.buildingsofireland.ie.

Those rated of regional significance or above are included in recommendations to planning authorities, made under section 53 of the Planning and Development Act, as amended, for inclusion on their RPS.

Arts Promotion

463. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if there is a process whereby artists and sculptors here can be facilitated in having their work exhibited in places such as the UN building in New York and EU buildings in Brussels; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37178/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department’s Culture Ireland programme promotes Irish arts worldwide by creating and supporting opportunities for Irish artists and companies to present and promote their work at strategic international festivals and venues. Culture Ireland has arranged exhibitions in the European Commission buildings, most notably when Ireland held the Presidency of the Council of the EU, and has also supported exhibitions in the European Parliament.

I understand that according to the rules governing cultural events and exhibitions on the premises of the European Parliament, art exhibitions are permitted but have to be sponsored by an MEP or, exceptionally, by the Institution itself - for example, on behalf of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. The sponsoring MEP would normally launch the request with the Parliament’s Services and be responsible for the conduct of the exhibition. I understand that each MEP is entitled to host up to 2 (or 3 on request) exhibitions per parliamentary mandate.

Responsibility for exhibitions in European Commission buildings in Brussels rests with the Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Brussels. In the Commission’s political headquarters, the Berlaymont Building, only the Members of the European Commission are entitled to propose exhibitions.

I understand that in relation to proposals to exhibit in the UN building in New York, the decisions are made by the UN Exhibits Committee, a standing body established by the Secretary-General to review and approve exhibits proposed for display in publicly accessible areas at UN Headquarters. It is a condition that all exhibits must be compatible with the aims, purposes and principles of the United Nations, in both content and presentation. The themes of exhibits must be specific to the work and activities of the organizations of the United Nations system and must be international or universal in character. Exhibit proposals focusing only on a specific individual, country, non-UN entity or religion, or originating from a single artist, are not permitted. The guidelines setting out the process and the criteria against which proposals are considered are available on <http://unexhibitsny.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/UN-Exhibits-Committee-Guidelines-V2-2016-3-1.pdf>

Commemorative Events

464. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs her plans to re-establish the decades of centenaries all-party consultative committee; and her further plans regarding future commemorative events related to events 100

years ago falling during her term of office. [32802/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Question No. 371 of 22 November 2016.

Departmental Funding

465. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the funding that has been provided to County Louth over the previous three years, 2014 to 2016, by project name, location and funding amount in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37216/16]

467. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the funding for projects in 2017 in County Louth to be funded by her Department by project name, location and funding amount in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37248/16]

468. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the funding that has been provided to County Meath over the previous three years, 2014 to 2016, by project name, location and funding amount in tabular form. [37264/16]

470. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the funding for projects in 2017 in County Meath to be funded by her Department by project name, location and funding amount in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37296/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 465, 467, 468 and 470 together.

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, 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

Departmental Funding

466. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the applications submitted for funding projects from Louth County Council in each of the years, 2014 to 2016, in tabular form; and if the applications were successful.

[37232/16]

469. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the applications submitted for funding and projects from Meath County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016, in tabular form; if the applications were successful; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37280/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 466 and 469 together.

As it would not be possible to compile the requested information in the time available, I have asked that a response be prepared and forwarded to the Deputy in accordance with Dáil Standing Orders.

Questions Nos. 467 and 468 answered with Question No. 465.

Question No. 469 answered with Question No. 466.

Question No. 470 answered with Question No. 465.

Waterways Issues

471. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs her views on the potential of canals, not just for walking and cycling alongside the canals, but for boats and moving boats; if she will examine the relevant bye-laws to facilitate those wishing to live on boats; if she will consider ways to ease right of way to the Grand Canal basin; and her engagement with Waterways Ireland and Iarnród Éireann on their role in enhancing the use of the canals for both residents and tourists. [32671/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Waterways Ireland, a North South Implementation Body under the remit of my Department, has responsibility for the management, maintenance, development and restoration of 1,000 km of the inland navigable waterway system throughout the island, including the Grand Canal, Royal Canal and the Barrow Navigation principally for recreational purposes. Waterways Ireland engages in promotion, including marketing and development of the tourism and commercial potential of the inland waterways for which it has responsibility. Iarnród Éireann has no statutory function in relation to the canals.

Waterways Ireland works strategically with Tourism Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, sports bodies and associations, and local authorities to actively develop the tourism and economic potential of the inland waterways. Waterways Ireland is currently working with these and other bodies in developing 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 Canals Act, 1986, (Bye-laws) 1988 provide for the management of canal and canal property and regulate the use of boats on the Royal Canal, the Grand Canal and the Barrow Navigation. There is no provision in these bye-laws for house boats or for allowing persons to live on board a vessel.

My Department is currently progressing, within the Heritage Bill 2016, amendments to the Canals Act 1986 so as to allow for the subsequent making of bye-laws to better regulate boating on the canals and to manage the use of the canals. The proposed changes to the Canals Act 1986

would introduce a provision for the regulation of the type or class of boats (including its dimensions) that may be used on the canals. The provisions would also provide for the regulation of berths and moorings on the canals. This would include house boats. 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. Following enactment of the legislation, Waterways Ireland would intend to bring forward proposed new bye-laws for consideration.

In relation to the Grand Canal Basin area, Waterways Ireland, through the Action Plan for Grand Canal Dock and Spencer Dock, is considering opportunities to increase access to Grand Canal Dock and Spencer Dock to reflect their importance as the gateways to the inland waterways network of Ireland. One of the actions being considered is opening access into Grand Canal Dock from the Grand Canal Dock DART Station on Barrow Street. This would leave Grand Canal Dock directly accessible by rail, just one stop from Trinity College, which would significantly increase the Dock's potential to attract both residents and visitors from this central location in the city.

I can assure the Deputy that Waterways Ireland will continue to work through a partnership approach with stakeholders, including State bodies, local authorities, Fáilte Ireland and, most importantly, local communities to create opportunities to increase the use of these valuable public assets.

Post Office Network

472. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs her plans to safeguard the position and operation of the post office network and especially rural post offices; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32207/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Michael Ring): The postal sector is undergoing significant change both nationally and internationally, with the increased use of electronic communications leading to a decline in core mail volume for An Post. In recent years, there has also been a decline in Department of Social Protection payments and a reduction in Billpay transactions at post offices.

The Government is committed to working with all stakeholders to find solutions to the sustainability of the post office network in this changed business environment. The Post Office Network Business Development Group was established in late 2014 to examine the potential for the delivery of additional Government services through the post offices and to identify new business opportunities for the network.

The Group published its report in January of this year and, amongst its conclusions, recommended that An Post should review and amend the five-year strategy for the post office network, following appropriate consultation with postmasters and other stakeholders.

Two further Working Groups were also established this year to progress the wider recommendations of the Business Development Group. The Post Office Network Implementation Group has been examining issues such as the number and spatial distribution of Post Offices, branch modernisation, the streamlining of products and services, postmaster payments and contracts, and training and qualifications for post office employees. The Implementation Group is nearing the conclusion of its work and its recommendations will be issued to the Board and management of An Post in the next few weeks. It will be a matter for An Post, as a commercial State company, to consider these recommendations and to bring their proposals to the appropriate Government Ministers for discussion.

Separately, I established the Post Office Hub Working Group to identify potential models under which the post offices could act as community hubs, especially in rural areas. This Group has recently concluded its deliberations and is finalising its report. In addition, my officials have also been examining the potential for the post offices to deliver other services, including motor tax and financial services.

I intend to report to Government on these matters in the coming weeks.

National Archives

473. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the number of persons that have visited the National Archives in each of the past five years. [37420/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The table shows visitor numbers to the National Archives from 2011-2015. The figures are published in the Director's Annual Reports on www.nationalarchives.ie.

It may be noted that the National Archives continues to see growth in online visitors to its archival resources and this far exceeds footfall to the Reading Room. For example, in 2015 over 6,000 people visited the National Archives websites every day, compared with an average of 50 physical visits per day.

Year	Number of Visitors
2011	12,800
2012	12,700
2013	12,300
2014	14,854
2015	12,365

Hare Coursing

474. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the footage of a coursing meeting (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37460/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Officials of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department attended the coursing meeting referred to and are examining the video footage in question. This may result in discussions with local coursing clubs and the Irish Coursing Club. I will be happy to release any reports of these meetings following completion of this process.

In August this year, my Department issued licences under the Wildlife Acts to the Irish Coursing Club, covering its affiliated coursing clubs, to capture and tag hares for use at regulated hare coursing meetings for the 2016/17 coursing season, which extends from the end of September 2016 to the end of February 2017.

There are 26 conditions in total associated with the licences issued to the Irish Coursing Club. These conditions, which have been developed and refined over a number of years, cover a wide range of issues, including prohibition on coursing hares more than once a day or coursing sick or injured hares, the need for adequate escapes for hares during coursing and releasing

hares in daylight hours after meetings.

The muzzling of greyhounds at coursing meetings is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. It is my understanding that the Irish Coursing Club has implemented mandatory muzzling of greyhounds at regulated coursing meetings since the early 1990s. The muzzling of greyhounds appears to have proven effective in reducing the number of hare injuries and deaths at coursing meetings. For example, the percentage of hares released back into the wild after coursing meetings last season was 99.33%.

Hare Coursing Regulation

475. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if she will confirm the presence of NPWS officers at the hare coursing meeting in Ardpatrick, County Limerick on 19 November 2016; and if they took any action after the severe mauling of a hare at that event. [37461/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): This meeting was not attended by officials from the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department. Owing to the restriction in staff recruitment and deployment in recent years, my Department is not in a position to provide 100% attendance at coursing meetings. We endeavour, however, to attend as many meetings as possible having regard to the calls on our staffing complement.

Heritage Sites

476. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the measures she will take to ensure that Westport House and its contents remain open to the public; the discussions that have taken place with the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government to consider acquiring the estate and its contents for the benefit of the State; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37477/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As Minister, I am fully aware of the cultural and economic importance of the institution in County Mayo referred to by the Deputy and of the threat to its future. In the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage for the county, the related building is rated of ‘*national*’ significance.

In recognition of that significance, conservation works have been undertaken in recent years to the building with public funding support in the region of €2m being channelled through the Heritage Council. This was directed at the vital re-roofing works necessary to secure the survival of the fabric of the asset.

I understand that the House in question has now been offered for sale by the owners and that negotiations are underway with interested parties. As Minister, I have no role in this as it is a commercial matter between the owners of the property and parties interested in the purchase.

I am also aware of the general risk to the sustainable future of the remaining stock of large Irish Historic Houses, where owners have consistently struggled throughout the last century to find sustainable alternative means of meeting the on-going costs of their maintenance.

I am prepared to work closely with the owners of such properties and to support them to the extent feasible to allow these properties to remain open to the public. In February 2015, I

approved the establishment of an Irish Historic Houses Committee, with representatives from relevant Government Departments, the Irish Historic Houses Association (a representative body for Historic House owners), Fáilte Ireland, relevant non-governmental organisations and a number of individual house owners. My Department has now concluded and published an Action Plan in this regard, which is being implemented in cooperation with the Irish Historic Houses Association.

As the Deputy can appreciate, the scope for funding for the conservation of the built heritage is currently constrained by the significant reduction in the public finances. Nonetheless, funding for the protection of built heritage continues to be provided by my Department in 2016 via a number of schemes, which are either directly administered or delivered through local authorities or through the Heritage Council. The remainder of my Department's built heritage capital budget for 2016 is focused on the conservation and presentation of the State's heritage portfolio, which is managed by the Office of Public Works.

Question No. 477 answered with Question No. 426.

Arts Funding

478. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if, in view of Ireland's growing jazz music scene, she has considered setting up a funding allocation which would be dedicated to this particular genre of music; if she will consider establishing a dedicated jazz venue in Dublin, along the lines of the Bimhuis in the Netherlands which is subsidised annually by the Dutch Government, in view of the lack of specialised venues here and an upcoming closure of a venue (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37480/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Government appreciates the importance of the cultural and creative industries to Ireland, including the music industry. Under the Arts Act 2003, primary responsibility for the promotion and support of the arts, including music, throughout the country is devolved to the Arts Council. I am pleased that I secured significant additional funding for the Arts Council in Budget 2017 amounting to an increase of €5 million, or 8%. This increase will enable the Council to enhance support to artists and arts organisations around the country, including those involved in jazz music, in line with its strategy statement, *Making Great Art Work*, which prioritises support for the artist and public engagement.

In addition, my Department, through Culture Ireland, provides supports for Irish artists and musicians to travel abroad and develop their careers. I am pleased that I have increased the annual baseline funding for Culture Ireland from €2.5m in 2016 to €3.5m in 2017.

My Department also provides support for music through its funding of the Music Capital Scheme, which is delivered by Music Network .

In terms of infrastructure, earlier this year, I announced a new €9 million investment scheme for arts and cultural to run over the next three years, focused on securing and enhancing our arts and culture infrastructure. The scheme will target investment at a range of different facilities, including arts centres, theatres, galleries and museums, as well as artists' studios and creative spaces.

The closing date for receipt of applications was in September and *applications received are now undergoing* evaluation. Awards will be announced in the near future. I further understand that the National Concert Hall has considered the development of enhanced facilities which

would incorporate jazz music. I anticipate that this will be considered further in the context of the overall master plan for the redevelopment of the Earlsfort Terrace complex, including the National Concert Hall (NCH), which is currently being prepared by the OPW in consultation with the NCH and my Department.

Departmental Reports

479. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the reports commissioned by her Department since 2006 which, while completed or in final draft form, have not been published; the reason they have not been published; the expected publication date; the cost to date of each such report; if tenders were invited; if it is not intended to publish any such report the reason for same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37542/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs was established on 9th June 2016. It has responsibility for all the matters that previously came within the remit of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, which was itself established on 2nd June 2011, and in addition is also responsible for certain functions transferred from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and from the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

Details of four reports, commissioned since 2 June 2011, which have not been published, are outlined in the table below. Contracts for the provision of services are not included. I would also point out that my Department also commissions engineering or environmental experts from time to time to provide technical reports on specific issues, as required. While the providers of these services are consultant engineers, environmental consultants or may describe themselves in other such terms, their work is not classified as consultancy services and is not funded from my Department's Administrative Budget.

Tenders Sought	Year	Company	Title of Report & Expected Publication Date	Cost€
Yes	2011	Avia Solutions	Review of financial submissions relating to the Public Service Obligation Air Service for the Aran Islands Not published due to reasons of commercial sensitivity	6,300
Yes	2012	Bonnar Keenlyside	Review of Dublin Contemporary 2011 To inform future consideration of any similar projects - not intended for publication.	10,959
Yes	2015	Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge	Coimriú ar an tSeirbhís Rapporteur don Díospóireacht Oscailte ar Pholasáí faoin Straitéis Fiche Bliain don Ghaeilge, 2010 – 2030 Expected to be published in near future.	5,994
Yes	2015	ILC Sports & Recreation	Review of Comhairle na Tuaithe and the implementation of the National Countryside Recreation Strategy. Expected to be published in the near future.	15,341

Commemorative Events

480. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 965 of 16 September 2016, if she will confirm that the 2016 event was the ninth annual famine commemoration, in view of the fact that the initial launch in 2008 included both local input and a formal State ceremony; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37609/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather

Humphreys): As indicated in previous replies to this House, the inception of the National Famine Commemoration was announced in 2008 by the then Minister of State for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, John Curran T.D.

In his speech at the official reception held in the Custom House on 25th May 2008, the Minister of State referred to the intention of the Government to join in with local and regional initiatives towards commemorating the Great Famine with an annual memorial day and also acknowledged the work of those involved in community initiatives in Dublin and elsewhere to remember the victims of the Famine.

The inaugural meeting of the National Famine Commemoration Committee was subsequently held in July 2008. Its main tasks were to consider the most appropriate arrangements for future national commemorations of the Great Famine and to organise such commemorations in 2009 and following years. The official reception held in the Custom House on 25th May 2008 complemented a community event held in Dublin that day. However, the National Famine Commemoration held in Skibbereen in 2009 was the first to integrate both local input and formal State ceremonials, and was the first planned and organised by the National Famine Commemoration Committee in close cooperation with the local community.

Non-Disclosure Agreements

481. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if her Department, or the agencies that report to her Department, entered into any non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements with any organisation due to court action or a threatened court action; and if so, the persons or groups with which these agreements exist. [37622/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Since the establishment of my Department, no non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements have been entered into with any organisation due to court action or a threatened court action. However, I am advised that there is a confidential legal agreement in place with Meath Partnership relating to the delivery of the LEADER Programme 2007-2013, which was entered into by the then Department of Environment, Community and Local Government in 2015. Responsibility for the LEADER programme was transferred to my Department earlier this year.

Departmental Legal Cases

482. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the elements of the High Court ruling in a case (details supplied) which she is in agreement with, in view of her claim that she had no alternative but to appeal that judgment in its entirety. [37640/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As the judgments referred to by the Deputy give rise to concerns for my own Department about the administration of the National Monuments Acts and for other Departments and official bodies in relation to public and social infrastructure provision, the orders of the High Court in all three sets of proceedings have been appealed. As the matter is currently before the courts, it would not be appropriate to comment further on the matter at this juncture.

Arts Funding

483. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the extent to which, directly or through the statutory agencies under her control, applications for funding have been made by groups or bodies promoting the arts or involved in musical or dramatic productions in the past twelve months from County Kildare; if she has been or expects to be in a position to respond favourably to such requests; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37727/16]

487. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the extent to which her Department continues to provide funding for the arts at local and community level, directly or indirectly; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37731/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 483 and 487 together.

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. I secured significant additional funding for the Arts Council in Budget 2017 of €5 million, or 8%. Details of the Council's funding decisions can be found on its website at the following link www.artscouncil.ie/Who_we_funded/

Direct funding from my Department for arts primarily relates to capital funding for individual projects, as well as the promotion of Irish arts and culture abroad through Culture Ireland.

Budget 2016 included over €48 million for the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme, including almost €31 million for major capital works. There was also additional funding for an inclusive and wide-ranging national and international commemorative programme, including State events, local community initiatives, and a wide range of arts and cultural projects, as well as €3 million for Culture Ireland's 2016 international programme and the Abbey Theatre. Investing in our cultural infrastructure is hugely important. Arts and cultural centres not only enrich local communities - they also help to drive economic growth.

I believe that it is important to continue the momentum to build on the positive legacy of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme. My Department has, therefore, been developing a cross-Government initiative to mainstream culture and creativity in the life of the nation and to promote individual, community and national wellbeing. This will focus on boosting cultural provision and participation in communities, and harnessing the goodwill and engagement generated by the commemorative programme this year. It will also act as the main vehicle to take forward the priorities identified in *Culture 2025*. I have secured funding of €5m in Budget 2017 to underpin this new initiative and I intend to announce further details in the coming weeks.

Film Industry Promotion

484. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the extent to which she and her Department continue to encourage internationally the use of Ireland as a film location with obvious beneficial economic implications; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37728/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): 2016 was a great year for the Irish film industry and there were many reminders

of how successful we have been in encouraging the use of Ireland as a film location. This success was particularly evident during Ireland's success at the 2016 Oscars with *Room*, *Brooklyn* and other films. This was followed later in the year with *Star Wars* returning to film here and the attendant promotional activity around the shooting.

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. The Irish Film Board is the national development agency for Irish filmmaking and the Irish film, television and animation industry. The Board promotes the Irish screen industries at major international markets and festivals, supports inward investment, promotes 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.

In Budget 2017, I secured an increase of €2 million for the Irish Film Board, representing a 14% increase in its annual budget. This increase in funding will allow the Board to invest more in Irish film talent in the year ahead, and follows on from a very successful year for the Irish film sector, particularly the indigenous film sector.

Heritage Sites

485. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the extent to which various at risk heritage sites and buildings continue to be protected; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37729/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My role, as Minister, 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.

Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, provides for the protection of 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. Inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures places a duty of care on the owners and occupiers of protected structures and also gives planning authorities powers to deal with development proposals affecting them and to seek to safeguard their future.

Under section 54 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, a planning authority may add to or delete from its Record of Protected Structures, a structure, a specified part of a structure or a specified feature of the attendant grounds of a structure. Such a structure, specified part of a structure, or specified feature remains on the Record of Protected Structures until such time as the planning authority deletes it. Provision is made in the Act for the carrying out of works to protected structures either by way of planning permission or on the foot of a declaration received from a planning authority that certain works that would not materially affect the character of a structure are exempted development. There is a duty on owners and occupiers to protect structures from endangerment. Where structures become endangered or unauthorised development has been or is being carried out, the planning authority has the powers to take appropriate action.

There is 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. The 2016 Structures at Risk Scheme, with an allocation of over €900,000, has funded over 50 projects. Since 2011, over 180 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 (BHIS) - for the repair and conservation of protected structures. The 2016 BHIS scheme has operated via the local authorities, on the same model as the very successful Built Heritage Jobs Leverage Scheme, which ran in 2014. In 2016, BHIS has supported over 270 projects across the country, creating over 17,000 days of employment in the conservation and construction industries, while helping to regenerate urban and rural areas. The scheme has also leveraged just under €5.5 million, more than double the scheme's allocation of €2 million. Both schemes will run again in 2017.

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

Heritage Sites

486. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the extent to which her Department is engaged in restoration of major historical or cultural sites throughout the country at present; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37730/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department has a number of measures at its disposal to facilitate the restoration of major historical or cultural sites. As Minister, 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 (OPW). Local authorities are responsible under the National Monuments Acts for maintaining 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 OPW do not have a direct role in their maintenance except where, as already noted, a monument is a national monument of which I, as Minister, am owner or guardian.

My Department is providing €350,000 of funding to the OPW in 2016 to assist in the conservation and presentation of historic buildings and national monuments in State ownership. 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. While my Department is responsible for legislation, policy and management of the archaeological heritage, works on the conservation and restoration of individual monuments in State care is undertaken by OPW.

Question No. 487 answered with Question No. 483.

Arts Funding

488. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the total number of applications received from various amateur societies involved in the promotion of the arts throughout County Kildare in the past twelve months; the extent to which she expects to be in a position to respond positively to such applications; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37732/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department does not have a scheme targeted at this sector and I am not aware of any applications in this regard received by my Department.

Arts in Education Charter

489. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the extent to which she has had discussions with other Departments or interest groups with a view to creating greater awareness of national heritage and culture throughout primary and second level schools; if she continues to have discussions with the Minister for Education and Skills in this regard; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37733/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): While the provision for arts in the education system in our schools at primary and secondary level 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 development of Ireland's first national culture policy – *Eire Ildánach/Culture 2025* - will also be relevant in terms of acknowledging the importance of supporting cultural engagement in education at all levels.

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 some funding to assist with implementation of initiatives of the Charter which has included the development of the Arts in Education Portal which now serves as an effective key communications and information channel for both education and arts sectors.

This year, the Ireland 2016 Project Office of my Department worked with the Department of Education and Skills to develop a rich programme for the primary and post primary sectors, and to ensure that the programme reached every school in the country. Every National School in the country was visited by members of the Defence Forces and were presented with the National Flag, copies of the Proclamation and the National Anthem. These were accompanied by a booklet which explained the history, heritage and significance of the national flag. In consultation with the Thomas Meagher Foundation, the National Flag was also provided to each secondary school around the country.

Schools were also invited to write a new proclamation for 2016, to reflect the values, hopes and aspirations of the generation of 2016, starting with an analysis of the ideals, principles and aspirations of the 1916 Proclamation. This project culminated on 15 March 2016, "Proclama-

tion Day”, which included the raising of the National Flag, followed by a reading of the Proclamation. I am satisfied that these additional initiatives have created a much increased awareness of our national heritage and culture in both primary and second level school.

Rural Development Plan

490. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the extent to which she and her Department have identified the primary issues of concern amongst community groups in rural or urban settings whose quality of life has been diminished for one reason or another such as rural isolation and urban or rural anti-social behaviour; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37734/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Social isolation can be a very real problem in both urban and rural communities. That is why the Government is committed to building a strong economy and delivering a fair society so that communities can thrive throughout both urban and rural Ireland.

The *Programme for a Partnership Government* contains a suite of commitments for delivery across Government relating to the protection of rural communities and services in rural Ireland in particular. The commitments include the provision and enhancement of services in areas such as education, health, rural transport, policing and community support. These measures fall under the remit of a number of Government Departments and agencies.

My Department is currently working on the development of an Action Plan for Rural Development that will act as an overarching structure for the co-ordination and implementation of initiatives across Government which will benefit rural Ireland. The implementation of these initiatives will contribute significantly to the protection and enhancement of local services and social inclusion in rural areas.

My Department conducted an extensive consultation process around the country to seek the views of people in rural Ireland on potential measures for inclusion in the Action Plan for Rural Development. Work on the Action Plan is now being finalised and I will be publishing the Plan in the coming weeks.

Cultural Policy

491. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the extent to which she and her Department expect to be in a position to continue to utilise events of a cultural and heritage nature to promote the national image at home and abroad, with particular reference to the need to generate increased interest in such matters amongst young persons; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37735/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The *Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme* this year facilitated a heightened sense of shared identity and pride of country. Building on this, my Department has focused in recent months on the *Reimagine* phase of the Centenary Programme. This aims to create an enduring impact and long-term legacy of 2016, using the momentum and very positive public responses to the *Remember* and *Reflect* phases of the Programme.

In parallel, I have also published a draft framework culture policy *Culture 2025/Éire Ildánach* in July. This was submitted to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional,

Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs for input.

It is now my intention to implement a cross-Government initiative as a legacy project arising from the *Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme* and as the main implementation vehicle for the priorities identified in *Culture 2025/Éire Ildánach*.

This will include, among other things, measures both to promote our image at home and abroad and to foster interest in cultural matters, including our cultural heritage, in young people.

Ministerial Advisers Appointments

492. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the status of the appointment of additional special advisers by her and Ministers of State in her department. [37883/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I have appointed two special advisers, which is fully in line with normal practice as provided for by section 11(1) of the Public Service Management Act 1997 (No. 27 of 1997). I can confirm that there have been no additional special advisers appointed by either myself or the Ministers of State in my Department.

Legislative Programme

493. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the sections of the Disability Act 2005 that have not yet been implemented in full; the nature of the provisions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36844/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): All parts of the Disability Act 2005 have been commenced except for Part 2, relating to the Assessment of Need, which has been partly commenced. Part 2 of the Disability Act 2005 provides for a statutory system for the assessment of individual health and personal social services needs for persons with a disability. This section of the Act was partly commenced in 2007 and currently all children born on or after 1st June 2002 have been deemed as being eligible to apply for an assessment of need under the Act.

In 2008, the Government decided, in the light of financial circumstances, to defer further implementation of the Disability Act 2005 and the Education for persons with Special Education Needs Act 2004.

Questions in respect of other aspects of the Disability Act 2005 should be referred to my colleague the Minister for Justice and Equality in the first instance.

Home Help Service

494. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Health when he expects to release money to the HSE in order to satisfy a recommendation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37207/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I understand the Deputy is referring to Home Help workers who are employed by voluntary providers of home help services which are

funded under section 39 of the Health Act 2004. It is important to note that these home help workers are not employed by the HSE and therefore the HSE and the Department has no role in determining the salaries or other terms and conditions applying to these staff including any pension arrangements.

A joint working group has been established, as agreed as part of the Lansdowne Road talks, to consider a number of issues in relation to section 39 organisations. The work of this group is still ongoing and is expected to conclude in the near future.

Services for People with Disabilities

495. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of children awaiting a first assessment from the HSE under the Disability Act 2005 for each local health office area, in tabular form. [36845/16]

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.

Blood Donations

496. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the categories of the population that are currently prevented from giving blood; and the percentage of the population that falls within these categories. [36846/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The IBTS has extensive deferral criteria for donors, and only a minority of these are permanent. The rate in donor deferral in the year to date is 21.96% and the most common categories for deferral are as follows:

Category of Deferral	% of Deferrals
Low Haemoglobin	39.93%
Recent medical investigation	5.23%
Donor left clinic	3.1%
Actively deferred	2.98%
Letter required from GP/Consultant	2.76%
Recently had an infectious disease	2.38%
Had/has a cold sore	2.37%
Visited malarial area	2.16%

As many individuals de-select themselves from donating blood due to the fact that they know they fall into a deferral category, the statistics available to the IBTS are based on those who attend clinics, rather than the population as a whole. In 2016 to date, 102,009 people have given a total of 113,652 blood donations.

Speech and Language Therapy

497. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the number of newly recruited speech and language therapists in 2016; the average contract provided to these new recruits; and the number of these which had the contract extended. [36847/16]

498. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the total number of speech and language therapists currently employed. [36848/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 497 and 498 together.

I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Speech and Language Therapy

499. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the policy of the HSE on the replacement of speech and language staff that are on maternity leave; the percentage of staff on maternity leave which have had their position covered by an additional member of staff in each of the past three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36849/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

National Cancer Strategy Publication

500. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health when the national cancer strategy 2016-2025 will be published; and the engagement he has had with the steering group established in 2015. [36852/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The draft National Cancer Strategy is currently being finalised and I expect it to be submitted to me before the end of the year, after which it will be brought to Government in advance of publication.

Officials in my Department have worked with the Steering Group over the past year to develop a Strategy aimed at providing the best possible outcomes for Irish patients. The Strategy will seek to address all aspects of cancer, including prevention, early diagnosis, treatment and the quality of life of those living with and beyond cancer.

Hospital Appointments Status

501. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36857/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

Dental Services Provision

502. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a dental appointment in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36859/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Appointments Status

503. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health when an operation will be provided in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Waterford; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36862/16]

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.

Medical Card Eligibility

504. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health if it is the policy of his Department that all workers on the job initiative scheme would be entitled automatically to a medical card in view of the low wage they receive and the nature of the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36888/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In accordance with the provisions of the Health Act 1970 (as amended), eligibility for a medical card is determined by the Health Service Executive (HSE). The Act obliges the HSE to assess whether a person is unable, without due hardship, to arrange general practitioner services for himself or herself and his or her family, having regard to his or her overall financial position and reasonable expenditure and every application must be assessed on that basis.

If a person's only income is a means tested Social Welfare Allowance, he/she will qualify for a Medical Card.

The Job Initiative scheme is a Department of Social Protection (DSP) programme which provides full-time employment for people who are 35 years of age or over, who are unemployed and are in receipt of Jobseeker's Benefit, Jobseeker's Allowance or a One-Parent Family Payment for 5 years or more.

The main purpose of the programme is to assist long-term unemployed people to prepare for work opportunities. The programme achieves this by providing participants with work experience, training and development opportunities. The programme is sponsored by groups wishing to benefit the local community, namely voluntary organisations, public bodies and those involved in not-for-profit activities.

The DSP provides financial support to assist with the Job Initiative scheme, for example participant wages. Also, while on the programme, participants can retain their medical cards.

On foot of changes the then Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment introduced in 2004, there is currently no recruitment onto this scheme.

Medicinal Products Prices

505. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 222 of 17 November 2016, when the HSE intends to enter into negotiations with the manufacturer in an effort to secure significant price reduction for the drug Kalydeco; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36909/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As outlined in previous reply, the HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the community drugs schemes, in accordance with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013.

In line with the 2013 Act, if a Company would like a medicine to be reimbursed by the HSE pursuant to the Community Drug Schemes or as a hospital medicine, the Company must first submit an application to the HSE to have the new medicine added to the Reimbursement List or to be priced as a hospital medicine. The Company must submit a separate application to extend a treatment to a new cohort of patients. Each application is considered separately on its merits and in line with the 2013 Act.

In reaching its decision, the HSE examines all the evidence which may be relevant in its view for the decision (including the information /dossier submitted by the Company) and will take into account such expert opinions and recommendations which may have been sought by the HSE at its sole discretion (for example, from the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics).

In considering an application, the HSE will also have regard to Part 1 and Part 3 of Schedule 3 of the 2013 Act. Part 3 requires the HSE to have regard to the following criteria:

1. the health needs of the public;
2. the cost-effectiveness of meeting health needs by supplying the item concerned rather than providing other health services;
3. the availability and suitability of items for supply or reimbursement;
4. the proposed costs, benefits and risks of the item or listed item relative to therapeutically similar items or listed items provided in other health service settings and the level of certainty in relation to the evidence of those costs, benefits and risks;
5. the potential or actual budget impact of the item or listed item;
6. the clinical need for the item or listed item;
7. the appropriate level of clinical supervision required in relation to the item to ensure patient safety;
8. the efficacy (performance in trial), effectiveness (performance in real situations) and added therapeutic benefit against existing standards of treatment (how much better it treats a condition than existing therapies); and

9. the resources available to the HSE.

I am informed that the HSE received a request and economic dossier from the manufacturer of Ivacaftor, brand name Kalydeco, for the treatment of cystic fibrosis patients aged 2 years and older weighing less than 25kg. In March of this year the HSE asked the NCPE to carry out a health technology assessment of the applicant's economic dossier on the cost effectiveness of this treatment.

The NCPE completed its assessment and made a recommendation in October 2016. The NCPE determined that the manufacturer failed to demonstrate cost-effectiveness of the drug for its intended cohort of patients and did not recommend that it should be reimbursed for this indication at the submitted price.

A summary of the health technology assessment has been published on the NCPE website and is available at: www.ncpe.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Ivacaftor-2-5-years-web-summary.pdf.

As the HSE is responsible for the negotiations with manufacturers I have asked them to reply to the Deputy directly in relation to the status of negotiations with the manufacturer.

Hospital Appointments Status

506. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36912/16]

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.

Hospital Waiting Lists

507. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health to set out the status of an MRI appointment in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36914/16]

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.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Eligibility

508. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health if he will review and consider adding new low-protein products to the long-term illness card for persons that have been diagnosed as having PKU, a rare metabolic disorder which requires a very low-protein diet; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36915/16]

515. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health if he will add new low-protein products to the long-term illness card list due to the discontinuation of products which had been on the list previously (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36946/16]

516. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health to indicate the last time low-protein products have been added to the long-term illness card list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36947/16]

544. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health if he will instruct the HSE to immediately engage with the PKU Association of Ireland in view of the fact that PKU is a rare metabolic disorder which requires a low-protein diet and prescribed low-protein foods are a key part of the diet due to its limited nature (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37169/16]

579. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that no products have been added to the long-term illness card for persons with PKU in approximately six years; if he will consider the introduction of new low-protein food products for patients of PKU; if so, when these products will be available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37467/16]

580. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if he will address matters raised in correspondence (details supplied) regarding the genetic disease HCU. [37469/16]

592. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the concerns by many persons with PKU at the lack of suitable food products available on the market here while many are available in other EU countries; if the clinical nutritional expert group within the HSE has called for new applications for the addition of new food products to the reimbursement list; and if this will be completed by the end of 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37521/16]

612. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that prescribed low-protein foods are required to prevent neurological damage and to supplement the diet of adults and children with phenylketonuria (PKU) and homocystenuria (HCU); if his attention has further been drawn to the fact that no new low-protein products have been added to the long-term illness card list in more than six years; if he will ensure a full and appropriate updated list of foods prescribed for PKU and HCU is added to the reimbursement list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37643/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 508, 515, 516, 544, 579, 580, 592 and 612 together.

The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of products under the community drug schemes, including the LTI Scheme, in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. Therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Waiting Lists

509. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health to set out the position regarding the case of a person (details supplied) who is waiting for a hip replacement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36916/16]

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.

Hospital Waiting Lists

510. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health to set out the status of an appointment at Cork University Hospital in respect of a person (details supplied). [36918/16]

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.

Disability Services Provision

511. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health to set down in tabular form the number of early intervention teams for children in each local health area; the total number on each team; the number of children in each area waiting for an appointment with a team; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36925/16]

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 servic-

es 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.

Disability Support Services Provision

512. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health to outline his proposals to re-introduce the mobility allowance and motorised transport grant schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36930/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): Conscious of the reports of the Ombudsman in 2011 and 2012 regarding the legal status of both the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grant Scheme in the context of the Equal Status Acts, the Government decided to close both schemes in February 2013. The Government is aware of the continuing needs of people with a disability who rely on individual payments which support choice and independence. In that regard, monthly payments of €208.50 have continued to be made by the Health Service Executive to 4,700 people who were in receipt of the Mobility Allowance at the time the scheme closed.

The Government decided that the detailed preparatory work required for a new Transport Support Scheme and associated statutory provisions should be progressed by the Minister for Health. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the Programme for Partnership Government acknowledges the ongoing drafting of primary legislation for a new Transport Support Scheme. I can confirm that work on the policy proposals in this regard is at an advanced stage and I anticipate that this will be brought to Government shortly.

The proposals seek to ensure that:

- There is a firm statutory basis to the Scheme's operation;
- There is transparency and equity in the eligibility criteria attaching to the Scheme;
- Resources are targeted at those with greatest needs; and
- The Scheme is capable of being costed and is affordable on its introduction and on an ongoing basis.

Primary Care Services Provision

513. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Health if a clinic (details supplied) will remain in Louth Primary Care Centre, Dublin Road, Dundalk; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36939/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this 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.

General Practitioner Services Provision

514. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health if he will address the issue of securing general practitioners for provincial town practices in which a client bank of 800 medical cards is not deemed to be economically feasible or attractive enough, resulting in no applications being received for a position which has become vacant due to a general practitioner retirement in Thurles, County Tipperary (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36941/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Government is committed to ensuring that patients throughout the country continue to have access to GP services, especially in remote rural areas and also in certain disadvantaged urban areas, and that general practice is sustainable in such areas into the future. The Programme for Partnership Government emphasises the need to focus on enhancing primary healthcare services, including building up GP capacity and increasing the number of therapists and other health professionals in primary care. The annual GP training intake has increased from 120 places prior to 2010 to 172 places as of July this year and I am anxious to achieve further increases in future years.

I am cognisant of the need for a new GP services contract which will help modernise our health service and develop a strengthened primary care sector, and health service management have already progressed a number of significant measures through engagement with GP representatives. The GP contracts review process will, inter alia, seek to introduce further measures aimed at making general practice a fulfilling and rewarding career option into the future. Progress to date includes changes to the entry provisions to the GMS scheme to accommodate flexible/shared GMS/GP contracts, and to the retirement provisions for GPs under the GMS scheme, allowing GPs to hold GMS contracts until their 72nd birthday, as well as the introduction of an enhanced supports package for rural GP practices.

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.

Questions Nos. 515 and 516 answered with Question No. 508.

Disability Services Provision

517. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if a private contractor has been appointed to deal with a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36949/16]

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.

Disability Services Provision

518. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive speech and language therapy. [36953/16]

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.

Departmental Staff

519. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health to set down in tabular form the number of staff from his Department currently seconded to other Departments or agencies in the Civil Service per annum from 2010 to date in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36967/16]

520. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health to set down in tabular form the number of staff from his Department who have appealed against secondment per annum from 2010 to date in 2016; the appeals mechanism involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36983/16]

521. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health to set down in tabular form the number of staff from his Department currently seconded to a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016; the details of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36999/16]

522. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health to set down in tabular form the number of staff from his Department currently seconded from a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016; the details of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37015/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 519 to 522, inclusive, together.

The number of staff from my Department who are currently seconded to other Departments or agencies in the civil service and where the secondment was initiated in the years 2010 to date in 2016 is set out in the following table:

Year	Number of Staff Seconded
2010	None
2011	None
2012	None
2013	2
2014	None
2015	2
2016	2

For the period from 2010 to date in 2016, no staff member has appealed against secondment, no staff member has been seconded to a firm in the private sector and no-one has been seconded to the Department from a firm in the private sector.

Blood Donations

523. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Health if, in view of the fact there is no deferral period for sexually active gay and bisexual persons donating blood in a number of European Union states (details supplied) and there is a review of the deferral period in the United Kingdom, he will review the requirement for a 12 month deferral period here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37022/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): At present the Irish Blood Transfusion Service (IBTS) imposes a lifelong ban on men who have sex with men (MSM) from donating blood.

In June of this year, I accepted a recommendation from the IBTS that:

(a) the deferral policy for men who have sex with men (MSM) from donating blood should be reduced to a period of one year following their last sexual encounter with a man, and

(b) all donors who have had a sexually transmitted infection (STI) should be deferred from donating blood for a period of at least five years from that infection. This change will come into effect before the end of January 2017.

A similar one year deferral policy has been adopted by the UK, US, Canada, Finland, New Zealand, the Netherlands, France and Australia.

The IBTS will continue to keep all deferral policies under active review in the light of scientific evidence, emerging infections and international experience.

Respite Care Services

524. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health to set out the total annual HSE budget for respite care for County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37023/16]

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.

Hospital Waiting Lists

525. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be issued with a date for an angiogram appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37026/16]

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.

Hospital Services

526. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health to set down in tabular form the number of hospitals which have acute medical assessment units; the number of days per week and hours per day they are open; and the estimated cost of opening all on a 24-7 basis. [37030/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to this particular query and as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Hospital Appointments Delays

527. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if he will investigate the waiting time of over three years for a person (details supplied) awaiting an orthodontic appointment in Merlin Park University Hospital. [37040/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Waiting Lists

528. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite a procedure for a person (details supplied). [37042/16]

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.

Health Services Provision

529. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health to set out his

plans to provide a motion analysis laboratory service for children in the south. [37062/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to this particular query, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Medicinal Products

530. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health to outline the position regarding the making available of Kalydeco to cystic fibrosis sufferers aged two years and over; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37102/16]

531. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health to set out the numbers of persons currently receiving Kalydeco as part of treatment for cystic fibrosis; and the cost per patient. [37103/16]

532. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if Government negotiations have commenced with the supplier of Kalydeco to ensure the supply of this drug to sufferers aged two years and over following the NCPE recommendation in October 2016, under which Kalydeco was deemed not to be cost effective in sufferers aged two and over; the stage these negotiations are currently at; and when he expects an update to become available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37104/16]

533. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the concerns expressed by parent groups of children with cystic fibrosis aged two years and over who are frustrated at the fact that Kalydeco has been approved for reimbursement for children aged six years and over; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37105/16]

534. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the number of children aged two years and over who may currently stand to benefit from the provision of Kalydeco; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37106/16]

535. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the pricing of Kalydeco for children aged two years and over being an issue in other countries in the EU; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37107/16]

566. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health if negotiations are taking place with the company that produces Kalydeco for cystic fibrosis patients in order for the Government to be able to reimburse the drug costs for children aged from two to five years in view of the fact that it is already being reimbursed for persons aged six years and over; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37385/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 530 to 535, inclusive, and 566 together.

The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the community drugs schemes, in accordance with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013.

In line with the 2013 Act, if a Company would like a medicine to be reimbursed by the HSE pursuant to the Community Drug Schemes or as a hospital medicine, the Company must first submit an application to the HSE to have the new medicine added to the Reimbursement List or to be priced as a hospital medicine. The Company must submit a separate application to extend a treatment to a new cohort of patients. Each application is considered separately on its merits

and in line with the 2013 Act.

In reaching its decision, the HSE examines all the evidence which may be relevant in its view for the decision (including the information /dossier submitted by the Company) and will take into account such expert opinions and recommendations which may have been sought by the HSE at its sole discretion (for example, from the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics).

In considering an application, the HSE will also have regard to Part 1 and Part 3 of Schedule 3 of the 2013 Act. Part 3 requires the HSE to have regard to the following criteria:

1. the health needs of the public;
2. the cost-effectiveness of meeting health needs by supplying the item concerned rather than providing other health services;
3. the availability and suitability of items for supply or reimbursement;
4. the proposed costs, benefits and risks of the item or listed item relative to therapeutically similar items or listed items provided in other health service settings and the level of certainty in relation to the evidence of those costs, benefits and risks;
5. the potential or actual budget impact of the item or listed item;
6. the clinical need for the item or listed item;
7. the appropriate level of clinical supervision required in relation to the item to ensure patient safety;
8. the efficacy (performance in trial), effectiveness (performance in real situations) and added therapeutic benefit against existing standards of treatment (how much better it treats a condition than existing therapies); and
9. the resources available to the HSE.

I am informed that the HSE received a request and economic dossier from the manufacturer of Ivacaftor, brand name Kalydeco, for the treatment of cystic fibrosis patients aged 2 years and older weighing less than 25 kg. In March of this year the HSE asked the NCPE to carry out a health technology assessment of the applicant's economic dossier on the cost effectiveness of this treatment.

The NCPE completed its assessment and made a recommendation in October 2016. The NCPE determined that the manufacturer failed to demonstrate cost-effectiveness of the drug for its intended cohort of patients and did not recommend that it should be reimbursed for this indication at the submitted price. In the economic dossier submitted to the NCPE the manufacturer estimates that there are 18 patients eligible for early ivacaftor treatment.

A summary of the health technology assessment has been published on the NCPE website and is available at: www.ncpe.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Ivacaftor-2-5-years-web-summary.pdf.

As the HSE is responsible for the negotiations with manufacturers I have asked them to reply to the Deputy directly in relation to the status of negotiations with the manufacturer.

I have also asked that the HSE respond on the issue of numbers of patients currently receiving Kalydeco and the cost per patient.

In relation to the pricing of Kalydeco in other EU countries, I am informed that the Scot-

tish Medicines Consortium has not recommended the drug for this cohort of patients as the manufacturer's justification of the treatment cost in relation to associated health benefits was not sufficient.

I understand how patients and their families must feel in these circumstances as they await the decisions by the HSE in relation to reimbursement. However as with all new drugs developed, the HSE must follow a process, as set out in the 2013 Act.

Hospital Beds Data

536. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 614 of 15 November 2016 to provide details relating to which hospitals the beds which are to be replaced are currently located; the number of beds to be replaced in each of the hospitals affected; the reason his Department is not seeking to provide the beds in addition to current bed capacity; if he will reconsider his approach; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37120/16]

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.

Antimicrobial Resistance

537. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients of Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda, who were diagnosed with multidrug-resistant bugs in each year over the past five years. [37123/16]

538. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients of Louth County Hospital, Dundalk, who were diagnosed with multidrug-resistant bugs in each year over the past five years. [37124/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 537 and 538 together.

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

The prevention and control of healthcare associated infections (HCAIs) and Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) has been a significant patient safety and public health priority for the Department of Health for numerous years. Ireland is fully committed to and engaged in addressing resolution of the problem of HCAI and AMR and will continue to collaborate at international, EU and national levels to this end.

Antimicrobial Resistance

539. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients in nursing homes in County Louth who were diagnosed with multidrug-resistant bugs in each year over the past five years. [37125/16]

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.

Maternity Services

540. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 97 of 18 October 2016, if the figures provided in tabular form in reply to the question include the 78 midwives recruited since moneys were allocated to recruit 100 additional midwives or if the figures pertain to the period before that recruitment took place. [37158/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to this particular query, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Medicinal Products Availability

541. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health if he will commence a health technology assessment to assess the benefits and cost-effectiveness through the HSE of Free-Style Libre, a sensor for measuring blood sugars, with a view to making it available on the General Medical Services, GMS, and long-term illness card, in view of the fact that this technology is available on the Irish market through a website (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37159/16]

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 provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

Services for People with Disabilities

542. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a personal budget for persons with disabilities to allow them to fund their own services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37160/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): One of the Government's key objectives is to provide people with disabilities with services and supports which will empower them to live independent lives, provide them with 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. To achieve this aim, the Programme for Government provided a commitment to the establishment of a Task Force on Personalised Budgets.

The Task Force has two components - a Strategy Group and an Advisory and Consultative Group - and its remit is to make recommendations on a personalised budgets model which will give people with disabilities more control in accessing health funded personal social services, giving them greater independence and choice in accessing services which best meet their individual needs.

The Task Force comprising both the Strategy Group and Advisory and Consultative Groups met in plenary session on 13th October and is now undertaking an ambitious work programme. The Task Force aims to recommend an approach and a suggested implementation strategy for the Government's consideration by the end of 2017.

Statutory Instruments

543. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health if there has been a change to statutory instrument No. 654 of 2004, Maternity Protection (Protection of Mothers Who Are Breastfeeding) Regulations 2004, specifically the timeframe from six months to two years; and if school principals and boards are obliged to facilitate mothers who wish to pump breast milk during their working day. [37164/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy): There has been no change to statutory instrument number 654 of 2004 from the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform in relation to the provision of Lactation or Breastfeeding breaks.

In relation to schools, the support of school principals in facilitating staff returning to work who need to express milk would be very welcome. As well as ensuring that the staff member maintains her milk supply enabling her to continue to breastfeed, expressing helps to reduce discomfort and prevent mastitis, which could result in absenteeism.

In Ireland, current entitlement to Lactation or Breastfeeding breaks for working mothers is up to 26 weeks after the date of confinement (estimated delivery date). Teachers returning to work after this time need to negotiate arrangements with their principals.

Question No. 544 answered with Question No. 508.

Hospital Appointments Administration

545. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite an ear, nose and throat, ENT, assessment for a person (details supplied); the reason the person has been referred to Mallow General Hospital instead of the nearest hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37170/16]

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.

Vacancies on State Boards

546. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of vacancies on each board and State agency under the remit of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37174/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The nomination and appointment process for boards of bodies under the aegis of my Department is set out in legislation. In line with Government Decision S180/20/10/1617 of 2014 and Guidelines set out by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform relating to the advertising for expressions of interest in vacancies on State Boards, my Department in conjunction with the Public Appointments Service

currently advertises for board vacancies as they arise, where I, as Minister for Health, have nominating rights under relevant legislation. I also appoint members on the nomination of various bodies, again in accordance with the relevant legislation.

The table below sets out the information requested by the Deputy.

Board	Current Number of Vacancies
Consultative Council on Hepatitis C	8
Dublin Dental Hospital Board	2
National Paediatric Hospital Development Board	1
Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland	1
Voluntary Health Insurance	1
Health and Social Care Professionals Council	5
Dietitians Registration Board	3
Medical Scientists Registration Board	1
Occupational Therapists Registration Board	4
Optical Registration Board	1
Physiotherapists Registration Board	3
Social Workers Registration Board	2
Speech and Language Therapists Registration Board	4

In addition, I will make appointments to fill the 8 vacancies on the board of the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council this week.

Hospital Equipment

547. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide funding to make dual energy X-ray absorptiometry, DEXA, scan services available to public patients at Beaumont Hospital, Dublin 9; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37176/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Vaccination Programme

548. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding the bacillus Calmette-Guérin, BCG, vaccine; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37186/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): There is only one licensed supplier of BCG vaccine to Ireland and to other countries within the EU. The manufacturer has had difficulties in the production of the BCG vaccine. 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 that can provide the vaccine for use in Ireland which satisfies all the HPRA requirements on safety and efficacy. There has been a worldwide shortage for over two years and 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, the HSE will be guided by the recommendations of the National Immunisation Advisory Committee on its administration.

Cross-Border Health Initiatives

549. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) is eligible for medical treatment under the cross-Border health care directive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37197/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive operates the EU Directive on Patients' Rights in Cross Border Healthcare in Ireland. In line with practice in other EU Member States, the HSE, through the National Contact Point (NCP) office, provides information for patients on the Cross-Border Directive on its website - www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/schemes/cbd/ - and also by phone. The principal function of the NCP (which is the mechanism specified under the Directive for the dissemination of information on the Directive by Member States) is to facilitate exchange of information for patients concerning their rights and entitlements relating to receiving healthcare in another Member State, in particular the terms and conditions for reimbursement of cost and the procedures for accessing and determining those entitlements.

The NCP also has a responsibility to ensure that all enquirers are informed of the right to healthcare, if any, that they may have through the European legislation on the coordination of social security schemes (EU Regulation 883/04) and which may be more beneficial to them. The NCP is able to inform patients what the cost of their treatments would be in Ireland to allow them make a comparison with the costs they are being quoted for comparable treatment in another Member State.

Similar to other healthcare schemes operated by EU Member States under Community legislation, access to healthcare abroad under the Cross-Border Healthcare Directive is based on patients following public patient pathways, hence the HSE has in particular concentrated on informing the doctors who make the referrals.

In order to determine if a patient is eligible under CBD an application must be submitted to the NCP. The contact details are: Cross Border Directive Office at 056 778 4547 or 056 778 4546 or 056 778 4556.

Hospital Consultant Recruitment

550. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the number of consultant paediatricians currently employed in approved posts. [37201/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Departmental Funding

551. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health the funding provided to County Louth over the previous three years, 2014 to 2016, by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37224/16]

552. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health the applications submitted for funding projects from Louth County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016 in tabular form; and if the applications were successful. [37240/16]

553. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health the funding for projects in 2017 in County Louth to be funded by his Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37256/16]

554. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health the funding provided to County Meath over the previous three years, 2014 to 2016, by project name, location and funding amount in tabular form. [37272/16]

555. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health the applications submitted for funding and projects from Meath County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016, in tabular form; if the applications were successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37288/16]

556. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health the funding for projects in 2017 in County Meath to be funded by his Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37304/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 551 to 556, inclusive, together.

My Department administers a National Lottery Discretionary Fund from which once off grants are made to community and voluntary organisations providing a range of health related services. Lottery funding provided in each of the years 2014 to 2016 amounted to €3.286 million.

A list of all the organisations that received lottery funding in 2014, 2015 and 2016 is available on my Department's website at <http://health.gov.ie/about-us/national-lottery-grant-scheme/list-of-approved-national-lottery-grants/>.

My Department has not received any applications for lottery funding in 2017.

Disease Management

557. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons here recorded as having polio; the facilities that exist to support those who have polio; the way his Department is working with others to assist in the global commitment to eradicate polio; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37311/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Department does not have the figures readily available. I have referred the Deputy's question to the Health Service Executive for a direct reply.

Community Care

558. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the closure of the community health clinic in Youghal, County Cork; the reason no prior notice was given to those who use the service; and his plans to ensure that local persons are not affected. [37313/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this 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.

Hospital Facilities

559. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Health if he will make provisions for the development of a dedicated injury unit in County Sligo for a place to treat specific injuries such as broken bones, dislocations, sprains, strains, wounds, scalds and minor burns, in view of the successful roll-out of similar units in other parts of the country, with the overall aim of reducing the pressures on Sligo University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37314/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

National Children's Hospital Expenditure

560. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the detail of the apparent changes in cost implications regarding the development of the new children's hospital at St. James's Hospital; if the development will stay within its budgeted figure; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the development of the hospital at Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown, would deliver a significant cost saving to the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37316/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Government decision in 2012 to co-locate the hospital with St James's, Ireland's leading and largest acute, adult research intensive hospital, was made in the best interests of children, with clinical considerations paramount in the decision. Independent reviews since 2006 have reaffirmed the importance of co-location with a major adult teaching hospital.

Planning permission was granted for this new children's hospital, as well as for two Paediatric OPD and Urgent Care Satellite Centres at Tallaght and Connolly Hospital, in April of this year, clearing the way for enabling works which began this summer on the campus of St. James's Hospital. It is expected that the satellite centres at Connolly Hospital and Tallaght Hospital can open in 2018, significantly enhancing access to urgent care and outpatient services for children from the Greater Dublin Area. Building work on the main site will be completed in 2020.

The previous Government committed to making €200m available from the sale of the National Lottery for the new children's hospital, adding to the existing €450m Exchequer funding and underlining the Government's commitment to the project. The 2014 estimate, as set out in the approved Project Brief, affirmed delivery of the core hospital, including both satellite centres, within this envelope. As with any capital project, it is essential that cost estimates be reviewed and refined as appropriate, including making prudent provision for construction infla-

tion.

The National Paediatric Hospital Development Board, which is the statutory body charged with delivery of the capital project, is currently reviewing tenders, received at the end of October, for the main and specialist contractors for the hospital on the campus of St James's and the two satellite centres. Due to the high profile nature of this project it is a highly competitive tender process and so it is anticipated that this will be reflected in the submissions tendered. Final capital costs will be available following tender evaluations. As the tendering process is still ongoing and for reasons of commercial sensitivity, details of cost estimates cannot be provided at this stage. It is my intention to bring a Memorandum to Government early in 2017 in relation to the new children's hospital and associated satellite centres.

The cost of transitioning the new children's hospital to a site at Connolly Hospital has not been assessed in any detail given the fact that no such project exists. Additional to the capital cost of developing the children's hospital itself on the campus, a significant upgrade of Connolly Hospital would be required to achieve the same potential for quality of clinical outcomes as co-location/tri-location with St James's, requiring very substantial investment of human and capital resources to develop over time into an adult tertiary hospital with critical mass supported by leading edge research facilities.

Alcohol Treatment Programmes

561. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 220 of 20 October 2016, if he will ensure a reply is provided to the question raised without further delay. [37319/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy): The provision of services to prevent and treat addiction to alcohol is the responsibility of the Health Service Executive. The Health Service Executive has advised that a response to parliamentary question number 220 of 20 October 2016 has been prepared and will issue to you in the coming days.

Suicide Prevention

562. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the status of the development of a national research and evaluation plan to support the monitoring and evaluation of Connecting for Life. [37358/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): Connecting for Life, Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide 2015-2020, is currently being implemented, and as such is subject to continuous monitoring and evaluation of existing actions. The National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) has responsibility for monitoring and reporting systems to support the delivery of the Strategy.

To date, activity has been carried out on all of these actions as part of the implementation of Connecting for Life. NOSP is currently in the process of establishing a research team within the office, consisting of a Research Manager, Data Officer and Research Assistant. This is proposed to be fully functional in early 2017. A core part of this team's work will be the development of a national research and evaluation plan to support the monitoring and evaluation of Connecting for Life.

Actions in Connecting for Life that relate to this include the following:

- Conduct proportionate evaluations of all major activities conducted under the aegis of Connecting for Life; disseminate findings and share lessons learned with programme practitioners and partners.

- Develop capacity for observation and information gathering on those at risk or vulnerable to suicide and self-harm.

- Collate and report on incidences of suicide through current and expanded health surveillance systems over the life of Connecting for Life.

- Collect, analyse and disseminate high quality data on suicide and self-harm and ensure adequate access to, and understanding of, the data among those working in suicide prevention across all sectors.

- Support research on risk and protective factors for suicidal behaviour in groups with an increased risk (or potential increased risk) of suicide behaviour.

- Support the co-ordination and streamlining of research completed by third-level institutions.

- Develop working partnerships with centres of expertise to support evaluation and research, knowledge transfer and implementation support between researchers, policy makers and service providers.

- Evaluate innovative approaches to suicide prevention including online service provision and targeted approaches for appropriate priority groups.

In addition, the Justice and Health sectors will engage with the Coroners, Garda Síochána, NOSP, CSO and research bodies in relation to deaths in custody, and recording of deaths by suicide and open verdicts, to further refine the basis of suicide statistics.

Suicide Prevention

563. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the key provisions of the national education and training plan to support the delivery of Connecting for Life. [37359/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): Connecting for Life, Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide 2015-2020, is currently being implemented. The Strategy provides an implementation and evaluation structure to achieve each of the goals it proposes, with defined actions and a lead agency and key partners in place for each individual objective. The National Office for Suicide Prevention has responsibility for coordination of the national education and training plan.

The key provisions of this plan are as follows:

- Develop a Training Plan for community based training.

- Deliver awareness training programmes prioritising professionals and volunteers across community-based organisations.

- Provide community-based organisations with guidelines, protocols and training on suicide prevention.

- Provide and sustain training to health and social care professionals.
- Provide support and resources for the implementation of the Department's curriculum and programmes in the promotion of wellbeing in the school community.
- Deliver training in suicide prevention to staff involved in the delivery of relevant services.
- Support professional regulatory bodies to develop and deliver accredited competency based education on suicide prevention to health professionals.
- Recommend the incorporation of suicide prevention training as part of undergraduate curriculum of the relevant professions.

The Suicide Prevention Education and Training plan will be finalised in December 2016.

Diabetes Strategy

564. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health if a community-based senior dietician to support the diabetes community has been appointed (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37361/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Respite Care Services Availability

565. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that respite beds for persons with intellectual disabilities in the system and notably in Enniscorthy are currently being used as full-time institutional beds and thus reducing the capacity for respite to families in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37367/16]

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 Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

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, for any further information that they may be able to provide.

Question No. 566 answered with Question No. 530.

Psychological Services

567. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Health when an adolescent psychologist will be appointed in Kildare North. [37388/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): As this is a service issue, this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Occupational Therapy

568. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the parents of children in Waterford city and county with complex needs are being informed that their children will not be seen by an occupational therapist, OT, on a regular basis as the waiting lists are too long; the average waiting times in Waterford; the number of OT positions in place; the numbers needed; his plans for recruitment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37424/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this 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.

Occupational Therapy

569. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that cover for sick leave and maternity leave in respect of occupational therapists in Waterford city and county is not being provided; his plans to address the problem; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37425/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this 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.

Services for People with Disabilities

570. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health if care plans are put in place for children with complex needs in Waterford to deal with the child's specific needs and access to therapies and other supports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37426/16]

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.

Psychological Services

571. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of child psychologist posts in situ in County Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37427/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): As this is a service issue, this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Psychological Services

572. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health if his Department and the HSE are experiencing difficulties in recruiting child psychologist posts in County Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37428/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): As this is a service issue, this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Mental Health Services Provision

573. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the redress available to a person (details supplied); the best practise relating to the use of electro-convulsive therapy, ECT, then and now; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37430/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): A programme of electro-convulsive therapy (ECT) can only be administered to a patient in accordance with the provisions of section 59 of the Mental Health Act 2001 and rules governing its use drawn up by the Mental Health Commission.

Version 3 of the 'Rules Governing the Use of Electro-Convulsive Therapy' were published on 10 February 2016 and are available on the Commission's website. Among other things, these rules provide that there must be a named consultant psychiatrist with overall responsibility for the management of ECT. They also state that an approved centre where ECT is administered to patients must have written operational policies and procedures concerning ECT and must ensure that such procedures comply with these Rules. Such written operational policies and procedures concerning ECT must be reviewed annually, in line with best international practice.

In relation to complaints about treatment against a hospital or individual Consultant, such complaints should first be addressed to the relevant hospital concerned. Most hospitals have a Complaints Officer who will take complaints in person, over the phone or in writing. Contact details are normally available on the hospital's website.

If a complaint relates to a doctor's fitness to practise medicine, then such complaints should be directed to the Medical Council which can take action where it is believed that a doctor has serious failings in his/her practice. The Medical Council acts in the public interest, and can impose restrictions on a doctor's registration, which would restrict or remove their right to practise medicine in Ireland. Complaints to the Medical Council can be made by submitting the relevant complaint form in writing and this can be emailed or sent to the Council by post.

Hospital Waiting Lists

574. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether it is satisfactory that a child in County Tipperary should be told that the waiting list time for an

ear, nose and throat appointment would be over four years; the steps he will take to reduce this waiting time; the services that will be offered to such patients that have to wait four years for treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37444/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to this particular query, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Services for People with Disabilities

575. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if he will request that the Health Service Executive provide clarity on the programme of support for a person (details supplied); if the assessment will be expedited as a matter of urgency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37445/16]

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

576. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to recent cuts to a disability service (details supplied) provided by the National Council for the Blind through funding from the local health board of the Health Service Executive; the reason service users have been told there has been no cut to the service; if his attention has been drawn to the effects the cut is having on staff morale and to service users as a result of the cut; if he will reverse the cuts to this service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37447/16]

577. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the annual funding figures through the Health Service Executive to the National Council for the Blind for each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37448/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 576 and 577 together.

This 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 questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Public Health Policy

578. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health the planned changes to the public health nurse service in west Tipperary that is the ending of the public health nurse attending at local health clinics at Bansha, Cappawhite, Emly and Dundrum; if the public health nurse is to be centrally based only in Tipperary town and if the public health nurse will continue to make house calls to elderly patients on a regular basis or if they will have to visit the nurse at the central location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37453/16]

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.

Questions Nos. 579 and 580 answered with Question No. 508.

Child and Family Agency Staff

581. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff allocated to the Health Service Executive and health board's separated children team in each of the years 2000 to 2014. [37471/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I understand from the HSE that all records relating to staffing numbers for the separated children team transferred ownership to TUSLA the Child and Family Agency on establishment in 2014. As such, the Deputy may wish to put this question to my colleague, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, as TUSLA falls under the aegis of her Department.

Hospital Waiting Lists

582. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Health the waiting times at Beaumont Hospital for tonsillectomy procedures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37472/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Services for People with Disabilities

583. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) has been waiting two years for a bed in the three-month programme in the National Rehabilitation Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37475/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): This 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.

Vaccination Programme

584. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to sanction an independent investigation of the causation of the symptoms affecting young girls as a result of the human papilloma virus, HPV, vaccine and for a treatment plan to be put in place to facilitate their needs [37481/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Each year in Ireland around 300 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer. The HPV vaccine protects against two high risk types of HPV (16 & 18) that cause 73% of all cervical cancers. Vaccinated women and girls will still be at risk from other high risk types of HPV that can cause cervical cancer and will therefore need to continue to have regular cervical smear tests. NIAC recommended that the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine be given to all girls aged 12-13 in 2009 and in September 2010 the HPV vaccination programme was introduced for all girls in first year of second level schools.

By January 2016, over 200 million doses of Gardasil had been distributed worldwide. In Ireland over 580,000 doses of Gardasil have been administered and over 220,000 girls have been fully vaccinated against HPV since it was introduced in 2010.

No medicine, including vaccines, is entirely without risk, there is therefore on-going pharmacovigilance and monitoring of medicinal products once they are authorised for use. The safety profile of Gardasil has been continuously monitored since it was first authorised both nationally and at EU level. In Ireland, the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) is the statutory regulatory authority for medicines in Ireland.

In November 2015 the European Medicines Agency (EMA) completed a detailed scientific review of the HPV vaccine. The review, in which the HPRA participated, focused on two conditions, complex regional pain syndrome and postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome. The review found no evidence of a causal link between the vaccine and the two conditions. On 12 January 2016 the European Commission endorsed the conclusion of the EMA stating that there is no need to change the way HPV vaccines are used or to amend the product information which is now binding in all member states.

I am aware of claims of an association between HPV vaccination and a number of conditions experienced by a group of young women. It appears that some girls first suffered symptoms around the time they received the HPV vaccine, and understandably some parents have connected the vaccine to their daughter’s condition. It is important to reassure people that anyone who is suffering ill health is eligible to seek medical attention, and to access appropriate health and social care services, irrespective of the cause of their symptoms. The individual nature of the needs of some children may require access to specialist services. The HSE are currently working to put in place a clinical care pathway appropriate to the medical needs of this group.

I encourage the parents of all eligible girls to ensure that their daughters receive this important cancer preventing vaccine.

Drug Treatment Programmes Availability

585. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health if he will offer additional funding to the Aiséirí centre in County Wexford and in particular the Aislinn service which is the only residential adolescent detoxification and rehabilitation service here; his views on the importance of this service being vital in tackling addiction for young persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37483/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): On 12 October 2016, I announced the allocation of an additional €3m in the 2017 Budget to increase support for interventions aimed at improving the health outcomes of vulnerable groups, in particular those affected by addiction, through establishing a supervised injecting facility in Dublin City centre and providing more detox places.

The additional funding will be used to address my key priorities in 2017, which include addressing gaps in addiction service provision for under 18s. I have asked the Health Service Executive to develop proposals on these priorities for consideration in the context of the Executive's 2017 National Service Plan.

I understand from the Health Service Executive that the addiction services in Community Health Organisation 5 are currently working with Aiséiri to review the model of services provided in Aislínn. As the specific issue raised by the Deputy relates to a service issue, I have referred it to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services Data

586. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health the number of children in each of the children's hospitals with complex medical needs, rare diseases and life-limiting conditions with addresses in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37499/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Hospital Services

587. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the proposed changes to the services provided at Tallaght children's hospital due to occur as part of the development of the children's hospital at St. James's in Dublin; if the children's hospital at St. James's will become counties Wicklow, Meath and Kildare's only accident and emergency facility for children; the proposed date for transfer of those services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37502/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The urgent care centres to be developed on the campuses of Tallaght Hospital and Connolly Hospital are an integral part of the new children's hospital. The children's hospital to be located on the campus of St James's will provide tertiary or more complex care for children from all over the country, and secondary or less complex care for children from the Greater Dublin Area, while the two satellite centres will improve access to urgent care and outpatient services, including rapid access general paediatric clinics and GP access to diagnostics for children locally. As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Hospital Services

588. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the services that will be provided in the proposed Tallaght urgent care centre, UCC; the number and type of beds available for children in Tallaght UCC; the types of illness that fall into the category of urgent as opposed to emergency; the proposed opening hours of the facility; the time at which all children that

require overnight care will have to be transferred to the children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37503/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The urgent care centres to be developed on the campuses of Tallaght Hospital and Connolly Hospital are an integral part of the new children's hospital. The children's hospital to be located on the campus of St James's will provide tertiary or more complex care for children from all over the country, and secondary or less complex care for children from the Greater Dublin Area, while the two satellite centres will improve access to urgent care and outpatient services, including rapid access general paediatric clinics and GP access to diagnostics for children locally.

As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Health Services Data

589. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the number of children from County Wicklow that are treated in Tallaght hospital accident and emergency each year, including the number that require overnight stays [37504/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Ambulance Service Data

590. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to an article (details supplied) regarding the access for ambulances to the children's hospital at St. James's; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37505/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The planning application submitted to An Bord Pleanála by the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board (NPHDB), the statutory body responsible for planning, designing, building and equipping the new children's hospitals, to build the hospital on the St James's campus included an Environmental Impact Statement detailed "traffic and parking" which included a traffic management and traffic mobility plan, endorsed by the National Transport Authority and Dublin City Council, for the construction and operational phases of the hospital. A ten-day oral hearing took place in December 2015 in which traffic evidence was presented in detail and allowed for cross-questioning by those who had concerns. An Bord Pleanála granted planning permission without change to the proposed traffic and mobility plan.

With regard to Ambulance Access, the St James's Hospital Campus already serves as a major adult emergency department and caters for 24 hour ambulance access. The campus

is served directly by key primary roads including the M50. From discussions with the National Ambulance Service and as presented to An Bord Pleanála, the off peak journey times to and from the St James's Hospital Campus and the M50 Motorway is approximately 10 to 12 minutes with a slight increase of 2 to 3 minutes in journey times, experienced during commuter traffic peak periods. Bus lanes leading to and near the campus are also available for use by emergency service vehicles, including ambulances

There will be 1000 parking spaces, of which 675 will be reserved for patients, and which can be pre-booked prior to arrival at the hospital. In addition, a condition of the planning permission granted by An Bord Pleanála is that a minimum of 20 spaces be marked and designated

as ‘parent and child’ spaces and reserved for parents of children with specific needs (equipment etc.) and there will also be 27 specific car parking spaces provided for emergency drop-off parking.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Hospital Procedures

591. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a cataract operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37507/16]

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.

Question No. 592 answered with Question No. 508.

Hospital Accommodation Provision

593. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide resources to open additional long-stay beds at a community hospital (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37527/16]

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.

Hospital Staff Data

594. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the number of consultant neurologists that are employed on a permanent basis and on a temporary basis for the north-west region; the number of persons waiting to see a consultant neurologist in County Donegal; the length of time these persons have been waiting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37528/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Hospital Procedures

595. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a cataract operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37536/16]

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.

Health Services Staff Remuneration

596. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure that a person (details supplied) is receiving the correct level of pay and entitlements as part of their work with the Health Service Executive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37537/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Hospital Waiting Lists

597. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a cataract operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37538/16]

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.

Hospital Waiting Lists

598. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a cataract operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37540/16]

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.

Departmental Reports

599. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health the reports commissioned by his Department since 2006 which while completed or are in final draft form have not been published; the reason they have not been published; the expected publication date; the cost to date of each such report; if tenders were invited; if it is not intended to publish any such report the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37550/16]

600. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health the reports commissioned by the HSE since 2006 which while completed or are in final draft form have not been published; the reason they have not been published; the expected publication date; the cost to date of each such report; if tenders were invited; if it is not intended to publish any such report, the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37557/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 599 and 600 together.

The Department does not collect data in a manner which would allow the Deputy's question to be answered in full. Published reports for the years in question are available on the Department's website at <http://health.gov.ie/publications-research/publications/>. Presented in the table below are details from the Department's A7 expenditure for consultant reports commissioned by the Department from March 2011 to December 2015 together with associated costs and publication status. Data for 2016 are not yet available and will be collated and forwarded as soon as possible.

It is the policy in my Department only to engage the services of external consultants where it is felt to be appropriate and cost-effective, taking account of Government decisions and policy including procurement protocols on the matter. Should the Deputy have a particular report for

Questions - Written Answers

which details are required please provide details to my office and I will ensure that the matter is investigated further.

I have forwarded your question regarding the HSE to the HSE for direct reply.

Year	Organisation/ Consultants	Name of Report	Current status	Cost to December 2015
2015	Amarach Research	Alcohol Labelling Research	Report being drafted.	€86,138
2015	NUIG	Suite of Literature Reviews to support National Clinical Guideleines	Work commenced	€159,645
2015	UCC	Systematic literature review National Early Warning Score update	Ongoing	€22,743
2015	ICF Consulting Services/DKM Economic Consultants	An assessment of the economic costs of smoking in Ireland	Ongoing	€12,449
2015	Prospectus	Code of Conduct for Health and Social Service Providers	Extracts will be published within clinical guidelines	€86,138
2015	UCD	Clinical Handover Guideline	Work ongoing	€86,292
2015	DCU	Management of the Acute Adult Asthma Patient – provision of research	Extracts to be published within clinical guideline	€9,973
2015	DCU	Paediatric Early Warning Score – Pre-implementation research	Extracts to be published within clinical guideline	€24,000
2015	INDECON Economic Consultants	Analysis of potential measures to encourage the provision of Primary Care facilities	Work ongoing	€0
2015	DKM Economic Consultants	Analysis of potential measures to encourage the provision of Nursing Homes and Community Nursing Unit facilities	Work ongoing	€40,221
2014	DCU School of Nursing	Report to support the Taskforce on Staffing and Skill mix for nursing	Will be used to inform the final Report on the Taskforce on Staffing and Skill Mix	€7,418
2014	DCU School of Nursing	Literature Review and Nursing Workforce Evaluation to Support the Taskforce on Staffing and Skill Mix	Will be used to inform the Report of the Taskforce on Staffing and Skill Mix	€19,845
2014	Crowe Horwath	Thematic Analysis of Submissions in response to a Public Consultation on the White Paper for Universal Health Insurance	Published on Department's website	€39,176
2014	NUI Galway	Systematic literature review Maternity Early Warning Score	Extracts published within clinical guideline	€23,935
2014	DCU	Systematic literature review Paediatric Early Warning Score	Extracts will be published within clinical guideline	€20,095
2014	UCC	Systematic literature review Clinical Practice Guidance	Published on Department's website	€20,712
2014	Sinéad Shannon	Review of the international evidence and literature on selection criteria for the Outcomes Framework (Whilst this piece of research which was commissioned in December and approved in January, no payments have been made to date)	Ongoing	€5,000
2013	Prospectus Strategy Consultants	Review of Staffing Resources and Organisational Structure of the Department of Health	Report completed but not published, for Department's use only	€72,940
2013	Deloitte and Touche Consultants Ltd	Review of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme	Ongoing	€36,900
2013	Matheson Ormsby Prentice	Legal Research and advisory services on the design and implementation of an insurance based health system providing universal coverage in Ireland	Not Published	€123,000
2013	Prof Oonagh Walsh	Report on symphysiotomy in Ireland, 1944-1984	Not published	€49,500

Year	Organisation/ Consultants	Name of Report	Current status	Cost to December 2015
2013	Ernst & Young	Reports relating to the development of the Programme Management Office (cost includes a range of consultancy services)	Ongoing – internal reports	€79,212
2013	Dr Sinead Hanafin & Associates	Review of the Traveller Health Advisory Committee	Finalised	€6,150
2013	Prospectus	Overview of the development of the Health & Wellbeing Programme	Finalised	€15,156
2013	Research Matters	Provision of Research Management Services	Ongoing	€74,490
2013	Institute of Public Health	Analysis re Consultation (Tobacco Products Directive)	Completed - not yet published	€5,000
2013	Professor Hammond	Research on Standardised Packaging- Irish Context	Ongoing	€5,000
2013	CJP Consultants	Preparation of report on the efficacy of minimum pricing and other public policies for alcohol.	Published on website	€31,488
2013	Advertising Standards Authority of Ireland	Annual Report of the Alcohol Marketing Communications Monitoring Body (AMCMB)	Published	€21,115
2012	McGee Pharma International	Labelling of Medicinal Products in both Irish and English	Completed	€13,644
2012	Goodbody Stockbrokers and Matheson Ormsby Prentice Solicitors	Further Analysis of Options in relation to the restructuring of the Irish Private Health Insurance Market	Report completed	€62,349
2012	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform with the assistance of PwC	Review of the Department of Health's Parliamentary and Legislative Processes	Report completed but not published - for Department's use only	€18,020
2012	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform	A survey of experience and qualifications in the Department of Health	Report completed but not published - for Department's use only	None
2012	Michael Collins Associates	Supplementary Report and Addendum on Cost Comparison for the Dolphin Review Group	Completed not published, commercially sensitive	€12,423
2012	John Martin	Further assessment of planning issues in relation to proposed sites for the Dolphin Review Group	Published	€6,000
2012	Simon Clear	Further assessment of planning issues in relation to proposed sites for the Dolphin Review Group	Published	€9,475
2012	The Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, UCC, in conjunction with the Centre for Health Policy and Management, TCD.	The Efficiency Review of the BreastCheck Screening Programme	Published	€71,270
2012	Mr Gerard Mullaly	Reforming Chronic Care: Financing and Delivering Integrated Chronic Care	Not published	€5,227
2012	Mr Gerard Mullaly	The Integrated Continuing Care System (ICCS): Reforming Elderly Care in Ireland	Not published	€7,558
2012	Matheson Ormsby Prentice	Options Appraisal of multi-payer universal health insurance models: Preliminary advice	Not Published	€6,150
2012	Department of Health / SIRA Consulting	Report on the baseline measurement of the administrative burden from the Department of Health (as part of a cross Departmental project coordinated by Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation)	Published 2013	€14,000
2011	Goodbody Stockbrokers and Matteson Ormsby Prentice Solicitors	Commissioned to undertake a review of the Irish Private Health Insurance Market in Relation to the options which may exist for re-balancing	Report completed	€300,000

Health Services Staff Data

601. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Health if there are psychotherapists in direct full time State employment; if so, the number of such positions that exist; the areas they

relate to; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37558/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): As this is a service issue, this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Mental Health Services Provision

602. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Health the number of meetings of the Wexford Advancing Recovery Ireland (ARI) group that have taken place since its establishment; if he has satisfied himself with the progress of the group to date; if they are any closer to their objective to introduce peer-to-peer support services in mental health services in County Wexford than they were when they started; the cost of the Wexford ARI group to the Exchequer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37559/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): As this is a service issue, this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Hospital Services

603. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health the detail in relation to acute hospital intensive care (details supplied) by acute hospital location for 2016 to date under each heading; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37578/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In 2014 the HSE National Clinical Programme for Critical Care designed and launched a 'hub-and-spoke' Model of Care for Adult Critical Care, which is a centralised critical care delivery model, designed to meet the complex needs of critically ill patients across the acute healthcare system.

The Programme carries out an annual census of critical care capacity and activity which includes critical care bed capacity and critical care staff in hospitals.

In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Disability Support Services

604. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if his Department will investigate the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37593/16]

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.

Hospital Services

605. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health the number of critically ill patients needing level three care that were transferred from an existing acute hospital with level three care, by location, to another acute hospital with level three care in 2016 to date; if an analysis has been carried out on the health outcomes for such patients; if concerns have been expressed regarding this situation; the urgent steps needed to address this situation and actions now proposed by the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37594/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Cannabis for Medicinal Use

606. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health his views on a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37595/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Since becoming Minister for Health I have met with a number of patients and carers who believe that cannabis should be a treatment option for their medical condition. My Department is aware that cannabis for medicinal use has been legalised in some countries and that there have been several studies internationally on the therapeutic effects of cannabinoids for a number of medical issues.

I understand the concern of these and many other people who believe that cannabis should be a treatment option for certain medical conditions and I recognise the urgency and constant worry felt by patients with very distressing illnesses. As a result I am committed to urgently reviewing Ireland's policy on medicinal cannabis.

Cannabis-based preparations are strictly controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Acts. However, it is open for an Irish registered doctor to apply for a licence for such preparations for an individual, named-patient. Such applications will be considered on a case by case basis. The appropriateness of any particular treatment is a matter between the patient and their doctor.

Cannabidiol (CBD) is derived from cannabis. However, since it does not have psychoactive properties it is not controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Acts.

While I am aware that CBD oil is sometimes marketed as a nutritional or dietary supplement, it should be noted that it is not authorised as a medicinal product in Ireland.

I recently asked the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) to examine the issue of permitting the use of cannabis-based products for medical purposes in Ireland. The HPRA's statutory role is to protect and enhance human health by regulating medicines and other health products and it has the necessary clinical and scientific expertise to provide advice on this issue.

Separately the Oireachtas Health Committee has now also begun to examine the issue of medicinal cannabis.

I hope to receive the report from the HPRA and the output from the Oireachtas Health Committee early in the New Year and I will then be in a position to consider future policy and progress any legislative changes that may be recommended.

Health Services

607. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health when facilities (details supplied) will be opened; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37600/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): As this is a service issue, this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Medical Card Eligibility

608. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if he will engage with the Department of Health to ensure that an anomaly in budget 2017 (details supplied) does not result in groups of pensioners losing their entitlement to medical cards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37617/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Alteration of Criteria for Eligibility) (No. 2) Act 2013, when a person attains the age of 70, the medical card income limits are €500 gross income per week for a single person and €900 gross income per week for a couple. Any revision of these medical card income thresholds requires primary legislation.

Persons aged 70 or older, who are assessed as ineligible under the gross income thresholds, may also have their eligibility assessed under the means-tested medical card scheme if they so wish, for example in the event that they face particularly high expenses, e.g. nursing home or medication costs. This scheme is open to all persons, irrespective of their age and assessment is based on net income and assessable outgoing expenses. The qualifying income thresholds under this scheme are lower than over-70s gross income thresholds. In setting the assessment guidelines, the Health Service Executive (HSE) has regard to Government policy as outlined by the Minister for Health, changes in the consumer price index and other issues which may be relevant. Furthermore, persons, including those aged over 70 years, may be deemed eligible for a medical card on a discretionary basis, if they are judged to face undue hardship in arranging GP services as a result of medical or social circumstances. In addition, from August 2015, all persons aged 70 or older qualify for a GP Visit Card, regardless of income.

The Deputy will be aware that the increase in the State pension takes effect from March 2017. In the meantime, I have asked my Department to consider with the HSE the impact, if any, which this increase may have on people's ability to qualify for a medical card under the gross income threshold arrangements. It would be the Government's intention that people would not be adversely affected.

HSE Reports

609. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 506 of 18 October 2016 and the outcome of the HSE report that has yet to be received, if he will consent to an independent inquiry once all parties have examined the findings of the report as is the desire of the family; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37620/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): As mentioned in the HSE reply to PQ No. 30737/16 of the 7 November, this report is currently in the process of being finalised by the HSE. Pending the outcome of this report I will consider what next steps should be taken then.

Non-Disclosure Agreements

610. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health if his Department, or the agencies that report to his Department, entered into any non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements with any organisation due to court action or a threatened court action; and if so, the persons or groups with which these agreements exist. [37630/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The State Claims Agency, within the National Treasury Management Agency, which is under the aegis of the Department of Finance, manages personal injury, property damage and clinical negligence claims brought against certain State authorities, including Government ministers and health enterprises. The vast majority of claims under the remit of the State Claims Agency are resolved without confidentiality agreements attaching. Confidentiality agreements typically apply to claims in respect of minors or claims associated with abuse or specific medical negligence issues. The agreements, where entered into at the behest of either party, preclude the disclosure of settlement details by either party.

Regarding other settlements in the Department, in September 2012 the Minister entered into an agreement with the Medical Defence Union in settlement of litigation. This agreement is subject to a confidentiality clause.

My officials are awaiting further clarification from the Deputy in relation to the specific details he requires on non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements with persons or groups and when this is supplied I will forward a reply to the Deputy as soon as possible. I will also send the question to the HSE and the other agencies under the aegis of my Department, when the specific details of the question are clarified and they too will be requested to reply directly to the Deputy.

Medical Card Applications

611. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if a medical card can be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37639/16]

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 was issued to Oireachtas members.

Question No. 612 answered with Question No. 508.

Community Care Provision

613. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Health the number of 24 hour care centres currently available for adults that cannot live independently and are in need constant supervision due to mental health issues. [37645/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): As this is a service issue, this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Cancer Research

614. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the amount the State has invested in cancer research in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37647/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Research Board, a statutory agency under the aegis of my Department, has invested approximately €21.8 million through Cancer Trials Ireland in the development of a network of cancer clinical trials in hospitals across Ireland over the past five years. The breakdown of the funding is as follows:

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
€4.7m	€4.2m	€4.3m	€4.3m	€4.3m	€21.8m

Meanwhile, the National Cancer Registry, another statutory agency under the aegis of my Department, has invested approximately €4.8 million in research relating to cancer statistics in Ireland over the same period. While some of this amount came from non-statutory bodies, the majority was state-funded. The breakdown of the funding is as follows:

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
€1.1m	€1.0m	€1.0m	€0.8m	€0.9m	€4.8m

Science Foundation Ireland has also invested in cancer research during the past five years.

Health Research Board Expenditure

615. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the amount the State has invested in Alzheimer’s disease research in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37648/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): The Health Research Board (HRB) is the lead agency in Ireland responsible for supporting and funding health research, information and evidence, with a mission to improve people’s health and to enhance healthcare delivery. Between 2011 and 2015 the HRB has made investments totaling almost €9.2 million in research focused on many aspects of dementia/Alzheimer’s. These awards have been funded either through HRB competitive open calls, which do not ring-fence funding for any one disease area, but are open to all disease areas, or in collaboration with Atlantic Philanthropies, the Irish Alzheimer’s Society, the Medical Research Charities Group or European Joint Programming initiatives. A list of dementia related projects to which the HRB made funding commitments between 2011 and 2015 is set out in the tables.

Area of focus for dementia research	HRB new dementia funding commitment (€) in year					Grand Total
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
Link to cardiovascular disease				572,222		572,222
Delirium, Dementia & Alzheimer’s Disease	1,575,970	193,935	315,338	543,637	4,217,611	6,846,491
Disabilities and dementia					599,992	599,992
Lifecourse studies in dementia	794,681					794,681

	HRB new dementia funding commitment (€) in year					
Area of focus for dementia research	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Grand Total
Mental health and dementia					59,848	59,848
Palliative care and dementia					528,714	528,714
Grand Total	2,370,651	193,935	315,338	873,637	5,406,165	9,159,726

	HRB new dementia funding commitment (€) in year					
Dementia projects by Research Field	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Grand Total
Ageing and related disease	1,301,155			330,000	209,848	1,841,003
Cardiovascular physiology and disease					572,222	572,222
Evaluation of treatments and interventions		46,806	56,162		916,512	1,019,480
Health services organisation and delivery	286,135		199,812		2,453,155	2,939,102
Healthcare resources and infrastructure					264,748	264,748
Mental health		147,129			29,730	176,859
Neuroscience	783,360			543,637	359,958	1,686,955
Palliative care/medicine			59,364			59,364
Population screening and preventive medicine					599,992	599,992
Grand Total	2,370,651	193,935	315,338	873,637	5,406,165	9,159,726

Cancer Services Funding

616. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the cost to the State of cancer care in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37649/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Deputy's questions relate to service delivery matters and accordingly I have asked the HSE to respond directly to him.

Health Services Funding

617. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the cost to the State of Alzheimer's care in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37650/16]

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.

Cancer Incidence

618. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of deaths from cancer in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37651/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The number of deaths from cancer in Ireland in each of the past five years is as follows:

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
8,666	8,571	8,725	9,022	8,783*

*Data for 2015 is subject to change.

Health Services Data

619. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of deaths from Alzheimer's disease in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37652/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): The Central Statistics Office has provided the following information on deaths attributable to dementia:-

Year	Male	Female	Total
2011	276	515	791
2012	535	978	1513
2013	573	1212	1785
2014	662	1282	1944
2015*	734	1425	2159

*Note 2015 is provisional data only and is subject to revision. Source Vital Statistics CSO.

Hospital Waiting Lists

620. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the number of children on waiting lists and the timescale involved for the treatment of scoliosis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37661/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Scoliosis affects approximately 1% of children and adolescents in Ireland. The management of scoliosis is complex and is determined by the severity of the curvature and skeletal maturity.

Long waiting times for scoliosis surgery are not acceptable and my Department has been working closely with the HSE to address service pressures, with most recently additional funding of €2 million provided under the HSE winter initiative specifically for scoliosis patients. The Department will continue to work with the HSE and the relevant hospitals to ensure improvements in access to spinal surgery are achieved. I recently met with a number of scoliosis advocacy groups to discuss their concerns, following which the Children's Hospital Group has begun a process of engagement with the advocacy groups on developing a partnership approach with the hospitals and consultants to the design and planning of services for children with scoliosis.

As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Dental Services Waiting Lists

621. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health further to parliamentary question number 429 of 25 October 2016, the length of time patients are waiting for dental surgery in County Louth; the length of time the 152 children on the paediatric list are waiting, for example, three months, six months, nine months and so on; if the surgery needed by these children can be provided elsewhere as a matter of urgency; if not, the reason therefor; the reason only three adults with special needs have received treatment in the past three years while six adults with special needs are awaiting surgery; if the surgery needed by these adults can be provided elsewhere as a matter of urgency; if not, the reason therefor; the reason there are 17 children with special needs still awaiting dental surgery; if the surgery needed by these children can be

provided elsewhere as a matter of urgency; if not, the reason therefor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37664/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

Health Services Provision

622. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address an issue with regard to building dementia friendly communities (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37668/16]

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.

HIQA Reports

623. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the HIQA report of the Mercy University Hospital unannounced inspections of 7 June 2016 and 20 July 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37670/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Each year, HIQA carries out a number of unannounced inspections in public acute hospitals to monitor compliance with the National Standards for the Prevention and Control of Healthcare Associated Infections. The aim of such unannounced inspections is to assess hygiene in the hospital, as observed by the inspection team and experienced by patients, at any given time.

In response to HIQA's findings, each hospital is expected to develop a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) that prioritises the improvements necessary to comply with the National Standards. These plans must be published, and made accessible on the websites of the individual hospitals, within six weeks of publication of the Authority's report.

HIQA's work in this field is to be commended, and is something I place a high value on as Minister for Health. It is vital that all elements of the health service strive to reach best practice standards in all areas of their work, and the inspection regime put in place by HIQA, is playing a major role in driving improvements across the health service.

As the updating of the QIP is an operational matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly on this point.

Hospital Waiting Lists

624. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the current duration on a waiting list for a child to see a urologist at Temple Street children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37675/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

625. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the cost of the nursing home support scheme to the State for each of the years 2010 to 2015 and the expected cost in 2016; the projected cost for each year to 2030 based on known demographics and on the assumption that the terms of the scheme do not change; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37677/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): The Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS) is a system of financial support for those in need of long-term nursing home care. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their income and assets while the State pays the balance of the cost. The Scheme aims to ensure that long-term nursing home care is accessible and affordable for everyone and that people are cared for in the most appropriate settings.

The gross funding, which includes client contributions under the Scheme, for the years 2010 to 2015 is as follows:

Year	Gross Budget (millions)
2010	€979
2011	€963
2012	€994.7
2013	€974
2014	€939
2015	€993

The gross budget for the Scheme in 2016 is €1,004.9 million, with a net budget (excluding income from clients) of €940 million. Expenditure of €921.5 million of the net budget is anticipated for 2016.

A number of factors may impact on future cost and demand for long-term residential care services, including social changes, possible new models of care for older people, and changes in population health status. Accurate long-term forecasts are accordingly difficult. However, high-level projections are possible, and as part of the review of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme, an analysis of the current NHSS population by age cohort, projected forward in line with CSO demographic projections, indicates that approximately 33,000 people will require support under the scheme by 2024. At present cost levels, this would imply a total annual net cost of approximately €1.3 billion by 2024.

HSE Expenditure

626. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Health when a new contract was last agreed by the HSE for the provision of taxi services for the Cork city and county area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37678/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Health Services

627. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Health when the last mini

competition was held by the HSE, in the context of the provision of taxi services in Cork city and county and when the last mini competition was held which led to the signing of a contract, whether new or otherwise. [37679/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Nursing Home Accommodation Provision

628. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health further to parliamentary question No. 613 of 15 November 2016, regarding the proposed new Letterkenny community nursing unit which has an indicative costing of €22.75 million, the percentage of this indicative cost that is estimated in the capital programme to be provided by private funds through the PPP process; the percentage of the projected cost that is estimated to be provided in upfront Exchequer funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37737/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): A contract has yet to be awarded in respect of this project. I have no further information at this time.

Disability Services Provision

629. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if additional personal assistant hours will be provided to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37738/16]

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.

Disability Support Services Provision

630. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health his views on correspondence (detail supplied) regarding a care home; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37739/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The HSE's report "*Time to Move on from Congregated Settings - A Strategy for Community Inclusion*", (2011) proposes a new model of support in the community by moving people from institutional settings to the community. The plan is being rolled out at a regional and local level and involves full consultation with stakeholders.

The Programme for Government contains a commitment to continue to move people with disabilities out of congregated settings, to enable them to live independently and to be included

in the community. Currently, 2725 people live in congregated settings and our objective is to reduce this figure by one-third by 2021 and ultimately, to eliminate all congregated settings.

The HSE has established a subgroup, under 'Transforming Lives', the Programme to implement the recommendations of the Value for Money and Policy Review of Disability Services, which is developing an implementation plan for moving people from institutions. I welcome the fact that the needs of people moving from congregated settings will be fully taken into account during this process as the model of care for individuals will be based on a person centred plan.

The HSE's 2016 National Service Plan has set a target of 165 people to move from institutions in 2016 into suitable accommodation. Earlier this year, I announced that we are providing €100 million in capital funding from now until 2021 in respect of acquiring and renovating properties in priority institutions identified by the HSE. This will ensure that people are able to move out of congregated settings, and into their own homes in the community. I want to emphasise that the appropriate supports and resources are being put in place to ensure that people are supported as they move out of residential centres.

In addition, I am pleased to note that the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government is providing €10 million under the Capital Assistance Scheme to provide suitable accommodation for people transitioning from institutions in 2016. The HSE estimate that a further 100 people could benefit from this initiative. €1 million in ring-fenced leasing funding is also being made available by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government in 2016 to support people moving from institutions into suitable social housing in the community. This demonstrates the joined up commitment of both Departments to support the de-congregation programme.

The HSE has developed a three strand approach to accelerate transitions from institutions in the period 2016-2021, with a target of 900 people to move to more suitable accommodation in this period.

- Strand 1- is focussed on large institutional settings at high risk of not meeting HIQA Standards;

- Strand 2- is focussed on moving people into suitable social housing in the community through the Department of Housing schemes; and

- Strand 3- is focussed on remaining service users in congregated settings who could move to suitable accommodation.

This process of moving people to more suitable accommodation in the community will take place over a number of years, and will be done in full consultation with all residents and their families.

As the HSE is responsible for leading out on the recommendations on "*Time to Move on from Congregated Settings - A Strategy for Community Inclusion*", I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy for any further information that they may be able to provide.

Health Services Expenditure

631. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health further to the OECD publication *Health at a Glance 2016* published on 23 November 2016 and in view of the methodological

notes and the discussion on comparability on page 120, if Ireland's public expenditure per capita on pharmaceuticals is validly and definitively characterised as the second highest in the OECD; if not, the reason therefor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37746/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): OECD statistics are useful for comparing expenditure in medicines and other areas. However, per capita figures are only one of a number of measures that can give a view of drugs spending in Ireland.

The OECD report cited by the Deputy uses data from 2014, the last year for which full figures are available. In 2014, expenditure on prescription and over the counter medicines accounted for just over 14 percent of overall health expenditure in Ireland. Although this was higher than several other EU countries, including Denmark, Finland, and Belgium, it was lower than Germany, France, Italy, and Spain, and significantly lower than Greece or Hungary.

OECD data on pharmaceutical expenditure includes expenditure on both prescription and over the counter medicines but excludes expenditure on Pharmaceuticals consumed in hospitals and other health care settings as part of an inpatient or day case treatment. As acknowledged by the OECD "comparability issues exist with regards to the administration and dispensing of pharmaceuticals for outpatients in hospitals."

Looking at expenditure in Ireland alone, the report noted the significant reversal in the growth of pharmaceutical spending in Ireland between 2009 and 2014. There has also been a number of significant developments since 2014 that will further reduce the cost of medicines in Ireland. The Framework Agreement on the Pricing and Supply of Medicines will reduce the price of medicines to the average of 14 other countries and provides for an annual downward only price realignment. This will ensure that Irish medicine prices continue to reduce in line with price reductions across reference countries. This Agreement is expected to deliver savings of up to €750 million over the next four years.

Other initiatives will continue to be pursued, to ensure that we achieve affordable prices for medicines for both patients and the State.

These include the HSE's Medicines Management Programme, which has a particular focus on cost-effective prescribing, and the continued implementation of generic substitution and reference pricing.

The implementation of generic substitution and reference pricing has also contributed to significant price reductions. The prices of referenced products are generally 70-80% lower than the prices paid when medicines were on patent. Generic substitution and reference pricing delivered savings of €47 million in 2014 and €94 million in 2015, and ensures that generic drug prices in Ireland will continue to fall towards European norms.

As a result of these measures, the average price of an item dispensed on the General Medical Services Scheme has reduced to below the price paid in 2001 and the average Drug Payment Scheme price is below the price paid in 2000.

National Drugs Strategy

632. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Health the measures that apply to specifically address the issue of recreational drug users; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37749/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): The overall

objective of the National Drugs Strategy is to tackle the harm caused to individuals and society by the misuse of drugs through a concerted focus on the five pillars of supply reduction, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and research.

Prevention and Education programmes constitute a significant part of the Government's response to the drug problem, particularly among young persons. The current Strategy contains an action to develop a sustained range of awareness campaigns that target third level educational institutions, workplaces and recreational venues. The HSE has implemented a number of targeted awareness campaigns through the drugs.ie website, relating to the use of new psychoactive substances, ketamine and pills. These campaigns provide harm reduction information and advice, while emphasising that it's always safest not to take unknown or illicit drugs at all. In addition, the HSE Addiction service provides non-judgemental, evidence based treatment interventions to individuals presenting with problems associated with a range of licit and illicit substances.

Substance use education in schools is provided in the context of Social Personal and Health Education. The Department of Education and Skills' Inspectorate continues to monitor the effectiveness of the implementation of substance use policies in schools through the whole-school evaluation process and the inspectorate system. Local and Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Forces operate a range of education and prevention programmes, which aim to promote healthier lifestyle choices among young people and other vulnerable groups at risk of problem drug use. In addition, young people at risk of drug misuse can access diversionary programmes, facilities and services and family support.

As the Deputy will be aware, a Steering Committee, with an independent chair, has been established to advise me on a new National Drugs Strategy, which will commence in 2017, when the current policy expires. I understand that the need for prevention and education programmes that raise awareness of the risks and harms associated with recreational drug use is one of the key issues emerging from the multi-stakeholder focus groups, which will advise the Steering Committee on measures to address gaps in the current response to the drug problem. It is expected that the focus groups will shortly conclude their work and report back to the Steering Committee. I am expecting the final report of the Steering Committee early in the New Year.

Medical Products Supply

633. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Health if he has considered the provision of pre-filled naloxone injections as a means of making provision to save the lives of persons suffering from an opiate drug overdose; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37750/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): 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. Naloxone is an anti-dote used to reverse the effects of opioid drugs like heroin, morphine and methadone, if someone overdoses.

I launched an Evaluation Report on the HSE's Naloxone Demonstration Project in August 2016. The Project involved 600 patients receiving take-home Naloxone and the provision of training to lay persons, such as the family and friends of a drug user, in the administration of a Naloxone injection to overdose victims. I was delighted to note that during the course of the demonstration project there were five potentially fatal overdoses prevented for the individuals involved. I am convinced that many more lives will be saved as a result of this initiative.

I understand that the HSE is working to implement the key recommendations of the Evaluation Report to inform the on-going development of the Naloxone programme.

Dental Services

634. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect to receive a dental appointment at Kerry University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37755/16]

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.

Disability Support Services Provision

635. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if transport arrangements will be put in place in respect of a person (details supplied); if he will expedite alternative travel arrangements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37761/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The provision of transport to adults with a disability attending HSE-funded day services is not a core health service, and the HSE endeavours to ensure that all service users access public transport, including rural transport services, if possible. In recognition of the challenges which some service users experience in relation to accessible transport, some transport is provided by disability service providers on a case by case basis as resources allow. Service providers are continuously reviewing their transport arrangements to ensure that they are used as effectively and equitably as possible within available resources, and will continue to keep the matter under review.

In regard to the issue raised by the Deputy I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Procedures

636. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health the reason an urgent operation on a person (details supplied) with chronic scoliosis was cancelled at the last minute; the reason the hospital showed no consideration for the person and their parent who had made extensive arrangements to be with their child; if the fact that the person has autism had anything to do with the decision; if he will ensure the hospital sets an early date for the operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37767/16]

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 be-

half, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The 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.

There is a National Waiting List Management Protocol in place which sets out a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment. Details of this are available on <http://www.nthf.ie/home/pdf/National%20Waiting%20List%20Management%20Protocol.pdf> .

In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

GLAS Administration

637. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the criteria being used by his Department to decide on a planner to carry out a commonage management plan for GLAS scheme applicants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36853/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): To be considered for approval to draw up Commonage Management Plans an agricultural advisor must fulfil the following criteria:

- have a minimum educational agricultural qualification of level 8 Fetac.
- have attended Farm Advisory Service and GLAS training courses that were run by my Department in 2014, 2015 and 2016.
- have attended a commonage field walk which were held in 2015 and 2016.

A list of currently approved commonage advisors is published on my Department's Website.

Commonage Division

638. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an appeal (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36854/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted an appeal for the attention of the Commonage Implementation Committee. A new chairperson has recently been appointed and the appeal will be dealt with in that forum.

GLAS Applications

639. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of commonage framework plans that have been prepared under the GLAS scheme to date broken down by county; the number that remain to be prepared; if payments have been and

will be paid out under GLAS for commonages in view of the fact that these plans have not been prepared in some instances; the amount of money held back as a result; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36895/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As result of the applications approved into the first two tranches of GLAS (GLAS 1 and GLAS 2) Commonage Advisors have been assigned to prepare Commonage Management Plans (CMPs) for over 2,700 commonages. No CMPs have been submitted to date as the deadline for completed plans to be submitted is 1 September 2017 which will facilitate the inclusion of commonage farmers approved into the third tranche of GLAS. This work is ongoing and final CMPs have therefore not been submitted yet.

In respect of 2016 payments for GLAS 1 and GLAS 2 applications with commonages, my Department has put in place a process to provide for the submission of interim Commonage Management Plans. The interim process requires the assigned GLAS commonage advisor to complete a 2016 interim CMP for each of the commonages assigned to them and requires signatures of each GLAS approved participant who is a shareholder on each of these commonages. The vast majority of interim CMP forms have been returned by advisors and in respect of these cases processing of 2016 payment will take place at the same time as all other applications.

The interim CMP clearly stated that failure by the farmer to sign the interim CMP would result in no GLAS payment issuing so it is only where a farmer has not signed up to an interim CMP that payment could not issue.

There are a number of commonages for which the assignment of an advisor is under review and my Department is currently putting in place a procedure which will facilitate the processing of 2016 GLAS payment for shareholders on these commonages to take place at the same time as all other GLAS 1 and GLAS 2 participants.

GLAS Payments

640. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if farmers who joined GLAS in 2015 and 2016 will be paid their 85% payment under GLAS for commonages in December 2016, even if farmers have not signed up to the interim GLAS plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36896/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): All commonage shareholders are required to sign an Interim Commonage Management Plan (CMP) for each of their commonages as a condition of payment for 2016. My Department put in place a process to provide for the submission of interim Commonage Management Plans and I am pleased that this has been well received and responded to by both advisors and commonage shareholders. The interim process requires the assigned GLAS commonage advisor to complete a 2016 interim CMP for each of the commonages assigned to them and required signatures of each GLAS approved participant who is a shareholder on each of the commonages.

The interim CMP clearly stated that failure by the farmer to sign would result in no GLAS payment issuing.

There are a number of commonages for which the assignment of an advisor is under review and my Department is currently putting in place a procedure which will facilitate the processing of 2016 GLAS payment for shareholders on these commonages to take place at the same time as all other GLAS 1 and GLAS 2 participants.

GLAS Data

641. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of commonages to which planners have been assigned; the number to which there is currently no planner assigned; the number of participants in GLAS on the commonages assigned to planners and the number on commonages with no planner assigned to them; the total number of active farmers on these commonages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36897/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Commonage Advisors have been assigned to prepare Commonage Management Plans (CMPs) for over 2,700 commonages which have been brought into the first two tranches of GLAS. A further 77 commonages are currently being reassessed where the commonage advisor initially assigned is no longer in a position to complete the work and 35 commonages have had no advisor assigned as there were no expressions of interest received.

Some 6,600 farmers have declared 13,000 commonages shares as part of their GLAS applications of which approximately 300 have declared shares on the 112 commonages for which the assignment of a commonage advisor is yet to be finalised.

My Department is currently finalising arrangements to assign an advisor to these 112 commonages and to put in place a procedure to ensure that GLAS participants on these commonages will have their 2016 GLAS payment processed at the same time as all other GLAS 1 and 2 participants.

GLAS Data

642. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of commonages to which planners were assigned and subsequently resigned; the number of GLAS participants affected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36898/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The number of commonages to which planners were assigned and subsequently reassigned is 255. A total of 571 GLAS participants are associated with these commonages. My Department has put in place arrangements to facilitate payments for these participants to ensure payments are processed as promptly as possible. A further 77 commonages in this category are currently being reassessed.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

643. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason the full payment is held back from farmers on their direct farm payments when small issues arise even when an interim payment is being made; if it is intended to review this policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36900/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Advance payments under the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) commenced in Ireland on 17 October 2016 in respect of applicants whose applications are fully processed and who have no outstanding errors. This is the earliest that payments can commence under the governing EU Regulations.

To date payments in excess of €791m have issued to over 120,000 applicants. Regular pay-

ment runs are being made in respect of all applicants whose applications are fully processed and who have no outstanding errors.

The processing of applications under the Basic Payment Scheme is a complex administrative task and one that remains a top priority for my Department. The scheme is fully funded by the European Union and the relevant Competent Authorities in each Member State are obliged to ensure that the requirements of the governing EU Regulations are observed and that only valid applications that fully comply with the requirements are paid.

The administration of the scheme in each Member State is subjected to close scrutiny by officials of the EU Commission and the EU Court of Auditors to ensure that the regulatory requirements are met and that the Schemes are applied in a uniform manner across the European Union.

All applications under the Scheme are subject to administrative checks, with a further 5% also subject to land eligibility inspections in compliance with EU legislation.

Where issues preventing payment are identified contact is made with the applicant concerned in order to resolve the query. Work is well underway in resolving the queries that have arisen following these checks and farmers are being contacted as necessary.

I am keenly aware that the advance payment of the BPS is a vital support to farmers across sectors in maximising cash flow and my Department will continue to prioritise the processing of all outstanding cases.

Basic Payment Scheme Eligibility

644. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the evidence of agricultural activity needed to qualify for the basic payment and greening; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36901/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): In order to draw down payment under the Basic Payment/Greening Scheme an applicant must have an “eligible hectare” to accompany each entitlement held. In this context, the definition of an “eligible hectare” is land that is used for an agricultural activity and it also includes maintaining an agricultural area in a state suitable for grazing or cultivation. More specifically an ‘Agricultural Activity’ means:

- a) The production, rearing or growing of agricultural products, including harvesting, milking, breeding animals, and keeping animals for farming purposes.
- b) Maintaining an agricultural area in a state suitable for grazing or cultivation.

Maintenance can be achieved by topping, keeping the hedgerows maintained and by preventing the development of scrub and maintaining drains. In 2015 my Department produced a very detailed Guide to Land Eligibility, which has been provided to all Basic Payment Scheme payment applicants. This guide gives clear and concise guidance on what is expected of farmers and includes examples of cases where the level of maintenance is such that the land can be deemed eligible.

GLAS Data

645. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the total pay out to date under the GLAS and GLAS plus scheme for 2015; the number of farmers that have received their full payment of 2015; the number that have received 85% payment and the number that have received no payment; the number of farmers that joined GLAS in 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36902/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): A total of €17,061,884 has issued to date under the GLAS Scheme in respect of the 2015 scheme year. There are 25,622 farmers currently approved in the first tranche of GLAS (GLAS 1). Some 22,162 of these participants are due a 2015 payment in respect of the three month period October to December 2015. The balance of farmers approved in GLAS 1, some 3,460 farmers, are not due a payment for 2015 as they either have a commencement date of 1 January 2016 or did not have any GLAS payable actions for 2015 in their applications.

To date 20,333 GLAS 1 farmers have received their full 2015 part year payment while an additional 1,197 applications have received the first instalment of their 2015 payment representing up to 85 % of total due for 2015. There are 632 applications which have yet to receive any payment for 2015 as they have not successfully completed the required regulatory checks due to errors identified during the Basic Payment Scheme cross checks, inspection cases that are currently being finalised, mis-matches in Land Parcel Identifications System numbers due to changes in parcel boundaries and applications to change the areas originally approved into the scheme. Staff in my Department are continuing to work on all outstanding applications on a case by case basis with the intention of processing payments which meet all required regulatory requirements as soon as possible.

GLAS Issues

646. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to the fact that farmers with shares in three commonages are paying up to €2,300 in professional fees to join the scheme (details supplied); the steps he will take taking to reduce the cost of compliance for such farmers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36903/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The GLAS Scheme includes a measure which provides support for farmers to manage their commonage lands. For commonage farmers who wish to join GLAS, the Scheme requires the development and implementation of a GLAS Commonage Management Plan (CMP) which must be prepared and completed by a trained and qualified Agricultural Advisor. The Advisor is paid by the farmer and is not working for the Department. The price paid is a matter between the farmer and the Advisor

My Department did not set any rules or guidelines in relation to professional fees involved in joining GLAS. Under the GLAS Scheme payment to farmers in respect of commonages was increased from €79 per hectare under the previous agri-environment measure to €120 per hectare per annum for five years to take account of potential additional costs to the farmer.

Agriculture Scheme Appeals

647. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if it is intended to appoint persons from outside his Department to the agricultural appeals process to ensure absolute independence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36904/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Under Section 2 of the Agriculture Appeals Act 2001 the Minister may appoint such and so many of his or her officers or, following selection at competitions held by the Public Appointment Service, other persons holding positions within the Civil Service, as he or she considers appropriate, to be appeals officers for the purposes of this Act.

Section 6 of the Agriculture Appeals Act 2001 places a statutory obligation on Appeals Officers to be independent in the performance of their functions. Appeals Officers are fully aware of their legal obligations in that respect.

The Programme for a Partnership Government includes a commitment to review the Agriculture Appeals Act 2001 to ensure the independence and efficiency of the Office in dealing with appeals from farmers. Consultations are due to commence shortly in that regard.

Basic Payment Scheme Eligibility

648. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when his Department intends to inspect an offshore land holding (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36917/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted a 2016 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS)/Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) Scheme application on 5 May 2016. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases on-farm inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a ground eligibility inspection. This inspection has been completed, with the island land in question having been inspected on 23 November 2016. The outcome of the inspection will now be processed to finalisation and in the event of any non-compliances being identified the person named will be notified of these shortly.

On completion of this process any payments due under the BPS and ANC Schemes will issue to the nominated bank account of the person named as soon as possible.

Basic Payment Scheme Eligibility

649. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of payments under the disadvantaged area scheme and single farm payment scheme in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36952/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted a 2016 Basic payment/Areas of Natural Constraint scheme application on 6 May 2016. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases remote sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

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

Departmental Staff Data

650. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of staff from his Department currently seconded to other Departments or agencies in the civil service per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36958/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The breakdown of staff currently seconded to other Departments or agencies, with the year the secondment commenced is outlined below:

Body	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016 (to 31/10/2016)
Animal Health Ireland					1		
Department of Arts, Heritage & Gaeltacht Affairs					1		2
Bord Bia					1		1
Carlow County Council				1			
Central Statistics Office							1
Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government							2
European Commission							1
Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade				1	3	3	2
Horse Sport Ireland				2			
Marine Institute				9			1
North South Ministerial Council					1	1	
Permanent Representative Brussels				1	1	2	
Road Safety Authority							1
Sustainable Food Systems Ireland							2
Department of Taoiseach					2		
Waterford County Council				2			

Departmental Staff Data

651. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of staff from his Department who have appealed against secondment per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the appeals mechanism involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36974/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department has no record of any staff appealing against secondment during the period 2010 to date in 2016.

Departmental Staff Data

652. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of staff from his Department currently seconded to a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36990/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department currently has no staff seconded to a firm in the private sector.

Departmental Staff Data

653. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of staff from his Department currently seconded from a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37006/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): There are currently no staff seconded from a firm in the private sector in my Department.

Agriculture Scheme Appeals

654. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an appeal (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37118/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted an appeal for the attention of the Commonage Implementation Committee. A new chairperson has recently been appointed and the appeal referred to is appropriate to and will be dealt with in that forum.

Departmental Funding

655. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the funding that has been provided to County Louth over the previous three years 2014 to 2016 by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37215/16]

657. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the funding for projects in 2017 in County Louth to be funded by his Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37247/16]

658. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the funding that has been provided to County Meath over the previous three years 2014 to 2016 by project name, location and funding amount in tabular form. [37263/16]

660. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the funding for projects in 2017 in County Meath to be funded by his Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37295/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 655, 657, 658 and 660 together.

The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the table:

2014 County Louth	Project Name	Location	Amount of Funding provided €
	Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Commercial Horticulture Sector	Various locations in the county	170,560
	Forestry -Afforestation		301,718

Questions - Written Answers

2014County Louth	Project Name	Location	Amount of Funding provided €
	Forestry- FEPS		39,605
	Forestry -Reconstitution		11,044
	Forestry -Woodland Improvement		8,138
	Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2014 - Annagassan Harbour Dredging Works	Annagassan Harbour, Co Louth	9,000
	Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2014 - Clogherhead Harbour Navigation Lights	Clogherhead Harbour, Co Louth	1,962
	Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme – Storm Damage Programme 2014 - Clogherhead Harbour Water Utilities	Clogherhead Harbour, Co Louth	5,250
	Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2014 -Carlingford Harbour Repair Storm Damage caused to revetment	Carlingford Harbour, Co Louth	4,500
	TAMS – On Farm Investment - Dairy Equipment		130,000
	TAMS – On Farm Investment - Sheep Handling		14,000
	Animal Welfare Organisation – Drogheda animal Rescue	Drogheda	17,500
	Animal Welfare Organisation – Dundalk Dog Rescue	Dundalk	5,700
	Animal Welfare Organisation – Holly’s Horse Haven	Omeath	12,000
	Animal Welfare Organisation – Louth SPCA	Dundalk	21,000
Co Meath	Project Name	Location	Amount of Funding provided €
	Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Commercial Horticulture Sector	Various locations in the county	226,226
	Forestry - Afforestation		1,860,195
	Forestry - FEPS		163,157
	Forestry - Forest Roads		79,812
	Forestry - Reconstitution		88,937
	Forestry - Woodland Improvement		33,413
	Research - 11/RD/EMIDA2:Coping with Anthelmintic resistance in Ruminants	Teagasc, Grange Co. Meath	12,005
	Research - 14/S/802: Strain Specific Pathogenicity of Staphylococcus aureus	Teagasc, Grange, Co. Meath	121,992
	TAMS – On Farm Investment - Farm Waste Mgmt.		6,000
	TAMS – On Farm Investment - Dairy Equipment		264,000
	TAMS – On Farm Investment - Sheep Handling		72,000
	TAMS – On Farm Investment - Loose Housing Sows		272,000
	Animal Welfare Organisation – dogs in Distress	Dunboyne	7,200
	Animal Welfare Organisation – Dog Rescue Coolronan	Coolronan, Ballivor	1,800
	Animal Welfare Organisation – Last Hope animal charity	Navan	8,400
	Animal Welfare Organisation – Mollies animal Rescue	Newtown Common, Duleek	1,000
	Animal Welfare Organisation – National Exotic animal Sanctuary	Coolronan, Ballivor	7,000

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2015Co Louth	Project Name	Location	Amount of Funding provided €
	Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Commercial Horticulture Sector	Various locations in the county	146,270

2015Co Louth	Project Name	Location	Amount of Funding provided €
	Forestry - Afforestation		292,761
	Forestry - FEPS		55,154
	Forestry - Reconstitution		945
	Forestry - Woodland Improvement		1,035
	Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2015 - Clogherhead Upgrade existing lighting	Clogherhead, Co Louth	7,500
	Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2015 - Gyles Quay. Repairs to pier structure	Gyles Quay, Co Louth	2,511
	TAMS – On Farm Investment - Dairy Equipment		217,000
	TAMS – On Farm Investment - Sheep Handling		29,000
	TAMS – On Farm Investment - Farm Safety		77,000
	Animal Welfare Organisation – Drogheda animal Rescue	Drogheda	19,500
	Animal Welfare Organisation – Dundalk Dog Rescue	Dundalk	7,000
	Animal Welfare Organisation – Holly’s Horse Haven	Omeath	16,000
	Animal Welfare Organisation – Louth SPCA	Dundalk	23,000
Co Meath	Project Name	Location	Amount of Funding provided €
	Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Commercial Horticulture Sector	Various locations in the county	450,322
	CEDRA agri-Food Tourism - Boyne Valley Food Series	Boyne Valley	8,454
	Forestry - Afforestation		1,693,161
	Forestry - FEPS		192,542
	Forestry - Forest Roads		163,131
	Forestry - Reconstitution		65,446
	Forestry - Woodland Improvement		103,890
	Research - 11/S/104: Molecular Biomarkers of Fertility-New Tools for the Cattle Industry	Teagasc, Grange, Co. Meath	73,745
	Research - 11/S/116: Maximising the Genetic Potential of Young Elite Bulls. A multidisciplinary approach	Teagasc, Grange, Co. Meath	33,635
	Research - 11/S/105: Defining optimal pasture composition and its relationship with management factors in order to maximise dairy and beef productivity, whilst minimising nitrous oxide emissions (urine output) methane emissions and product taints	Teagasc, Grange, Co. Meath	23,524
	Research - 11/S/104: Molecular Biomarkers of Fertility-New Tools for the Cattle Industry	Teagasc, Grange, Co. Meath	293,307
	Research - 11/S/122: Feed evaluation for accurate nutrition	Teagasc, Grange, Co. Meath	14,913
	Research - 11/RD/EMIDA/2: Coping with Anthelmintic resistance in Ruminants	Teagasc, Grange, Co. Meath	34,532
	TAMS – On Farm Investment - Dairy Equipment		412,000
	TAMS – On Farm Investment - Sheep Handling		96,000
	TAMS – On Farm Investment - Farm Safety		120,000
	TAMS – On Farm Investment - Rainwater Harvesting		2,000
	TAMS – On Farm Investment - Bioenergy Scheme		26,000
	Animal Welfare Organisation – dogs in Distress	Dunboyne	11,000
	Animal Welfare Organisation – Dog Rescue Coolronan	Coolronan, Ballyliver	4,000

Questions - Written Answers

2015Co Louth	Project Name	Location	Amount of Funding provided €
	Animal Welfare Organisation – Last Hope animal charity	Navan	10,000
	Animal Welfare Organisation – Mollies animal Rescue	Newtown Common, Duleek	3,000
	Animal Welfare Organisation – National Exotic animal Sanctuary	Coolronan, Ballyliver	17,000
	Animal Welfare Organisation – royal Dog Rescue	Navan	2,000
	Animal Welfare Organisation – Meath SPCA	Kells	2,000
	Animal Welfare Organisation – Leinster Horse & Pony Rescue	Trim	2,000
	Meath County Council Navan Traveller Workshop	Carnaross	3,022

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2016Co Louth	Project Name	Location	Amount of Funding provided €
	Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Commercial Horticulture Sector	Various locations in the county	14,633 paid to 31/10/2016. Possibly more payments to be made to 31/12/16 following receipt and processing of eligible claims.
	Forestry - Afforestation		363,585
	Forestry - FEPS		32,000
	Forestry - Forest Roads		16,664
	Forestry - Reconstitution		1,378
	Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme – Storm Damage Programme 2016 - Clogherhead Harbour Buoy Replacement	Clogherhead Harbour, Co Louth	7,500
	Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme – Storm Damage Programme 2016 - Carlingford Pier Repairs to Pier Wall	Carlingford, Co Louth	18,750
	Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2016 - Clogherhead Harbour Additional power point at Inner harbour	Clogherhead Harbour, Co Louth	11,250
	TAMS – On Farm Investment - Dairy Equipment		35,000
	TAMS – On Farm Investment - Sheep Handling		17,000
	TAMS – On Farm Investment - Farm Safety		22,000
Co Meath	Project Name	Location	Amount of Funding provided €
	Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Commercial Horticulture Sector	Various locations in the county	89,530 paid to 31/10/2016. Possibly more payments to be made to 31/12/16 following receipt and processing of eligible claims.
	CEDRA Agri-Food Tourism - Boyne Valley Food Series Marketing Initiative	Boyne Valley	6580
	Forestry - Afforestation		1,796,586
	Forestry - FEPS		104,286
	Forestry - Forest Roads		66,631
	Forestry - Reconstitution		16,226
	Forestry - Woodland Improvement		48,090

2016Co Louth	Project Name	Location	Amount of Funding provided €
	Research - 11/S/131: Predisposing factors for disease and immunocompetence in artificially reared dairy and suckled beef calves from birth to weaning	Teagasc, Grange, Co. Meath	74,402To date
	Research - 13/S/515: An integrated multidisciplinary approach to improving the reproductive efficiency of seasonal calving beef cow herds in Ireland	Teagasc, Grange, Co. Meath	168,030To date
	Research - 13/S/519: A multidisciplinary approach for the development of accurate biological markers of feed efficiency in cattle and pigs	Teagasc, Grange, Co. Meath	120,782To date
	Research - 11/RD/EMIDA2: Coping with Anthelmintic resistance in Ruminants	Teagasc, Grange, Co. Meath	60,289To date
	Research - 11/S/116: Maximising the Genetic Potential of Young Elite Bulls. A multidisciplinary approach	Teagasc, Grange, Co. Meath	22,232To date
	Research - 11/S/147: Smart Grassland Systems – Innovative Management Systems to Maxamise Resource Use Efficiency in Grasslands	Teagasc, Grange, Co. Meath	2,686To date
	Research - 11/S/104: Molecular Biomarkers of Fertility-New Tools for the Cattle Industry	Teagasc, Grange, Co. Meath	23,475To date
	Research - 11/S/105: Defining optimal pasture composition and its relationship with management factors in order to maximise dairy and beef productivity, whilst minimising nitrous oxide emissions (urine output) methane emissions and product taints	Teagasc, Grange, Co. Meath	610To date
	TAMS – On Farm Investment - Dairy Equipment		102,000
	TAMS – On Farm Investment - Sheep Handling		70,000
	TAMS – On Farm Investment - Farm Safety		69,000
	Meath County Council – Navan Traveller Workshop	Carnaross	22,390

Agriculture Scheme Applications

656. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the applications submitted for funding projects from Louth county council in each of the years 2014 to 2016 in tabular form; and if the applications were successful. [37231/16]

659. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the applications submitted for funding and projects from Meath county council in each of the years 2014 to 2016, in tabular form; if the applications where successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37279/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 656 and 659 together.

2014 Applications submitted for funding projects from Louth /Meath County Council	Indicate if applications were successfulY/N
Louth	

Questions - Written Answers

2014 Applications submitted for funding projects from Louth /Meath County Council	Indicate if applications were successfulY/N
Afforestation	N
Carlingford Harbour – Repair storm damage caused to revetment in Jan/Feb 2014 – Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme, Storm Damage Programme 2014	Y
Clogherhead Harbour – Water Utilities – Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2014	Y
Annagassan Harbour – Dredging Works – Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2014	Y
Clogherhead Harbour – Navigation Lights – Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2014	Y
Clogherhead Harbour – Wall Fender Protection – Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2014	N
Meath	
NIL	

2015 Applications submitted for funding projects from Louth /Meath County Council	Indicate if applications were successfulY/N
Louth	
Clogherhead – Upgrade existing lights – Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2015	Y
Gyles Quay – Repairs to pier structure – Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2015	Y
Meath	
CEDRA Agri-Food Tourism projects - Boyne Valley Food Series	Y
Navan Traveller Workshop	Y

2016 Applications submitted for funding projects from Louth /Meath County Council	Indicate if applications were successfulY/N
Louth	
Clogherhead Harbour – Buoy Replacement – Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2016	Y
Carlingford Pier – Repairs to Pier Wall – Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2016	Y
Clogherhead Harbour – Additional power point at Inner Harbour – Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2016	Y
Meath	
CEDRA Agri-Food Tourism projects - Boyne Valley Food Series Marketing Initiative	Y
Navan Traveller Workshop	Y

Questions Nos. 657 and 658 answered with Question No. 655.

Question No. 659 answered with Question No. 656.

Question No. 660 answered with Question No. 655.

Animal Welfare

661. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his Department has plans to impose an outright ban on the operation of wild animal circuses here in view of the fact that similar bans are now being imposed in many countries across Eu-

rope; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37318/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The conditions under which circus animals are kept and managed come under the scope of the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013, which contains rules relating to the welfare of all animals and requires a person having an animal under his or her control to safeguard and not endanger the health and welfare of the animal. My Department continues to engage with stakeholders, including circus groups, animal welfare organisations, in relation to the welfare of wild animals in circuses. According to the information available to my Department, there are in fact very few wild animals currently performing in Irish circuses. I have no plans at this juncture to ban the use of wild animals in circuses.

Young Farmers Scheme

662. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide a breakdown, by county, of the number of persons that have applied under the young farmers scheme in each of the past five years. [37419/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Young Farmers' Scheme was introduced in 2015 as a measure to support young farmers under the reformed Common Agricultural Policy. The number of applications received under the Young Farmers' Scheme, by county, in 2015 and 2016 is set out in the following table.

County	2015 Number of Applications	2016 Number of Applications
Carlow	150	144
Cavan	370	372
Clare	379	377
Cork	1067	981
Donegal	434	407
Dublin	44	42
Galway	777	771
Kerry	508	524
Kildare	143	140
Kilkenny	328	282
Laois	279	277
Leitrim	255	245
Limerick	383	338
Longford	154	157
Louth	95	92
Mayo	747	734
Meath	292	278
Monaghan	236	238
Offaly	257	258
Roscommon	380	358
Sligo	208	212
Tipperary	520	455
Waterford	252	243
Westmeath	185	186
Wexford	399	327
Wicklow	178	170

County	2015 Number of Applications	2016 Number of Applications
Total	9020	8613

Climate Change Adaptation Plans

663. **Deputy Josepha Madigan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the efforts currently underway to make Irish farming more environmentally sustainable in view of Ireland's difficulty in reaching the climate change targets of the Paris Agreement due to agricultural production of greenhouse gases. [37432/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Paris Agreement, which recently entered into force, clearly recognises that efforts to limit global temperature increases must do so in a manner that does not threaten food production.

This reflects the need for a coherent approach to the twin challenges of climate change and food security that does not force us to reduce our sustainable production of food.

The extent of the challenge to reduce GHG emissions, in line with Ireland's EU commitments, is clearly understood by Government, as reflected in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015.

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 provides a statutory basis for Government policy on climate change. As required by the Act, a National Mitigation Plan (NMP) is currently being prepared and I understand that this will be released shortly for a period of public consultation by my colleague, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment. Agricultural sectoral mitigation measures have been prepared for input to the NMP.

A range of actions are currently being undertaken to make Irish farming more environmentally sustainable, including measures under the Rural Development Programme (RDP), which is worth almost €4 billion over 7 years. The Programme is strongly targeted towards environmental benefits, including knowledge transfer programmes, which will bring the latest innovative sustainability research and practices direct to farmers.

Other measures include GLAS, the Green, Low-Carbon, Agri-Environment Scheme which offers opportunities to support emission reductions and carbon sequestration through various actions such as hedgerow and tree planting, minimum tillage and encouraging the sustainable management of upland peatlands, while at the same time addressing other environmental threats such as biodiversity and water quality.

The Beef Data and Genomics Programme is directly targeted at the climate emissions of 30,000 beef farmers. Its objective is to lower the intensity of GHG emissions by improving the quality and efficiency of the national beef herd

Furthermore, the establishment and maintenance of landscape features (for example, Ecological Focus Areas under CAP Pillar I) can assist with achieving other environmental objectives which are expected of land, such as water and biodiversity management, in addition to carbon sequestration benefits.

Ireland is a world leader in areas such as sustainable auditing and carbon foot-printing under the Origin Green programme. Origin Green is a strategic priority in Food Wise 2025, the ten year strategy for the agri-food industry.

Also the Pasture Profit Index, the Carbon Navigator Tool and the Agricultural Catchments

Programme help to reduce carbon emissions per unit of output produced and help protect our rivers.

All of these efforts are being implemented alongside an extensive afforestation scheme. Afforestation is the main cost effective land based climate mitigation tool available to Ireland, followed by the above mentioned mitigation technologies in agriculture itself. 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. Agriculture and afforestation are intrinsically linked in Ireland. Every new hectare of afforestation comes directly from agriculture.

TAMS Applications

664. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if full approval will be given under TAMS II for a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37441/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted an application for grant-aid under the Dairy Equipment Scheme in TAMS 11 on 26 August 2015. The applicant has completed the investment works and has submitted his claim for payment. My Department is awaiting an outstanding document in relation to the application for payment. The Applicant's Agricultural Advisor had advised the Department local office that it will be forwarded as soon as possible and once received the claim can be processed for payment.

Basic Payment Scheme Eligibility

665. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will review a matter (details supplied) regarding entitlements under the basic payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37463/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted an application for an allocation of entitlements under the 'Scottish Derogation' measure of the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme.

This application was initially deemed unsuccessful as the applicant held entitlements under the 2014 Single Payment Scheme which was not permitted under the conditions of the 'Scottish Derogation' measure of the Basic Payment Scheme. However following a recent clarification from the EU Commission, this applicant is now deemed successful and the person named will receive an allocation of entitlements under the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme.

A letter will issue in the coming days to the person named informing them of this decision and payment will issue shortly thereafter.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

666. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a single farm payment will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37473/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): An applica-

tion under 2016 Basic Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 16 May 2016. Processing of the application has recently been finalised and payment will shortly issue, directly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland

667. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when he will open the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, SBCI, agricultural fund to farmers; the operational breakdown of this scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37522/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I announced earlier this month that the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) had invited financial institutions to take part in the “Agriculture Cashflow Support Loan Scheme”. This Scheme will enable farmers to improve the management of their cash flow and reduce the cost of their short-term borrowings. This loan scheme forms part of a “three pillar strategy” in response to income volatility, which I announced as part of the recent Budget. Along with tax measures and farm payments, it will alleviate some of the pressures being caused by the current market difficulties.

The SBCI is targeting that the loans will be available in the market by the end of January 2017. I am encouraging farmers to consider their cash flow and borrowings situation now, and if appropriate to their circumstances, to be prepared to apply for these loans when they become available.

The Scheme is being developed by my Department in partnership with the SBCI. The Department’s funding of €25 million includes €11 million made available under the EU’s exceptional adjustment aid for milk and other livestock farmers and €14 million in national funding. This provides leverage for the €150 million scheme, which will support highly flexible loans for up to six years, for amounts up to €150,000, at an interest rate of 2.95%.

Departmental Reports

668. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reports commissioned by his Department since 2006 which, while completed or in final draft form, have not been published; the reason they have not been published; the expected publication date; the cost to date of each such report; if tenders were invited; if it is not intended to publish any such report, the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37541/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Due to the volume of the information requested by the Deputy, it was not possible to provide it within the required time. I will forward it to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

TAMS Applications

669. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will clarify a situation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37572/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted an application for grant-aid under the Dairy Equipment Scheme of TAMS II on 6 October 2015. The applicant has completed the investment works and submitted an application for payment. A prepayment inspection will be undertaken shortly. When this inspection has been satisfactorily completed, the application will move to payment stage.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

670. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payments will issue for the Green Low carbon Agri-environment Scheme, GLAS, Areas of Natural Constraint, ANC, scheme, and hen harrier scheme for 2016 to a person (details supplied). [37577/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted a 2016 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme application on 10 May 2016. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases remote sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a remote sensing eligibility inspection. This inspection has been processed and the person named was notified of the findings on 23 November 2016. The notification issued outlines the options available at this stage, namely to accept the findings or to submit comments to my Department for consideration. On completion of this process, any payments due will issue to the nominated bank account of the person named as soon as possible.

My Department is currently in the process of recruiting a Project team for the administration of an European Innovation Partnership Locally Led Scheme for the Conservation of the Hen Harrier. This scheme will offer a novel and complementary approach to the action-based approach which has been adopted for the broader GLAS scheme. Once this team is in place the Scheme will be opened to farmers that have hen harrier designated land in any of the six Special Protection Areas that will be covered under the Scheme.

The person named has also been approved under Tranche 1 of GLAS with a contract start date of 1 October 2015 and full payment has issued in respect of the 2015 Scheme year. Payment in respect of the 2016 scheme year is currently being processed and once the prepayment validations have been successfully completed, the first instalment due will issue to the person named.

Harbours and Piers Maintenance

671. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of dredging works in Dingle harbour (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37581/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Dingle Fishery Harbour Centre is one of the six designated Fishery Harbour Centres which are owned, managed and maintained by my Department under Statute.

The possibility of a dredging project in Dingle has been mooted for some time and in that regard my Department had previously carried out investigations in relation to dredging the

main navigation channel into Dingle Harbour.

I am happy to advise the Deputy that funding of €1.225 million was made available for new capital works and the maintenance of Dingle Fishery Harbour Centre during 2016. Of importance in the context of a possible future dredging project at Dingle is the allocation of €500,000 for preparatory elements required before such project could commence.

To progress this, my Department engaged the services of a consultancy firm with expertise in civil and marine engineering earlier this year. The objective was to prepare a preliminary report, detailed design and tender documentation for the Dredging of Navigation Channel at Dingle. Part of that process included a geotechnical site investigation and a vessel simulation study, together with environmental studies and archaeological studies.

The Consultant's report is currently being finalised, however my Department's engineers are moving ahead with the preparation of application documents for the necessary statutory consents required before any project can proceed.

The Deputy should note however, that as with all developments in the six Fishery Harbour Centres, a possible future dredging project at Dingle FHC will be considered under future Capital Programmes on the basis of available exchequer funding and competing priorities.

Non-Disclosure Agreements

672. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his Department or the agencies that report to his Department entered into any non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements with any organisation due to court action or a threatened court action; and if so, the persons or groups with which these agreements exist. [37621/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): It is not possible to provide this information in the required time. I will forward it to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Nitrates Action Programme Review

673. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the transitional arrangements for pig farmers can be allowed to continue in the current format until the full review of the nitrates regulations in 2017 is completed (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37665/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2014 are the responsibility of the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government. The current arrangement negotiated with the Commission in Ireland's action programme for Nitrates whereby the intensive sectors (Pig, Poultry and Mushroom composts) are allowed to apply manures in excess of crop requirement is due to expire at the end of the year. The arrangement was put in place in 2006 to assist the industry to comply with the regulations and has been moving the industry towards full compliance over the intervening 10 years.

In 2017, the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, assisted by my Department will embark on a review of its Nitrates Action Programme with the European Commission, with a view to having in place by 2018, an agreed Nitrates Action Programme that will run from 2018 to 2021. In addition, a request for a new nitrates derogation will be

submitted to the Commission as part of the review process.

Agreeing a new action programme and securing a derogation will be a significant objective for 2017. Although having been successful in all previous derogation requests, this review will be complicated by the recent EPA report on Water Quality 2012 – 2015. Previous reports all revealed an increase in water quality albeit a slow and gradual improvement. This report, however, at best reveals a stalling of this trend in improvement and at worst shows a slight deterioration in the water quality of certain types of water courses.

I understand that a full consultation process will be carried out as part of reviewing the action programme in early 2017 and all issues raised by stakeholders will be fully considered as part of this process.

Carbon Tax Implementation

674. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has considered introducing a carbon tax on beef and dairy products; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37666/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): There is a whole of Government approach to climate policy as set out in the National Climate Policy Position. Officials from my Department work very closely with other Departments and in particular, with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, which is the lead in this area and the matter of a carbon tax on beef and dairy products has not been considered.

Irish Grass-based agricultural production is independently and internationally recognised as one of the most climate and resource efficient in the world. However, there are limited cost-effective abatement options available in respect of biological emissions and imposing carbon taxes on Irish beef and dairy products could have the effect of shifting production to other countries with less sustainable production systems.

My approach is to focus on driving down the emissions intensity of Irish production through the deployment of innovative and efficient practices at farm level combined with the practical application of emerging scientific knowledge.

Agriculture Industry

675. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will address an issue (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37667/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I recently met with the Association of Farm Contractors in Ireland (FCI) to discuss the matters raised in their submission. The sustained period of lower commodity prices has caused cash flow difficulties for farmers in several sectors, which consequently affects service providers such as farm contractors. I have committed to working with all the stakeholders to address the issues involved and ensure that we continue to have a sustainable and resilient sector. As part of the recent Budget, I announced a “three pillar strategy” to alleviate the pressures of income volatility through lower cost finance, tax measures and farm payments.

While taxation policy is primarily the responsibility of the Minister for Finance, our two

Departments continuously liaise on agri-taxation matters and I make an annual submission in advance of the Budget. I will ensure that the Department of Finance is informed of the various issues raised by FCI. Considerable progress was made in the recent budget, including the extension of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland's accelerated capital allowance scheme for energy efficient equipment to non-incorporated businesses, and increased equity within the income tax system for the self-employed.

Hedge cutting controls are primarily a responsibility for the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs under the Wildlife Act.

You may be aware that last week I announced that the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) has invited banks and other lenders to take part in the "Agriculture Cashflow Support Loan Scheme". My Department and the SBCI have been working closely on the Scheme and the SBCI is targeting that the loans will be available in the market by the end of January 2017. I clarified at the meeting with FCI that these loans will be available to farmers or SMEs engaged in primary agricultural production.

Horse Racing Ireland

676. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 209 of 16 November 2016, if the nominee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, ICTU, to the board of Horse Racing Ireland, HRI, receives his or her salary from ICTU; if the salary of the nominee of ICTU is not paid by ICTU, the name of the person or the entity that pays the salary of the ICTU member and nominee of that body to the board of HRI; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37751/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Horse Racing Ireland (HRI) is a commercial state body established under the Horse and Greyhound Racing Act, 2001, and is responsible for the overall administration, promotion and development of the horse racing industry.

The matter raised by the Deputy is not a matter for my Department.

Ministerial Advisers Appointments

677. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of the appointment of additional special advisers by him and Ministers of State in his Department. [37882/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Under the Special Advisors (Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine) Order 2016 two special advisers were appointed to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. This was in line with Section 11 of the Public Service Management Act, 1997.

Waste Management

678. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if there is anything prohibiting local councils from continuing to grant licences to small pay-by-bag domestic waste collectors while he is examining the future of pay-by-weight regulations following the suspension of their introduction by him earlier this year; and if he

will consider the position of small pay-by-bag operators that currently operate in parts of rural Ireland when reviewing the pay-by-weight regulations. [37642/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): It is widely recognised that there are difficulties associated with the collection of household waste in bags, including:

- littering caused by ripped bags;
- health and safety issues for collectors, where sharp objects are placed in bags;
- litter caused by fly-tipping on streets/areas, where bag collections take place;
- little or no segregation of recyclable or food waste; and
- inability to gather data on waste collected for statistical and environmental reporting purposes.

As a result of such issues, I am aware of at least one local authority which has already (through bye-laws) removed the option for householders to present household waste in bags for collection.

With the above in mind, a decision was taken in April 2015 to phase-out the use of bags for household waste collection, where 'wheelie bins' could be accommodated.

The Department, in consultation with local authorities, has set criteria to be applied nationally with a view to phasing out bags, with the exception of areas where it is not practical to use 'wheelie bins'. Local authorities have been requested to designate areas as not being suitable for wheelie bin collections (i.e. designate areas which should remain on bag collections) and are working through this process.

In brief, the criteria for undertaking the exercise to designate 'bag collection areas' are as follows:

- No space within the boundary of the property (front, rear or side) to store 3 bins.
- Physical features which make it difficult to move a bin to the front edge of the property or nearest boundary for presentation, e.g. steep gradient and or steps (the advice of a Roads Engineer should be sought) or that would present an unreasonable difficulty.
- The area (e.g. street) is too narrow for a refuse collection vehicle to access properties and the nearest Designated Collection Point or suitable presentation point is greater than 100m from the property (again, the advice of a Roads Engineer should be sought on this issue).
- Where the Local Authority is notified of exceptional circumstances by a householder / resident and the Local Authority certifies same.

Many local authorities have now completed the process of designating areas where bag collections may continue, if applicable, and can be contacted for further information.

National Broadband Plan

679. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when the latest broadband development programme can deliver the much required service in all areas throughout the country with particular reference to County Kildare;

and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37736/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (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 Government commits to the delivery of the NBP as a matter of priority. This is being achieved through a combination of commercial investment by the telecommunications sector and through a State intervention in those areas where commercial investment has not been fully demonstrated. The Department is now in a formal procurement process to select a company or companies who will roll out a new high-speed broadband network within the State Intervention Area, comprising over 750,000 premises including approximately 20,300 premises in Co Kildare, covering 100,000km of road network and 96% of the land area of Ireland.

Intensive dialogue with bidders is continuing and the three bidders have indicated that they are proposing a predominantly fibre-to-the-home solution. Householders and businesses may get speeds not just of 30 megabits per second but potentially up to 1000 megabits per second with businesses potentially availing of symmetrical upload and download speeds.

Earlier this year, before I came into office, the Department announced that it would be June 2017 before contract(s) were awarded under the NBP. The bidders in the process have recently indicated that they may need more time to conclude the procurement process. The timing of each stage of the procurement continues to be dependent on a range of factors including the complexities that may be encountered by the procurement team and bidders, during the procurement process. Bidders need adequate time to prepare detailed proposals and their final formal bids. In addition, bidders need adequate time to get the relevant shareholder and funding approvals at key stages of the process. It is also important to ensure that risks in this multi-million euro procurement are carefully managed. I do not propose to comment any further on timelines at this juncture, given that discussions are on-going in the procurement process. I can assure the Deputy, however, that the procurement process is being intensively managed, to ensure an outcome that delivers a future-proofed network that serves homes and businesses across Ireland, for at least 25 years. The Government considers the NBP to be one of the most significant investments in rural Ireland for decades, and one that will transform society, akin to rural electrification in the last century.

During the Department's extensive stakeholder consultations in 2015, telecommunications service providers indicated a 3-5 year timeline to rollout a network of the scale envisaged under the NBP. 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 Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. A detailed rollout plan for the network will be published once contract(s) are in place.

The Programme for Government also commits to measures to assist in the rollout of the network once a contract is awarded. In this regard, Minister Humphreys is leading on the establishment of two regional action groups, working with Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Offices and other relevant agencies to help accelerate the broadband network build in rural Ireland, once a contract(s) has been awarded.

The High Speed Broadband Map, which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie shows the extent of the State Intervention area:

- The areas marked BLUE represent those areas where commercial providers are either currently delivering or have previously indicated plans to deliver high speed broadband services.

- The areas marked AMBER on the High Speed Broadband Map represent the target areas for the State Intervention which are the subject of the current procurement process.

The map provides information on a county by county basis with a breakdown of coverage across the townlands in every county including County Kildare. Members of the public can view whether their premises in Kildare are in the BLUE or AMBER area by accessing the High Speed Broadband Map and entering their Eircode.

I would encourage citizens in County Kildare who cannot access high speed broadband services to contact my Department directly at broadband@dcae.gov.ie, quoting their address and Eircode, and giving details of providers they have contacted with a view to obtaining services. This information will assist my Department to keep track of progress in those areas so that high speed broadband solutions can be found in parallel with the State Intervention high speed broadband network roll-out.

Renewable Energy Generation

680. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will provide the performance output of energy generated by Mount Lucas wind farm, County Offaly. [36876/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Single Electricity Market (SEM) is the wholesale electricity market for the island of Ireland since 2007. The Electricity Regulation (Amendment) (Single Electricity Market) Act, 2007 provides the legal framework for the establishment, operation and regulation of the SEM. The market is designed to provide for the least cost source of electricity generation to meet customer demand at any one time across the island, while also maximising the long-term sustainability and reliability of the market. The SEM is regulated by the SEM Committee while the operation and administration of the SEM is managed by the Single Electricity Market Operator. The Single Electricity Market Operator (SEMO) is a joint venture between the transmission system operator for Ireland, EirGrid plc., and the System Operator for Northern Ireland Limited, (SONI). SEMO is licensed and regulated by the Commission for Energy Regulation in Ireland and its counterpart in Northern Ireland, the Utility Regulator. I have no function in the day-to-day operational matters of the CER, of the SEM Operator or of the SEM Committee.

Data in regard to the generation of electricity by wind on an individual wind farm basis is made publicly available on the website of the Single Electricity Market Operator through a log in facility at the following link www.sem-o.com, but should the Deputy have a specific query, for example relating to a particular period or time, the Single Electricity Market Operator has advised me that it would be happy to assist the Deputy should he contact it directly.

Broadcasting Authority of Ireland

681. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will appoint the final Government appointee to the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland; the timeframe for the appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36877/16]

682. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will appoint the final Government appointee to the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland; if not, the reasons for this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36878/16]

684. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the vetting process or assessment criteria for appointees to the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland; if conflicts of interest are taken into account; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36880/16]

686. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will publicly advertise for the position on the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, for which the Government has an appointee; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36882/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 681, 682, 684 and 686 together.

Appointments to the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) are made by Government, on my nomination as Minister, in accordance with the provisions of the Broadcasting Act 2009. There is currently one vacancy on the Authority.

In addition to appointments to the BAI, the Government, on my nomination, makes appointments to two BAI statutory committees, namely the Contract Awards Committee and the Compliance Committee. There is currently one vacancy on each of these Committees with a further vacancy due to arise on the Compliance Committee in January.

The 3 current vacancies, as well as the upcoming vacancy, will be filled in accordance with the provisions of the 2009 Act and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards published in November 2014. In line with the Guidelines, the vacancies have been publically advertised on the websites of the Public Appointments Service (PAS), the BAI and my own Department. The closing date for applications is 8 December 2016 after which applications will be assessed and a shortlist provided to me for consideration. It is my intention to bring my nominations to Government as soon as possible after the shortlist is provided to me.

The assessment criteria in each case are detailed in the public advertisements. Candidates must in all cases confirm that they do not have any conflicts of interest which would likely interfere with their ability to play a full part on the Authority or relevant Committee.

Broadcasting Authority of Ireland

683. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if there are currently any complaints lodged with the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland that cannot be assessed, answered or adjudicated on in view of the fact that the final Government appointee has not been selected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36879/16]

685. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of times members of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland have had to remove themselves from assessing, answering or adjudicating on a complaint due to a conflict of interest; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36881/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 683 and 685 together.

The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) is an independent body established under the Broadcasting Act 2009. The activities of the Board and the statutory committees, namely the

Contract Awards Committee and Compliance Committee, are operational in nature and not matters in which I, as Minister, have any function.

Postal Codes

687. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he requested the public broadcasting of advertisements on both television and radio promoting the use of Eircode during emergency situations; and if so, the reason the public advertisements do not carry any endorsement by his Department. [36883/16]

688. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on whether it was more appropriate to use public funds to run public awareness campaigns advising persons to ensure their Eircode is correct. [36884/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 687 and 688 together.

Eircode ran an advertising campaign on television and radio to raise public awareness of using Eircodes during emergency situations. Using Eircodes helps the National Ambulance Service (NAS) provide speedier access to care. The NAS integrated Eircodes into their Computer Aided Dispatch system (CAD) in February 2016. This means that callers to the ambulance service can give the patient's Eircode, which is validated in the CAD system. The call taker can then locate the patient's property and direct the nearest available ambulance to the correct location.

Ambulance emergency requests often come from isolated rural locations. NAS considers the Eircode information to be very important in the rapid identification of these rural addresses – in particular, responding to calls from any of the 35% non-unique addresses in the state which caused significant operational challenges in the past. On foot of the campaign, call takers in the National Ambulance Service noticed a big improvement in the elderly population knowing and keeping their Eircode close to the phone.

While there is no requirement to reference the Department in a public service announcement, my Department did approve the public awareness campaign.

Postal Codes

689. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if Eircode has carried out an assessment of the accuracy of the Eircodes assigned to households. [36885/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Eircode employ rigorous quality assurance and validation check processes on the assignment of Eircodes to each postal address and its corresponding geo-location. The postal addresses and the geo-locations are provided to Eircode from authoritative sources, namely An Post and Ordnance Survey Ireland through their subsidiary company An Post GeoDirectory.

Eircode undertake detailed quality checking process of all new address data provided by An Post GeoDirectory. Once this process has been completed, Eircodes are then allocated to each postal address through rigorous rules based assignment with built-in quality checks that verify each Eircode is unique and is accurately assigned to the postal address as well as its geo-location.

Departmental Staff Redeployment

690. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of staff from his Department currently seconded to other Departments or agencies in the Civil Service per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36961/16]

691. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of staff from his Department who have appealed against secondment per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the appeals mechanism involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36977/16]

692. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of staff from his Department currently seconded to a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36993/16]

693. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of staff from his Department currently seconded from a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37009/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 690 to 693, inclusive, together.

My Department works with other Departments and public sector organisations to provide access to development opportunities for staff by way of secondment to/from the Department. Secondments from the private sector arise in respect of skills not readily available within my Department.

The information sought by the Deputy is set out in the following table:

Year	No. of Staff Seconded out to Other Departments/Agencies	No. of Appeals to Secondments	No. of Staff Seconded Out to Private Sector	No. of Staff Seconded In from Private Sector
2010	9	0	0	0
2011	11	0	0	0
2012	12	0	0	1
2013	10	0	0	1
2014	10	0	0	1
2015	12	0	0	1
2016	11	0	0	1

Commission for Energy Regulation

694. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the structure being applied to a company (details supplied) for the sale of gas into the network here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37161/16]

695. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if proposed tariffs to deal with the loss of capacity which will occur for the interconnector pipes across the Irish Sea is being applied to a company (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37162/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 694 and 695 together.

I have no statutory function in relation to matters regarding tariffs for the gas industry. 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. Decisions on the regulatory treatment of the gas network and tariffing are statutorily matters for the CER under the Gas (Interim) (Regulation) Act 2002. The CER, as the independent energy regulator, has a remit to protect energy consumers, ensure security of supply and support competitiveness.

From 2011, in anticipation of the entry of Corrib gas into the system, and in pursuance of its duty to ensure that new sources of gas for the Irish market did not result in unwarranted increases in the price of gas to business and domestic consumers, the CER embarked on a process of reform of the regime governing the regulatory treatment of the two Ireland/UK gas interconnectors and associated tariffing. The rationale for the CER's proposed reform was that if the then current regime were to persist, new sources of gas coming onstream such as Corrib, and possible liquified natural gas (LNG), would cause the price of gas to rise significantly for all Irish consumers, regardless of the source of the supply. Given our high dependence on gas for electricity generation this would also give rise to electricity price increases and would negatively impact on Ireland's competitiveness.

On 29 June 2012, following the usual consultation period, the CER published a high-level decision outlining its proposals for the new tariff regime. This CER decision subsequently became the subject of a Judicial Review taken by Shannon LNG. On 11 December 2013 the High Court upheld the CER decision of 29 June 2012. I understand that Shannon LNG has appealed the High Court decision to the Supreme Court.

Following an extensive period of consultation on how the 2012 decision would be implemented, the associated new tariffing regime was introduced with effect from 1st October 2015. Full details are to be found in the CER Decision Paper of 23 July 2015 (CER/15/140) available from the CER website at www.cer.ie.

Departmental Funding

696. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the funding that has been provided to County Louth over the previous three years 2014 to 2016 by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37218/16]

697. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the applications submitted for funding projects from Louth county council in each of the years 2014 to 2016 in tabular form; and if the applications were successful. [37234/16]

698. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the funding for projects in 2017 in County Louth to be funded by his Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37250/16]

699. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the funding that has been provided to County Meath over the previous three years 2014 to 2016 by project name, location and funding amount in tabular form. [37266/16]

700. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and

Environment the applications submitted for funding and projects from Meath County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016, in tabular form; if the applications were successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37282/16]

701. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the funding for projects in 2017 in County Meath to be funded by his Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37298/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 696 to 701, inclusive, together.

In the time available it has not been possible to gather the information sought. My Department is compiling the information requested and I will write to the Deputy with the information sought as a matter of urgency.

Gas and Electricity Disconnections

702. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will ensure that gas and electricity companies will not disconnect customers from services during December 2016 and into the early months of 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37387/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I am acutely aware of the financial challenges faced by families, businesses, charitable and voluntary organisations in dealing with energy costs. However, it is important to note that the electricity and gas markets are commercial, liberalised, and competitive and that they operate within national and European regulatory regimes.

Responsibility for electricity and gas market regulation is a matter for the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) which is an independent statutory body.

Existing obligations on suppliers as regards disconnections are included in the CERs Electricity and Natural Gas Supplier Handbook, which includes a Code of Practice on Disconnections, under which suppliers are required to offer customers assistance in managing their account and treat disconnections as a last resort.

A number of measures have been taken in recent years to assist consumers deal with energy costs. The CER procured Pay-As-You-Go (PAYG) Meters to help those in difficulty with energy bills to better manage their usage and reduce the risk of disconnection. The rollout of PAYG meters has contributed to a fall in the number of disconnections and limited the accumulation of arrears. The Department continues to work with the CER and the energy industry to ensure that there are no impediments to their continued availability to customers who are at risk of energy poverty.

Bord Gáis Energy, Electric Ireland, Energia, Flogas Natural Gas and SSE Airtricity have adopted a voluntary code of practice, the 'Energy Engage Code' committing them never to disconnect an engaging customer, to avoid disconnections in the winter period, and to work with their customers on realistic and achievable payment plans for any arrears.

CER has also issued a disconnection moratorium request to all suppliers and the network companies for all domestic customers for the Christmas period. The moratorium runs from 16th December 2016 to 6th January 2017. Essentially, network companies cannot process

requests for disconnection for non-payment of account during this period.

The Code supplements existing obligations on suppliers as set out in the CERs Electricity and Natural Gas Supplier Handbook. The impact of the Code on the level of disconnections is being continuously monitored by the CER.

Electricity Generation

703. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the materials, their volumes and their values that are imported by State agencies to fuel the generation of electricity here for the past five years. [37508/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The information sought regarding the agencies under the aegis of my Department is an operational matter for each Agency. I will request the relevant bodies to reply directly to the Deputy with the information requested in respect of their organisation.

Vacancies on State Boards

704. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when he will fill the number of vacancies on the board of EirGrid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37529/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The three current vacancies and an anticipated upcoming vacancy on the Board of EirGrid will be filled in accordance with the provisions of the European Communities (Internal Market in Electricity) Regulations 2000 (S.I. No. 445 of 2000) and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards published in November 2014. In line with the Guidelines, the vacancies will shortly be publically advertised on the websites of the Public Appointments Service (PAS), EirGrid and my own Department. Following receipt of applications an assessment process will be undertaken and a shortlist of candidates provided to me for consideration. It is my intention to fill the vacancies as soon as possible after the shortlist of candidates is provided to me.

Departmental Reports

705. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the reports commissioned by his Department since 2006 which, while completed or are in final draft form, have not been published; the reason they have not been published; the expected publication date; the cost to date of each such report; if tenders were invited; if it is not intended to publish any such report the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37544/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I would refer the Deputy to a previous PQ 22172/16 Dail Ref: 800 answered on 19 July 2016 relating to this matter which gives details of reports commissioned since 2011. Due to the reconfiguration of the Department it is not possible to provide information prior to 2011.

While in the time available it has not been possible to update information for the interim period to date, my Department is compiling that additional information and I will write to the

Deputy with the information sought as soon as it is compiled.

Departmental Bodies Data

706. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the total overall amount paid by way of grant aid to An Taisce from 2010 to 2016; and for each year respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37605/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): A total of €4.31 million has been provided to An Taisce between 2010 and 2016 in respect of a range of environmental activities and public awareness initiatives which it undertakes, including: the National Spring Clean initiative; contribution to the Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL) National Litter League; and the Green Schools programme. Funding was also provided from the Environment Fund during the period in question for the Green Coast and Blue Flag Awards.

Funding to an An Taisce is provided from the Environment Fund. The annual allocations for each of the years 2010 to 2016 are set out in the following table.

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016*	Total
€	€	€	€	€	€	€	€
834,424	766,014	753,200	736,800	415,000	403,000	403,000	4,311,438

*2016 figures are allocations. Final details on payments in 2016 will not be available until end of year.

Electromagnetic Hypersensitivity

707. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if a person has a right to refuse installation of a smart meter on their property on the grounds of the unknown health effects of wireless radiation and to provide any health and environmental impact studies that have been done in relation to their safety; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37619/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The EU's Third Energy Package stipulates "where roll-out of smart meters is assessed positively, at least 80% of consumers shall be equipped with intelligent metering systems by 2020." The majority of energy customers in Europe are expected to have an electricity smart meter by 2020 and smart meters are also being rolled out in other parts of the world including the United States, Brazil, India, and China.

In Ireland, the National Smart Metering Programme is managed by the Commission for Energy Regulation. The roll-out will include replacement of electricity meters, by ESB Networks, and gas meters, by Gas Networks Ireland, with new smart meters.

Smart meters are considered safe, having a smart meter in one's home is on a comparable scale with having WiFi or a baby-monitor. In the delivery of smart meters, ESB Networks, and Gas Networks Ireland are required to ensure that any meters procured would, at a minimum, meet Irish and EU product health and safety legislation and standards, which require manufacturers to ensure that any product placed on the market is safe. The Commission for Energy Regulation will be monitoring this to ensure full compliance.

Regarding right of refusal, I have been informed by the Commission for Energy Regulation that a customer that does not want an upgraded meter will be able to decline to have this new meter installed. However, the intention is that the default for newly constructed dwellings or other premises, or where meters are due for replacement at the end of their life, will be the installation of a smart meter. Over time, every mechanical meter is likely to be replaced with this new generation technology.

Non-Disclosure Agreements

708. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his Department, or the agencies that report to his Department, entered into any non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements with any organisation due to court action or a threatened court action; and if so, the persons or groups with which these agreements exist. [37624/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Following legal advice, it is considered that the provision of the information requested would undermine and possibly breach any agreement that may have been entered into by my Department.

The information regarding the agencies under the aegis of my Department is an operational matter for each Agency. I will request the relevant bodies to reply directly to the Deputy with the information requested in respect of their organisation.

Commission for Energy Regulation

709. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has considered using his powers under section 13 of the Communication Regulation Act 2002 to ensure proper and effective use of the 3.6GHz spectrum to promote competition in the market; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37740/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The regulation of telecommunications operators is the statutory responsibility of ComReg in accordance with the requirements of the Communications Regulation Act 2002 and the Regulations transposing the EU Regulatory Framework for Electronic Communications Networks and Services.

In October, I signed Regulations which will allow ComReg to auction spectrum in the 3.6GHz band (Wireless telegraphy (3.6GHz Band Licences) Regulations, 2016 (S.I. 532 of 2016)). This will allow ComReg to proceed to auction the 3.6GHz radio spectrum band, and will provide an 86% increase in total spectrum available for mobile and fixed wireless services. The liberalisation of this band is in accordance with EU rules, and will allow the band to be used for a combination of mobile and wireless services, providing better quality voice and data services to customers across Ireland.

The proposals by ComReg to allocate spectrum in this band have been the subject of considerable consultation by ComReg over a long period and the process to allocate that spectrum has already commenced.

Alternative Energy Projects

710. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the grant aid available for a company wishing to install a bio-mass burner instead of oil and gas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37759/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The introduction of a Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) is a commitment in the Programme for Government and will be the primary support mechanism in the heating sector designed to meet Ireland's renewable energy obligations. The aim of the RHI is to build on the progress already made in the renewable heating sector and to help reach Ireland's 12% target by 2020. In 2015, 6.6% of heat was derived from renewable sources in Ireland. The proposed RHI scheme is aimed at supporting larger industrial and commercial installations outside of the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) to change to heating solutions that produce heat from renewable sources. While no decision has been taken on the precise technologies to be supported, the use of biomass is one of the renewable heat technologies under consideration as part of the new scheme.

Before a final decision is taken on the renewable heat technologies to be supported, there will be an additional public consultation phase on the design of the new support scheme. The next consultation will be published before the end of 2016 and details will be posted to the Department's website www.dccae.gov.ie.

Before the RHI scheme is opened for applications, the overall costs and technologies to be supported will be subject to Government approval and State aid clearance from the European Commission. I hope to be in a position to announce the introduction of the new scheme in the latter half of 2017.

Ministerial Advisers Appointments

711. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the appointment of additional special advisers by him and Ministers of State in his Department. [37885/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Special Advisers are appointed by Government under the terms and conditions set out in the 'Instructions to Personnel Officers – Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil' which includes the Guidelines for Staffing of Ministerial Offices. I have appointed two special advisors to my Department in accordance with the Guidelines. No advisors have been appointed by Minister of State Kyne to my Department.

Driver Test Regulations

712. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a learner driver arriving at the test centre to take the driving test is unaccompanied by a qualified driver will be permitted to take the test; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37658/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Learner drivers must, whenever they drive, be accompanied by a qualified driver. If they are not, then they are not covered by the terms of the learner permit, which entitles them to drive only if accompanied. As such, unaccompanied learner drivers are in fact driving unlicensed.

The driver testing service, which is operated by the Road Safety Authority (RSA), is responsible for running the driving test, and does not have any power to enforce the law. This remains the role of An Garda Síochána.

Road Projects

713. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if Transport Infrastructure Ireland plans to carry out upgrade works on the N69 Kilcornan village as escalated by Limerick City and County Council in view of the fact conditions are extremely dangerous in the area. [36858/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects (including works on the N69 Kilcornan village) is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), formerly the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Taxi Regulations

714. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans for making the taxi services here more environmentally friendly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36870/16]

715. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if there are proposals for making the taxi industry more environmentally friendly; the stage of these plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36871/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 714 and 715 together.

A key element of securing more environmentally friendly taxi services is the anticipated transition of the national taxi fleet to more sustainable alternative fuels over time.

As the Deputy may know, my Department is in the process of developing the transport sector's contribution to the National Mitigation Plan. This will include proposals for a range of measures aimed at supporting a transition to low carbon technologies. In addition, I recently held a public consultation on a draft national policy framework on alternative fuels infrastructure for transport. The primary aim of this framework is to remove any barriers that exist towards greater uptake of low emissions vehicles or LEVs.

The framework reflects the Programme for Partnership Government's commitment to establishing a dedicated LEV taskforce. It is certainly recognised that greater penetration of LEVs in the Irish market would assist Ireland in meeting emissions reduction, energy efficiency and air quality targets as well as achieving 10% renewable energy in the transport sector by 2020.

As policy in relation to electric vehicles rests with my colleague, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, his Department is working closely with mine to establish the taskforce in the coming weeks. It will work to present a range of potential

measures and incentive options to Government for the purpose of accelerating the deployment of LEVs, including taxis. Proposals to support the uptake of lower emitting public service passenger cars will be considered within its work programme.

Tourism Promotion

716. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding available from his Department for 2017 for the development of walking and cycling tourism; the way this money will be disbursed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36889/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Patrick O'Donovan): My Department's role in relation to tourism lies primarily in the area of national tourism policy. It is not directly involved in the management or development of individual tourism sectors such as walking or cycling, which are operational matters for the Board and Management of Fáilte Ireland. I have asked Fáilte Ireland to reply you directly in regard to its investment in and development of these sectors, including any funding available. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply in ten working days.

With regard to my Department's responsibility in respect of sustainable transport, under the Capital Plan, €100 million is committed to smarter travel and carbon reduction measures which includes funding for the further development of greenways. The Programme for Government also commits to providing additional capital funding for various tourism projects, including greenways. I will be seeking to deliver this additional funding in the context of the mid-term review of the Capital Plan next year.

My Department is currently developing a new strategy to set out a cohesive and forward looking approach to the development, funding and promotion of greenways and intends to consult with all stakeholders in the coming months. The outcome of this consultation and the resulting strategy will inform my Department's approach in relation to the allocation of available greenway funding in 2017 and beyond.

Tourism Promotion

717. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if Fáilte Ireland will outline the efforts made in 2016 to promote home-holidaying; the efforts that will be made in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36937/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Patrick O'Donovan): Domestic tourism marketing and the promotion of home holidays are operational matters for the Board and Management of Fáilte Ireland. Accordingly, I have referred the Deputy's question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply. The Deputy should contact my private office if he has not received a reply within ten working days.

Tourism Funding

718. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide funding in 2017 for the community tourism initiative for the diaspora in view of the success of the scheme for small communities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36940/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Patrick O'Donovan): My Department's role in relation to tourism lies primarily in the area of national tourism policy. It is not directly involved in the management or development of individual tourism initiatives, which are operational matters for Fáilte Ireland.

The National Community Diaspora Tourism Initiative was a three-way partnership between Fáilte Ireland, the Local Authorities (under the auspices of the County and City Managers Association) and IPB Insurance. Each party contributed €333,000 per year for 3 years between 2014 and 2016 towards community events which had a strong Diaspora element. This fund was established as a follow-on from the success of the Gathering in mobilising local communities to harness diaspora links for the benefit of local tourism.

As regards the development of another tourism funding initiative of this nature, I am referring the Deputy's question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply. The Deputy should contact my private office if he has not received a reply within ten working days.

Departmental Staff Redeployment

719. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of staff from his Department currently seconded to other Departments or agencies in the Civil Service per annum from 2010 to 2015, inclusive, and to date in 2016, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36973/16]

720. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of staff from his Department who have appealed against secondment per annum from 2010 to 2015, inclusive, and to date in 2016, in tabular form; the appeals mechanism involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36989/16]

721. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of staff from his Department currently seconded to a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to 2015, inclusive, and to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37005/16]

722. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of staff from his Department currently seconded from a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to 2015, inclusive, and to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37021/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 719 to 722, inclusive, together.

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

□Year	□2010	□2011	□2012	□2013	□2014	□2015	□2016 to date
□Seconded out to Departments or agencies	□0	□0	□1	□2	2	□4	9
□Seconded out to private sector	□0	□0	□0	□0	□0	□0	□0
□Seconded in from private sector	□0	□0	□0	□0	□0	□0	□0

No staff from my Department have appealed against secondment from 2010 to date. All secondments are on a voluntary basis by the staff concerned.

Road Projects Status

723. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of proposals to construct a bypass around Tipperary town; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37025/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), formerly the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the TII for direct reply. The Deputy should advise my private office if he does not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Road Projects

724. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the decision of the UK to leave the EU results in the funds that the Government has pledged to the construction of the A5 in Northern Ireland not being required, whether those funds will be ring-fenced for road projects here, including the proposed bypass for Ardee; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37122/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Commitments in relation to the A5 are governed by the *Stormont House Agreement and Implementation Plan - A Fresh Start* which reaffirmed the Government's commitment to provide funding of £50 million for the A5 project and committed an additional £25 million to ensure that Phase 1 of the project (Newbuildings to north of Strabane) can commence as soon as the necessary planning issues have been resolved by the Northern Ireland authorities.

Departmental Funding

725. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding that has been provided to County Louth over the previous three years, 2014 to 2016, inclusive, by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37230/16]

726. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the applications submitted for funding projects from Louth County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016 in tabular form; and if the applications were successful. [37246/16]

727. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding for projects in 2017 in County Louth to be funded by his Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37262/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 725 to 727, inclusive, together.

It is not possible to give a full breakdown of funding on a county basis as requested by the

Deputy. Some funding cannot be allocated to a specific county (e.g. rail safety management systems, Bus Eireann buses).

My Department is collating the information requested in so far as possible and this will be provided to the Deputy within 10 working days.

Departmental Funding

728. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding that has been provided to County Meath over the previous three years, 2014 to 2016, inclusive, by project name, location and funding amount in tabular form. [37278/16]

729. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the applications submitted for funding and projects from Meath County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016, in tabular form; if the applications were successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37294/16]

730. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding for projects in 2017 in County Meath to be funded by his Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37310/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 728 to 730, inclusive, together.

It is not possible to give a full breakdown of funding on a county basis as requested by the Deputy.

Some funding cannot be allocated to a specific county (e.g. rail safety management systems, Bus Eireann buses).

My Department is collating the information requested in so far as possible and this will be provided to the Deputy within 10 working days.

Legislative Measures

731. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the provisions of the Vehicle Clamping Act 2015 will be implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37317/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Vehicle Clamping Act was enacted in May 2015 and conferred the responsibilities of regulating vehicle clamping upon the National Transport Authority (NTA).

This conferral of additional responsibilities resulted in a requirement for allocation of additional resources to the NTA in order to allow it carry out its new functions in this area. In addition the NTA also required a period to make and prepare the necessary regulations provided for under the Act as well as ensure appropriate training and administrative supports are in place to allow for commencement of regulatory activities.

This preparatory work has now been completed; however, in recent weeks an issue arose in how the Act deals with the required consultation process in relation to draft Regulations prior

to their finalisation. This issue needs to be addressed so as to ensure that the NTA can proceed with the publication of said draft Regulations.

This issue is being dealt with through making a technical amendment to the Vehicle Clamping Act 2015 which will be introduced by means of an amendment to the Road Traffic Bill 2016 which is currently at Dáil Committee Stage.

Subject to the availability of parliamentary time, I expect that the Road Traffic Bill 2016 will complete its Oireachtas passage before the end of the year. Once amended, I will commence the Vehicle Clamping Act and the NTA will then proceed with the consultation process in relation to the draft Regulations prior to their finalisation.

Driver Licences Renewals

732. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of a driving licence renewal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37338/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The operation of the National Driver Licensing Service is the statutory responsibility of the Road Safety Authority, and I have no role in individual cases. I have therefore referred the Question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response has not been received within ten days.

Rural Transport Programme

733. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has any planned policy or proposed legislation aimed at combatting rural isolation due to the lack of rural transportation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37438/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department provides funding to the National Transport Authority (NTA) for the management of the Rural Transport Programme (RTP). The objective of the RTP is to provide a quality nationwide community based public transport system in rural Ireland which responds to local needs. These needs include isolation in rural areas arising from unmet public transport needs.

A major restructuring of the RTP arising from a 2011 Value for Money and Policy Review, involving the formation of 17 Transport Coordination Units (TCUs) from 35 previously existing rural transport groups, was implemented on a phased basis during 2014 and 2015. The purpose of the restructuring of the RTP is to protect the provision of rural transport services into the future by ensuring a more efficient delivery structure that maximises integration with other State transport services and by making the Programme a sustainable part of the public transport system.

The NTA, in consultation with the TCUs and other relevant stakeholders, is overseeing a number of initiatives to improve connectivity and integration of RTP services with other State funded transport services which will be of particular benefit to those at risk of social exclusion. The restructured RTP offers a structure to integrate rural transport services with other State funded local transport services, to achieve greater synergies, better meet identified transport needs and deliver increased value for money for the exchequer. The NTA is also preparing a report for my Department, in line with the commitment in the Programme for Government, for

submission to the Oireachtas Transport Committee, regarding the potential integration with other transport type services such as the HSE transport networks.

The NTA, in its role as regulator of the taxi industry, introduced the Local Area Hackney licence in December 2013. This was recommended in the Taxi Regulation Review Report 2011 as a means of providing a low cost entry to the hackney market for transport provision in rural locations which would otherwise not receive such services. It should be noted that is not intended to replace or displace conventional hackney or taxi services.

Road Projects Status

734. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount of funding that has been allocated to Sligo County Council towards the development of the N4 Collooney-to-Castlebaldwin road upgrade scheme by his Department since 2012 for CPOs and other works; when the overall contract for the road will be awarded; the expected completion date of the road project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37482/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), formerly the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the TII for direct reply. The Deputy should advise my private office if he does not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Rail Network

735. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason the future of the Sligo-to-Dublin Irish Rail route has been thrown into doubt following comments by Irish Rail officials regarding the company's overall finances; if he will ensure that this essential service for the north west will not be curtailed in any way; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37489/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy will be aware, the National Transport Authority (NTA) is currently running a public consultation on rail in Ireland. It was launched two weeks ago with the publication of the Rail Review 2016 - which the NTA undertook in conjunction with Iarnród Éireann - together with an NTA consultation document "The Role of Rail in Ireland and Funding its Delivery". Both documents are available on the NTA's website.

The public consultation process will give the public and all interested parties the opportunity to give their views and contribute to the debate on the future of heavy rail in Ireland. The public consultation process will run until 18 January and the NTA will then prepare a report based on the findings; thereafter I intend to bring this report to Government. No decisions will be made about the heavy rail network before the public consultation process has concluded and been evaluated.

National Car Test

736. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to introduce an NCT or MOT requirement for trikes or three-wheeled motorbikes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37500/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I understand that while Directive 2014/45/EU on periodic roadworthiness tests for motor vehicles and their trailers provides for the roadworthiness testing of three-wheeled vehicles from 1 January 2022, EU Member States who have appropriate alternative road safety measures in place can avail of an exemption from this requirement.

An issue of concern in relation to this vulnerable cohort of road users is certain driving behaviour exhibited by and towards motorcyclists, including those driving three wheeled motorbikes, on our road network. While any measures which have a positive effect on road safety are to be welcomed, it is important to ensure that the optimal road safety impact is realised.

Having statutory responsibility for vehicle testing arrangements, the Road Safety Authority will examine the requirements of Directive 2014/45/EU and will report to my Department on their recommendations shortly.

Road Network

737. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding will be made available to urgently address the need for a bypass of Tipperary town; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37511/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), formerly the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the TII for direct reply. The Deputy should advise my private office if he does not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Transport Infrastructure Provision

738. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the progress there has been in the implementation of section E, paragraph 1.4 of the Fresh Start-Stormont Agreement in the 12 months since it was signed on 17 November 2015, including the progress on the building of the A5 road project and investment in the Dublin-to-Belfast rail line listed separately; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37534/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware implementation of the A5 project is the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Authorities. Since the conclusion of the *Fresh Start* Agreement, the Northern Ireland authorities have been moving ahead with the project planning process. A public consultation exercise on the project statutory orders and Environmental Statement was concluded earlier this year and a Public Inquiry on the proposed scheme under the aegis of the Planning Appeals Commission is underway.

As regards the Dublin-Belfast rail line, Iarnród Eireann has advised my Department that

€21.3 million was invested in the refurbishment of the Drogheda Viaduct and the Enterprise Fleet refurbishment which was successfully completed by early 2016.

Departmental Reports

739. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reports commissioned by his Department since 2006 which, while completed or in final draft form, have not been published; the reason they have not been published; the expected publication date; the cost to date of each such report; if tenders were invited; if it is not intended to publish any such report, the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37556/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The information requested by the Deputy is available on my Department's website at the following link <http://www.dttas.ie/corporate/english/expense-external-services-2015>.

Departmental Agencies

740. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will address the concerns of a person (details supplied); if his Department will facilitate the person's requests to meet Fáilte Ireland and assist with the request for the appointment of consultants within Meath County Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37573/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Patrick O'Donovan): My Department's role in relation to tourism lies in the area of national tourism policy. It is not directly involved in the management or development of individual tourism projects. This is an operational matter for the Board and Management of Fáilte Ireland.

Accordingly I have referred the Deputy's question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply to the Deputy. The Deputy should contact my private office if he has not received a reply within ten working days.

I should also highlight that I have no role in the appointment of consultants within Meath County Council.

Road Projects

741. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the early activities announced in relation to the M20 Cork-to-Limerick motorway project will include a review of the junction strategy that was previously in place for this project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37575/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual national road projects is a matter for the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (formerly known as the NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred your question to TII for direct reply. The Deputy should advise my private office if he does not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Transport Policy

742. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will address an issue (details supplied). [37591/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the question refers, my Department recently launched, for public consultation, a draft national policy framework on alternative fuels infrastructure for transport. The deadline for receipt of submissions was last Wednesday, 23 November.

Among the range of alternative fuels being considered is electricity supply for stationary aircraft through the deployment of fixed external ground power units or FEGP units.

As the policy refers, Dublin Airport already has 27 of these units installed on Pier 4 and has plans to install more by end 2016. The benefits in terms of lower local emissions and noise is recognised.

An examination of all submissions from the consultation is now underway and my Department expects to publish its review of these along with the final policy framework in the coming weeks.

Non-Disclosure Agreements

743. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department, or the agencies that report to his Department, entered into any non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements with any organisation due to court action or a threatened court action; and if so, the persons or groups with which these agreements exist. [37636/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Following consultation with the Department's Legal Adviser, the provision of any such information would undermine and possibly breach any confidentiality agreements that may have been entered into.

Local Improvement Scheme Funding

744. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37747/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) 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 at present, 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.

While 2017 will see a modest increase in funding for roads, it will take some years yet under the Capital Plan to restore "steady state" funding levels for regional and local roads. The primary focus will have to continue to be on the maintenance and renewal of public roads. I do, however, expect that local authorities will continue to be able to use a proportion of their Discretionary Grant for the local improvement scheme in 2017.

In light of the provision in the Programme for Government indicating that, as the economy

recovers, the Government will promote increased funding for Local Improvement Schemes, I will be raising the issue of increased funding in the context of the planned Review of the Capital Plan.

Rail Services

745. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if, following the opening of the Luas cross city as far as Broombridge station, the Irish rail timetable will be amended to allow the Sligo train stop at Broombridge to create inter-connectivity between the two routes, particularly for the morning service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37748/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) in conjunction with Irish Rail and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Ministerial Advisers Appointments

746. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the appointment of additional special advisers by him and Ministers of State in his Department. [37895/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): No additional Special Advisers have been appointed by me or Minister of State O'Donovan. I have appointed two Special Advisers since I took up office in line with Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Guidelines on the staffing of Minister's and Minister of State's Offices. No Special Advisers have been appointed by Minister of State O'Donovan.

Copyright Legislation Review

747. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if she will undertake a full review of the rights of artists here including a thorough examination of existing copyright laws and the current Competition Act. [37073/16]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): In my most recent answer to Parliamentary Question No. 294 to the Deputy on 20 October, I advised on progress in relation to the proposed Bill on copyright for which Government approved the Heads of Bill in July 2016. The main purpose of the proposed Bill is to respond to certain of the recommendations contained in a Report undertaken by the Copyright Review Committee entitled "Modernising Copyright" which was published in October 2013. The Bill does not involve a thorough examination of copyright legislation in its entirety or indeed of the rights of artists. In general, the rights of artists come within the overall policy responsibility of the Minister for the Arts, Heritage, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

As advised, the Bill is currently undergoing the formal drafting process with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel and that remains the position.

Artists who are employees in Ireland have the same rights as all other employees. In cases

of self-employed artists, as with other self-employed workers, the application of competition law would only be a consideration if there are allegations of anti-competitive behaviour.

Departmental Staff Data

748. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of staff from her Department currently seconded to other Departments or agencies in the Civil Service per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36968/16]

749. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of staff from her Department who have appealed against secondment per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the appeals mechanism involved; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36984/16]

750. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of staff from her Department currently seconded to a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37000/16]

751. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of staff from her Department currently seconded from a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37016/16]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): I propose to take Questions Nos. 748 to 751, inclusive, together.

Opportunities for staff to apply for secondments are offered in line with the business needs of the Department and the wider Civil Service, and also serve to provide a range of broader developmental interests for the staff concerned. Appeals against secondments have not been an issue for my Department.

No secondments to the private sector have taken place to/from my Department within the relevant period, however, activities and initiatives to enhance mutual understanding between the private and public sector are welcomed by my Department to further inform policy and decision making. Staff of my Department participate in a wide range of secondments, including to the EU institutions in Brussels both to utilise their expertise and corporate knowledge, and to further develop their skills to the benefit of the staff concerned, the Department and the overall Civil Service.

Details of the number of staff of my Department on secondment to other Departments or Agencies during 2010-2016 are as set out in the following table.

Staff Seconded out from the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation

Year	Total Seconded
2010	82
2011	89
2012	79
2013	61
2014	54
2015	42

Year	Total Seconded
2016	43

Departmental Bodies Data

752. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of vacancies currently on each board and State agency under the remit of her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37173/16]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): There are currently two vacancies on State Boards that come within my Department's remit, both of which are on the Board of IAASA. In this regard, there is one position for a Chairperson, for which a shortlist was recently submitted by the Public Appointments Service (PAS) to me. The selected candidate is now to meet with the Joint Oireachtas Committee for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation before I conclude the appointment process. The second vacancy, a Ministerial nominee, will be filled following public advertisement and recruitment process conducted by PAS.

Departmental Funding

753. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the funding that has been provided to County Louth over the three years 2014 to 2016 by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37225/16]

754. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the applications submitted for funding projects from Louth County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016 in tabular form; and if the applications were successful. [37241/16]

755. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the funding for projects in 2017 in County Louth to be funded by her Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37257/16]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): I propose to take Questions Nos. 753 to 755, inclusive, together.

My Department is focused on ensuring that the effects of economic recovery are felt throughout all regions of the country. While employment has increased in all our regions, it has not been as fast in some. The Government's ultimate target is to achieve sustainable full employment, and to assist in achieving this objective, my Department's agencies are ensuring that targeted supports for enterprise and job creation are provided throughout all regions. The Action Plan for Jobs for the North West/North East region, which includes Louth, sets out a comprehensive plan to build on the strengths of the region to develop its full potential for enterprise and jobs growth.

Details of funding for projects in County Louth in 2014, 2015 and 2016 provided by the agencies of my Department are set out in the following tables where available. The levels of funding to be provided for projects in 2017 has not yet been determined.

IDA Ireland continues to work towards achieving job creation and investment targets set out in its strategy ‘Winning Foreign Direct Investment 2015-2019’, and is particularly focusing on job creation outside Dublin. In 2016 the following project announcements were made in relation to IDA Ireland companies in Louth. Details of grant payments in 2016 are not yet available.

Project Name	Location	Funding Amount	Other relevant information
Kelton Tech Solutions Limited	Drogheda	Confidential	Establishment of an EMEA HQ with the creation of 100 jobs.

In 2015 the following project announcements were made in relation to IDA Ireland companies in Louth. In addition, grant payments to IDA Ireland clients in Louth during 2015 totalled €993,000.

Project Name	Location	Funding Amount	Other relevant information
Prometric	Dundalk	Confidential	A leading US Testing company expanding its operation in Dundalk with the creation of 40 jobs and also entering a three-year research partnership with DCU, valued at almost €1 million.

In 2014 the following project announcements were made in relation to IDA Ireland companies in Louth. In addition, grant payments to IDA Ireland clients in Louth during 2014 totalled €3,672,307.

Project Name	Location	Funding Amount	Other relevant information
Becton Dickinson	Drogheda	Confidential	€16 million investment in new equipment to expand its production of BD syringes with the creation of 20 jobs.
Paypal	Dundalk	Confidential	400 jobs created as an expansion of its operation centre.

Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland works in partnership with Irish enterprises to help them start, grow, innovate and win export sales in global markets, thus supporting sustainable economic growth, regional development and secure employment. Details of the funding amounts provided by Enterprise Ireland for projects in Co. Louth are set out in the following table. Data for funding provided by Enterprise Ireland in 2016 is not available at present.

Year	Location	Funding Amount
2014	Louth	€868,531.84

Year	Location	Funding Amount
2015	Louth	€2,359,406.23

Local Enterprise Offices

Capital funding from my Department for Local Enterprise Development is allocated to the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) through the Centre of Excellence in Enterprise Ireland. This funding is allocated among the LEOs to support clients through the provision of grants (Measure 1) and soft supports (Measure 2), such as training and mentoring, and used to fund the Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE) programme. Details of the total payments made by LEO Louth in 2014 and 2015 are set out in Table 1. Details of total payments made in 2016

are not available.

Table 1: Total Payments by LEO Louth in 2014 and 2015

Louth LEO	Total Payments
2014	€225,203
2015	€195,023

PQ 37241/16 refers

LEO Louth is effectively a Unit of Louth County Council and made a successful application under the LEO Competitive Fund in a collaborative project with a number of other LEOs as set out in Table 2. This was one of four applications in which LEO Louth was involved under the Fund.

Table 2: Applications for Funding from Louth County Council

Project Name	Was application successful YES/NO	Any other relevant information
The ACCELINVEST programme, in conjunction with the LEOs Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan and Monaghan: the aim is to create a clear pathway for export focused, investment-ready regional companies to progress from the LEO Network to Enterprise Ireland.	Yes	The project was approved for funding of €175,000 in 2016, although the amounts to be allocated to the individual participant LEOs, including the LEO Louth, will not be known until later in the project lifecycle.

PQ 37257/16 refers

A total of €22.5m in Capital funding has been allocated to my Department for Local Enterprise Development in 2017. The allocations to individual LEOs will be calculated next year in line with an agreed methodology.

Credit Guarantee Scheme

The SME Credit Guarantee Scheme is a government initiative that was set up to encourage additional lending to commercially viable SMEs which, under normal lending criteria, are unable to obtain new or additional facilities from their bank. The total amount of loans sanctioned under the Credit Guarantee Scheme in 2014, 2015 and 2016 are set out below.

Year	Location	Funding Amount
2016	Louth	€1,140,000
2015	Louth	€215,000
2014	Louth	€50,000

Microfinance Ireland

Microfinance Ireland provides small loans through the Government's Microenterprise Loan Fund to help to start up a small business or expand an existing business. The total applications received and approved in Louth in 2014, 2015 and 2016 are set out in the following tables.

2016

Applications Received	Amount	Applications Approved	Amount
27	€466k	7	€99k

2015

Applications Received	Amount	Applications Approved	Amount
18	€295k	9	€126k

2014

Applications Received	Amount	Applications Approved	Amount
10	€187k	3	€38k

Other Relevant Information

With regard to applications received from Louth County Council for funding by my Department and its agencies, LEO Louth is effectively a Unit of Louth County Council and made a successful application under the LEO Competitive Fund in a collaborative project with a number of other LEOs as set out below. This was one of four applications in which LEO Louth was involved under the Fund.

Applications for Funding from Louth County Council

Project Name	Was application successful YES/NO	Any other relevant information
The ACCELINVEST programme, in conjunction with the LEOs Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan and Monaghan: the aim is to create a clear pathway for export focused, investment-ready regional companies to progress from the LEO Network to Enterprise Ireland.	Yes	The project was approved for funding of €175,000 in 2016, although the amounts to be allocated to the individual participant LEOs, including the LEO Louth, will not be known until later in the project lifecycle.

Departmental Funding

756. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the funding that has been provided to County Meath over the three years 2014 to 2016 by project name, location and funding amount in tabular form. [37273/16]

757. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the applications submitted for funding for projects from Meath County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016, in tabular form; if the applications were successful; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37289/16]

758. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the funding for projects in 2017 in County Meath to be funded by her Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37305/16]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): I propose to take Questions Nos. 756 to 758, inclusive, together.

My Department is focused on ensuring that the effects of economic recovery are felt throughout all regions of the country. While employment has increased in all our regions, it has not been as fast in some. The Government's ultimate target is to achieve sustainable full employment, and to assist in achieving this objective, my Department's agencies are ensuring that targeted supports for enterprise and job creation are provided throughout all regions. The Action Plan for Jobs for the Mid-East region, which includes Meath, sets out a comprehensive plan to

build on the strengths of the region to develop its full potential for enterprise and jobs growth.

Details of funding for projects in County Meath in 2014, 2015 and 2016 provided by the agencies of my Department are set out in the following tables where available. The levels of funding to be provided for projects in 2017 has not yet been determined.

IDA Ireland

IDA Ireland continues to work towards achieving job creation and investment targets set out in its strategy ‘Winning Foreign Direct Investment 2015-2019’, and is particularly focusing on job creation outside Dublin. In 2016, the following project announcements were made by IDA client companies in Meath:

Project Name	Location	Funding Amount	Other relevant information
Shire	Piercetown Co Meath	Confidential	Shire will create a new, state of the art biologics manufacturing campus, which it expects will lead to the creation of approximately 400 permanent jobs on a 120 acre site.
Facebook	Clonee, Co Meath	Confidential	Facebook announced the construction of a data centre. The facility will become part of the infrastructure that enables billions of people to connect with the people and things they care about on Facebook and across its family of apps and services.

Details of grant payments to IDA client companies in 2016 are not yet available. In 2015 grant payments totalling €300,000 were made to IDA Ireland client companies located in Co Meath. There were no grant payments to IDA clients in Meath in 2014.

Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland works in partnership with Irish enterprises to help them start, grow, innovate and win export sales in global markets, thus supporting sustainable economic growth, regional development and secure employment. Details of the funding amounts provided by Enterprise Ireland for projects in Co. Meath are set out in the following tables. Data for funding provided by Enterprise Ireland in 2016 is not available at present.

Year	Location	Funding Amount
2014	Meath	€1,159,192.49
Year	Location	Funding Amount
2015	Meath	€2,276,891.58

Local Enterprise Offices

Capital funding from my Department for Local Enterprise Development is allocated to the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) through the Centre of Excellence in Enterprise Ireland. This funding is allocated among the LEOs to support clients through the provision of grants (Measure 1) and soft supports (Measure 2), such as training and mentoring, and used to fund the Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE) programme. Details of the total payments made by LEO Meath in 2014 and 2015 are set out in Table 1. Details of total payments made in 2016 are not available.

Table 1: Total Payments by LEO Meath in 2014 and 2015

Meath LEO	Total Payments
2014	€143,098
2015	€166,085

The LEOs use their Measure 1 allocations to provide feasibility, priming and business development grants to their clients. Details of the individual grants allocated in 2014, 2015 and 2016 are set out below.

PQ 37289/16 refers

LEO Meath is effectively a Unit of Meath County Council and was involved in two collaborative project applications with other LEOs to the LEO Competitive Fund. The projects were not approved for funding under the call.

PQ 37305/16 refers

A total of €22.5m in Capital funding has been allocated to my Department for Local Enterprise Development in 2017. The allocations to individual LEOs will be calculated next year in line with an agreed methodology.

Credit Guarantee Scheme

The SME Credit Guarantee Scheme is a government initiative that was set up to encourage additional lending to commercially viable SMEs which, under normal lending criteria, are unable to obtain new or additional facilities from their bank. The total amount of loans sanctioned under the Credit Guarantee Scheme in 2014, 2015 and 2016 are set out in the following table.

Year	Location	Funding Amount
2016	Meath	€280,000
2015	Meath	€450,000
2014	Meath	€95,000

Microfinance Ireland

Microfinance Ireland provides small loans through the Government's Microenterprise Loan Fund to help to start up a small business or expand an existing business. The total applications received and approved in 2014, 2015 and 2016 are set out in the following tables.

2016

Applications Received	Amount	Applications Approved	Amount
33	€490k	11	€141k

2015

Applications Received	Amount	Applications Approved	Amount
39	€572k	18	€220k

2014

Applications Received	Amount	Applications Approved	Amount
28	€429k	13	€187k

Other Relevant Information

With regard to applications received from Meath County Council for funding by my De-

partment and its agencies, LEO Meath is effectively a Unit of Meath County Council and was involved in two collaborative project applications with other LEOs to the LEO Competitive Fund. The projects were not approved for funding under the call.

Departmental Reports

759. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the reports commissioned by her Department since 2006 which, while completed or are in final draft form, have not been published; the reason they have not been published; the expected publication date; the cost to date of each such report; if tenders were invited; if it is not intended to publish any such report the reason for same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37551/16]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O’Connor): With regard to the Deputy’s question, in the time available, it has not been possible for my officials to compile all of the information requested. I will ensure that the requested information is supplied as soon as it is collated.

Employment Rights

760. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if plans are being considered to amend the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997, concerning Sunday premiums and supplemental provisions in order to provide greater clarity to both workers and employers as to the definition of reasonable paid allowances, pay increases and-or paid time off work; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37606/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen): I have no plans to amend the provisions of the Organisation of Working Time Act related to Sunday premiums.

Section 13(5) of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 provides that the weekly or fortnightly rest period for employees must include a Sunday unless the contract of employment includes a specific provision requiring the employee to work on a Sunday. Section 14 of the Act provides that an employee who is required to work on a Sunday is entitled to a premium for Sunday work in circumstances where the requirement to work on a Sunday has not already been taken account of in the determination of an employee’s pay. The method for determining the premium to be paid is set out in Section 14.

An employee can seek redress in relation to section 14 by making a complaint to the Adjudication Service of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC). In circumstances where WRC Inspectors, in the course of the inspection of employment records, become aware of, or suspect, a possible failure to comply with the provisions relating to the payment of Sunday premium, the employer concerned is advised of their obligations and employees are advised of the avenues of redress open to them.

Any persons with questions or complaints regarding their rights under employment law should contact Workplace Relations Customer Service on lo-call 1890 80 80 90 or at www.workplacereactions.ie.

Non-Disclosure Agreements

761. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if her Department or the agencies that report to her Department entered into any non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements with any organisation due to court action or a threatened court action; and if so, the persons or groups with which these agreements exist. [37631/16]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): My Department and the agencies under its remit have not entered into any non-disclosure or confidentiality agreement with any organisation due to court action or a threatened court action.

Ministerial Advisers Appointments

762. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the status of the appointment of additional special advisers by her and Ministers of State in her Department. [37891/16]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): The appointment of Special Advisers to my Department is governed by “Instructions” issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) and requires the approval of Government.

Within those guidelines, I currently have one Special Adviser reporting directly to me and the Guidelines allow for two.

In addition, my colleague, Minister of State John Halligan, T.D, has recently received approval to appoint a Special Adviser. However, for administrative reasons, Minister of State Halligan appears on the staffing complement of the Department of Education and Skills where he is also assigned and, therefore, his Special Adviser will be on the payroll of that Department also.

Child Detention Centres

763. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the separation policy in place in Oberstown detention centre; the number of times inmates were placed in isolation in each month of 2014, 2015 and to date in 2016. [37194/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): A copy of the separation policy has been forwarded to the Deputy directly. The separation policy and the other policies for children detention schools are available on the website of the Irish Youth Justice Service and can be accessed at the following web address: www.iyjs.ie/en/IYJS/Pages/WP12000013.

The Oberstown Children Detention Campus is responsible for collating information on the use of single separation; I have therefore referred the Deputy's request for information in that regard to the Director of Oberstown for direct reply to the Deputy.

Adoption Records Provision

764. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to concerns that the records of the victims of a mother and baby home (details supplied) in Cork are not being stored safely; if there are plans to digitise the records; and if so,

when this will be completed. [37312/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla has advised me that all records held by the Tusla adoption service in Cork, including those related to the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, Bessborough, are stored in fire proof cabinets in a dry and secure location. Access to records is by Tusla staff only due to the highly confidential nature of the records. Tusla has begun the process of centralising all adoption records held by the Agency to one secure location and it anticipates this will be completed by August 2017.

The Adoption Information and Tracing Bill which was published last Friday provides that the Adoption Authority of Ireland will have overall responsibility for the safeguarding of adoption records, including information relating to informal adoptions and persons whose birth was incorrectly registered. All adoption records, which are currently held in a number of locations, are to be transferred to the custody of the Authority. The Bill provides that the records are to be indexed and a searchable electronic database of the records is to be created.

A working group has been established with representation from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Adoption Authority of Ireland and Tusla in preparation for the commencement of the legislation to consider long term plans for the storage, archiving and scanning of all historical adoption and adoption related records.

Youth Services Funding

765. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount of funding that has been allocated to youth services for 2017; the amount of funding that has been allocated to Foróige, the National Youth Development Organisation for 2017; and if she will compare it against the funding allocated in 2014, 2015 and 2016 to the sector and the organisation. [36864/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department administers a range of funding schemes and programmes to support the provision of youth services to young people throughout the country including those from disadvantaged communities. The funding schemes support national and local youth work provision to some 380,000 young people and involve approximately 1,400 youth work staff in 477 projects and 40,000 volunteers working in youth work services and communities throughout the country.

As the Deputy is aware, Budget 2017 has provided an additional €5.5m in current funding to my Department to support the provision of youth services. This will bring the total youth funding in 2017 to €57.4m. This additional funding will be used for programmes that target disadvantaged young people and to assist national youth organisations in their work to support local voluntary youth services. Following the Budget 2017 announcement, my Department commenced the process with national organisations, including Foróige, and local services to identify service development needs for 2017 and to agree the 2017 allocations. Every effort will be made to complete this process as soon as possible.

The funding allocated by my Department in respect of the schemes indicated in the Deputy's question is set out in the following table.

-	2014	2015	2016
Youth Service Grant Scheme	€9.949m	€9.901m	€10.149m
Special Projects for Youth	€14.4m	€14.4m	€14.762m

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-	2014	2015	2016
Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund (Round 1 and 2)	€18.397m	€18.397m	€18.857m
Local Youth Club Grant Scheme	€1.035m	€1.035m	€1.065m
Youth Information Centres	€1.234m	€1.234m	€1.265m
Local Drug Task Force projects	€1.151m	€1.151m	€1.180m
Foróige	€2.038m	€2.552m	€2.616m
% of total Youth Funding to Foróige	4.23%	5.24%	5.24%

In 2015, Foróige also received €55,000 additional end of year funding to assist towards the long term sustainability of the Mayo centre and NFTE Programme.

Departmental Staff Data

766. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of staff from her Department currently seconded to other Departments or agencies in the Civil Service per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36960/16]

767. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of staff from her Department who have appealed against secondment per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the appeals mechanism involved; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36976/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 766 and 767 together.

As my Department was established in June 2011, the information requested by the Deputy is set out in tabular form with effect from that date. The information supplied refers to staff seconded to other Departments, agencies or bodies in the public sector. Currently there are two members of staff on secondment from my Department to such bodies. No member of staff from my Department has appealed against their secondment to date.

Year	Number of staff from my Department seconded to other departments, agencies or bodies at end of year
2011	16
2012	16
2013	15
2014	11
2015	2
2016	2

Departmental Staff Data

768. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of staff from her Department currently seconded to a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36992/16]

769. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number

of staff from her Department currently seconded from a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37008/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 768 and 769 together.

Since its establishment in June 2011, my Department has not seconded staff to any private sector organisation. There is currently one person from the Children's Rights Alliance, which is a registered charity, seconded to this Department.

Departmental Bodies Data

770. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of vacancies currently on each board and State agency under the remit of her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37175/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am responsible for the appointment of members to the boards of the Adoption Authority of Ireland, the Child and Family Agency (Tusla), Gaisce (the President's Award) and the Board of Management for Oberstown Children Detention Campus.

There are currently seven vacant positions on the Gaisce Council, one vacant position on the Board of the Child and Family Agency and one vacant position on the Board of Management for Oberstown Children Detention Campus.

Child Care Services Funding

771. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views on the sustainability fund; the criteria for inclusion in the interventions to assist community and not-for-profit child care services announced as a consequence of budget 2017; and when it will be rolled out. [37187/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): In Budget 2017 provision was made for a fund of €1m to assist in the investigation of sustainability issues being faced by childcare providers, and to develop a policy to guide any future interventions. This initiative is at an early stage and officials will commence work in this regard in early 2017. At present there is no fund in place that would provide additional funding to services beyond the funding to which they are entitled through the various childcare funding programmes operated by my Department.

Child Care Services Regulation

772. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the fact that the new regulations coming on stream in January regarding the use of community employment participants and their education levels in community and not-for-profit child care services will cause difficulties and challenges for the services to stay within the regulations; and her views on the matter. [37188/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Under the Child

Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, registered providers of pre-school services will, from 31st December 2016, be required to ensure that each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to be equivalent.

Earlier this year my Department asked Childcare Committees Ireland (CCI) to lead on a national piece of work, with the 30 City and County Childcare Committees, to firstly ascertain whether there were services who would struggle financially when the new regulations came into effect and, secondly, all staff who were treated as part of the staff/child ratios would have to have a Level 5 qualification.

In working with services on this exercise, CCI was asked to explore how challenges could be resolved *within existing resources*. In any services where difficulties are being experienced, the CCCs are tasked with supporting services to assess the contributing factors and manage any change that may assist the service. This is done initially through the use of business tools which focus on the finances and overheads of the service. For example, a fee calculation exercise looks at whether the fee being charged by the service is appropriate. There is also a staff ratio calculation applied to look at the numbers of children in the service, when they are booked in, and what ratio needs to be applied. For example, it may be that the service should take two fewer children in the morning, and two more in the afternoon in order to maximise the potential and run a viable service.

This methodology has been found to be very effective in many services across the country, and whilst sometimes unpopular decisions have had to be made in the short term, the medium and long term results should justify these decisions.

I hope that the support offered to the services can assist them in reforming their services in order to enable them to continue. I will of course be working extremely hard to seek further investment in childcare that will improve affordability for parents but also assist providers in running viable and high quality services. My Department has long-standing relationships with community/not-for-profit childcare providers, and recognises the important role that this sector has to play in childcare provision. I can certainly empathise with the challenges these services face and I continuously commend all early years services, particularly those operating on a not for profit basis, for the work they do.

The CCI review is due to be completed shortly, but preliminary results suggest that some services became over-reliant on unqualified CE participants to be part of core staff ratios over the years. Many services across the country began preparing for the regulations some time ago and have reduced or eliminated their reliance on CE participants as part of the ratios, but I understand that some remain.

In Budget 2017 provision was made for a fund of €1m to assist in the investigation of sustainability issues being faced by childcare providers, and to develop a policy to guide any future interventions. This initiative is at an early stage and officials will commence work in this regard in early 2017.

I believe that the work presently being undertaken by my Department and the CCI will influence policy over the coming months and years as we seek to establish a high quality childcare infrastructure in Ireland. You will also be aware that the Programme for Government contains a commitment to independently evaluate the cost of providing childcare. This report will give us solid evidence which will also inform future policy. Such evidence will be critical to ensuring that whilst we work to make high quality childcare more accessible and affordable for parents, we also invest sufficiently to enable services to operate to high standards and attract new staff

and retain their existing valued staff.

Community Childcare Subvention Programme

773. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the fact that the ECCE child care scheme has caused some difficulties for some child care providers especially if they are open 50 weeks a year (details supplied). [37189/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Officials from my Department have sought clarification from the Deputy as to what is meant by CSSF funding, and it is my understanding that the Deputy is referring to the Community Childcare Subvention Programme. Childcare service providers receive grant funding from the Department for the provision of ECCE for a period of 38 weeks, as per the 2016/17 ECCE grant funding agreement. Community/not for profit Childcare services that provide the ECCE Programme may also avail of grant funding for the provision of TEC and CCS for up to a period of 52 weeks per year. Both TEC and CCS will be subsumed into Single Affordable Childcare Scheme from September 2017. The new scheme will provide up to 48 weeks of childcare per year.

Although my Department does not act as employer to childcare it does acknowledge that the sector is under cost pressure, and that staff wages are a large component of cost. To go some way towards addressing this, I have secured additional funding of €14 million in Budget 2017 which will enable ECCE providers to be paid for a 39th week and part of a 40th week (7 ECCE days in total or 1.4 ECCE weeks) where they will have no children present and they will be able to pay staff to concentrate on administrative workload. Services themselves can decide how to use the payment when it is received. For the average ECCE service with 25 children, this will mean an additional annual payment of approximately €2,400 per annum. Part of the additional funding €14m will be given to CCS and TEC providers on a pro-rata basis also to acknowledge their administrative burden also. The Affordable Childcare Scheme when introduced in Sept 17 will replace CCS and TEC and will have recognition of non-contact time built into its cost base. In addition, under Budget 2017 a provision was made for a fund of €1m to assist in the investigation of sustainability issues being faced by childcare providers, and to develop a policy to guide any future interventions. This initiative is at an early stage and officials will commence work in this regard in early 2017.

Child Care Services Staff

774. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views on whether there is a crisis of sustainability in the child care sector not only in terms of pay and conditions for staff but in terms of the availability of qualified staff to deliver on new standards. [37190/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Although my Department does not act as employer to childcare it does acknowledge that the sector is under cost pressure, and that staff wages are a large component of cost. To go some way towards addressing this, I have secured additional funding of €14 million in Budget 2017 which will enable ECCE providers to be paid for a 39th week and part of a 40th week (7 ECCE days in total or 1.4 ECCE weeks) where they will have no children present and they will be able to pay staff to concentrate on administrative workload. Services themselves can decide how to use the payment when it is received. For the average ECCE service with 25 children, this will mean an

additional annual payment of approximately €2,400 per annum. Part of the additional funding €14m will be given to CCS and TEC providers on a pro-rata basis also to acknowledge their administrative burden also. The Affordable Childcare Scheme when introduced in Sept 17 will replace CCS and TEC and will have recognition of non-contact time built into its cost base. In addition, under Budget 2017 a provision was made for a fund of €1m to assist in the investigation of sustainability issues being faced by childcare providers, and to develop a policy to guide any future interventions. This initiative is at an early stage and officials will commence work in this regard in early 2017.

The Programme for Government commits to conducting and publishing an independent review of the cost of providing quality childcare. This commitment aligns closely with work on the design and development of a new Single Affordable Childcare Scheme and is currently being progressed in that context. Work is well underway on the development of policy proposals for the new Affordable Childcare Scheme. As part of this, Department officials are reviewing previous published research and analysis on the cost of childcare provision, are assessing available data sources and are scoping the precise requirements for the independent review.

Under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, registered providers of pre-school services will, from 31st December 2016, be required to ensure that each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to be equivalent. The Learner Fund was introduced in 2014 to provide support for existing childcare staff to achieve this minimum requirement. The fund was later expanded to support existing pre-school leaders to up-skill to Level 6 on the National Qualifications Framework, which is now the minimum requirement for pre-school leaders delivering the Early childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme.

Funding of €1.5m will be available in 2017 to continue to Level 6 support in the context of the expansion of the ECCE programme. I also hope to extend the Learner Fund to support childcare staff to achieve higher level qualifications in childcare, i.e. Fetac Level 7 and Level 8. In this regard, my Department, in association with the Department of Education and Skills and Pobal, intends to commence work as soon as possible on the development of an approved panel of Level 7 and Level 8 training providers, and a new Learner Fund application process.

I also hope to be in a position to make some funding available to those childcare staff who have already completed higher level courses entirely at their own expense.

Child Care Costs

775. Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views on the measures announced recently in budget 2017 and the way they impact on parents; the way parents will avail of or be identified for the affordable child care scheme; and her views on whether parents should be able to apply online prior to September 2017. [37191/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): A major policy priority for me is the development of a new Affordable Childcare Scheme, which is a major step in making quality childcare more affordable, and will enable both universal and targeted subsidies for parents towards their childcare costs. Under the new scheme, parents will qualify for a targeted subsidy based on their net income, and the highest levels of support will be offered to those on the lowest incomes.

Budget 2017 allocated funding for the development of an online IT application system that will allow parents to apply for subsidies, via an online application system, by entering their PPS number and other details such as their work or training status. In order to make the application process as easy as possible for parents, it is intended that the means-testing will, in most cases, be carried out through an automatic link with income data held by the Revenue Commissioners and by the Department of Social Protection.

It is envisaged that the scheme will be available from September 2017 and, as such, applications for eligibility from parents will commence prior to September 2017. Detailed development and implementation planning, including relating to the development of new legislation and ICT infrastructure, is currently underway. This is a major project and it will be underpinned by a comprehensive communications strategy which will involve regular updates to the public and to all key stakeholders regarding progress and precise timeframes for implementation.

Child Care Services Funding

776. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when the new non-contact grant for child care services will be rolled out and first instalments paid to the services. [37192/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I have made €14.5m available to provide an additional payment to childcare providers to recognise the increasing volume of work done outside of direct contact hours with children. This funding will provide an additional payment of 7 days' funding to all ECCE Services - and an equivalent level of payment to CCS and TEC services.

This will enable ECCE providers to be paid for a 39th week and part of a 40th week (7 ECCE days in total or 1.4 ECCE weeks) where they will have no children present and they will be able to pay staff to concentrate on administrative workload. Services themselves can decide how to use the payment when it is received. For the average ECCE service with 25 children, this will mean an additional annual payment of approximately €2,400 per annum.

A decision on when this payment will occur will be made by my Department in due course.

Early Childhood Care and Education Funding

777. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount of the 2017 child care budget increase which is connected with the roll-out of measures announced in budget 2016. [37193/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I was pleased that significant additional funding was allocated to Early Childcare in Budget 2017. The largest volume of additional funding was provided to enable the full-year costs of the expansion of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme into a second year. I provided €67.6m for this. In addition, the full year roll out of the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) within the ECCE scheme was provided for with an allocation of €18.07m.

Departmental Funding

778. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the fund-

ing that has been provided to County Louth over the previous three years 2014 to 2016 by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37217/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The information is currently being compiled by my Department and will be forwarded to the Deputy in the near future.

Departmental Funding

779. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the applications submitted for funding projects from Louth County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016, in tabular form; and if the applications were successful. [37233/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The information is currently being compiled by the Department and will be forwarded to the Deputy in the near future.

Departmental Funding

780. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding for projects in 2017 in County Louth to be funded by her Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37249/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The information is currently being compiled by the Department and will be forwarded to the Deputy in the near future.

Departmental Funding

781. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding that has been provided to County Meath over the previous three years 2014 to 2016 by project name, location and funding amount in tabular form. [37265/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The information is currently being compiled by the Department and will be forwarded to the Deputy in the near future.

Departmental Funding

782. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the applications submitted for funding and projects from Meath County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016, in tabular form; if the applications were successful; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37281/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The information is currently being compiled by the Department and will be forwarded to the Deputy in the near future.

Departmental Funding

783. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding for projects in 2017 in County Meath to be funded by her Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37297/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The information is currently being compiled by the Department and will be forwarded to the Deputy in the near future.

Greenways Development

784. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will publish any statistics compiled by her Department regarding the increase in cycling activity among children and adolescents in areas in which public greenways have been developed. [37421/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department does not collect statistics on cycling activity among children and adolescents in areas in which public greenways have been developed. The Minister for Transport Tourism and Sport provides funding for greenway initiatives and may be in a position to direct the Deputy to where these statistics can be accessed.

Child Care Services

785. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of hours of formal child care per week and the number of weeks per year a child will have to undertake for their parents to be eligible for the universal child care subsidy. [37498/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): From September 2017, a new Affordable Childcare scheme will be introduced which will provide financial support for parents towards the cost of childcare. The new scheme will provide a system from which both universal and targeted subsidies can be provided towards the cost of childcare. This new scheme will replace the existing targeted childcare programmes with a single, streamlined and more user-friendly scheme and is intended to provide “wraparound” care for pre-school and school-age children.

The universal element of the Scheme will be available to all families with children between the age of 6 months and 36 months (or until the child qualifies for the free pre-school programme if later than 36 months), who are attending a childcare provider who is registered with Tusla initially, including both centre-based childcare providers (e.g. crèches, preschools and daycare centres) and child-minders.

Under the scheme, there will be no requirement to avail of a minimum number of subsidised hours or weeks. Subject to the terms of the scheme, including the maximum subsidised hours per week, the universal subsidy will be payable for the number of hours and weeks agreed between the parent and childcare provider.

Departmental Reports

786. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reports commissioned by her Department since 2006 which while completed or are in final draft form have not been published; the reason they have not been published; the expected publication date; the cost to date of each such report; if tenders were invited; if it is not intended to publish any such report the reason for same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37543/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department was established in June 2011, therefore all information provided to the Deputy is from this date.

Name of Report	Reason for non-publication	Internal Report/ To be published	Cost of Report	Tendering Process Undertaken
Public Knowledge and attitudes relating to children's rights, welfare, protection and services	Internal use only	Internal Report	€103,011.98	Yes
Issues for consideration in developing an on-line resource to support implementation of QCBI and preliminary Roadmaps (scoping project on data sources relating to children)	Internal use only	Internal Report	€20,932.79	Yes
Comhairle na nÓg and Garda Síochána survey on the Attitudes of Gardaí to Young People. Questionnaire for Gardaí and Young People	Internal use only	Internal Report	€7,650.00	Yes
Report on the process, methodology and work of the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive 2014-2015	Internal use only	Internal Report	€7,915.05	Yes
Audit of education and training on children's rights and children's and young people's participation in decision-making in all third level and further education programmes and continuing professional development programmes in Ireland	Internal use only	Internal Report	€19,978.00	Yes
A review of public policy on play and recreation in Ireland	Internal use only	Internal Report	€13,200.00	Yes
Report of the workshop discussions at the Comhairle na nÓg Showcase 2016		December 2016	€9,203.00	Yes
Report of consultations and meetings of Phase 1 of the Children's Poverty Truth Commission		July 2017	Per diem rate – number of days to be determined	Yes
Report of Evaluation of Phase 1 of the Children's Poverty Truth Commission		July 2017	Per diem rate – number of days to be determined	Yes
Strategic Human Resources	Internal use only	Internal Report	€20,602.50	Yes
Needs Assessment for the Redevelopment of www.childrensdatabase.ie	Internal use only	Internal Report	€18,400.00	No
"Becoming an Active Player" - Report on meeting of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures Advisory Council	Internal use only	Internal Report	€1,600.00	No
Care Issues Review	Internal use only	Internal Report	€3,556.56	No
Report on Structural Damage	Internal use only	Internal Report	€7,668.74	Yes
Staff Roster Review	Internal use only	Internal Report	€6,715.80	Yes
Care issues Review	Internal use only	Internal Report	€13,636.21	No
Care Issues Review	Internal use only	Internal Report	€13,500.00	Yes

Name of Report	Reason for non-publication	Internal Report/ To be published	Cost of Report	Tendering Process Undertaken
Policy Analysis and Development on Remission of Sentence	Internal use only	Internal Report	€29,151.00	No
Land Valuation Report	Internal use only	Internal Report	€2,152.50	Yes
Valuation Report	Internal use only	Internal Report	€1,230.00	No
Internal Audit Report: Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme & Audit Report on ICT Shared Services Arrangements	Internal use only	Internal Report	€23,803.00	Yes
Internal Audit Report: Community Childcare Subvention/Childcare Education & Training Supports Programmes	Internal use only	Internal Report	€8,200.00	Yes
Internal Audit Report: National Children's Detention Facility	Internal use only	Internal Report	€12,623.00	Yes
Internal Audit Report: Programme Integration	Internal use only	Internal Report	€16,858.00	Yes
Internal Audit Report: Programme Integration Platform	Internal use only	Internal Report	€15,675.00	Yes
CFA Governance Audit	Internal use only	Internal Report	€23,468.50	Yes
Policies & Procedures Review	Internal use only	Internal Report	€4,125.00	Yes
Report of Ireland's Implementation of EU Youth Strategy	Internal & EU use only	Internal Report	€6,300.00	Yes
National Consultation with Children (Aged 3-5) on the National Early Years Strategy	Report not yet finalised	Report not finalised	€23,865.00	No
Evaluation of the strategic options to deliver an ICT system to support the Single Affordable Childcare Scheme	Internal use only	Internal Report	€27,950.00 - Phase 1	Yes

Departmental Funding

787. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the case of persons (details supplied) in County Louth; if her Department provided funding to repay a number of refundable registration fees; if so, the amount of funding which was allocated; if the persons will also be refunded; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37574/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department provided Arc Adoption with €10,000 in July 2014, to assist with its cashflow problems and enable it to refund 3 clients who were due repayment of their refundable registration fees at that time. Arc Adoption is a company limited by guarantee, not having a share capital and operates on a “not-for-profit basis”. The fees in question were paid as part of an agreement between Arc Adoption and its clients.

My Department was not party to this agreement and having taken legal advice on the matter, has been advised that it has no legal responsibility for repayment of these fees. This is a complex issue which has been given detailed consideration by both myself and my officials in the Department. While I regret the time involved in reaching this decision, it was necessary to clarify a number of issues, including legal ones, to ensure that I could make a fully informed decision. After careful consideration of all the facts, the decision was made not to provide funding to repay the registration fees owed to clients of Arc Adoption. My Department has written to the persons referred to by the Deputy and advised them of the decision.

Non-Disclosure Agreements

788. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her Department, or the agencies that report to her Department, entered into any non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements with any organisation due to court action or a threatened court action; and if so, the persons or groups with which these agreements exist. [37623/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): No agreements as referred to by the Deputy have been entered into by my Department. The public bodies funded through my Department's Vote are the Adoption Authority of Ireland, the Child and Family Agency (Tusla), the Oberstown Children Detention Campus and the Ombudsman for Children's Office. My Department also provides the primary source of funding for Gaisce, the President's Award. Gaisce is a limited company set up under the Companies Acts. I am asking each of these bodies to respond directly to the Deputy.

Youth Services

789. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the provision of a youth officer for County Kildare in view of the fact that it is a county with one of the highest youth populations and one of only a few without a dedicated youth officer; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37757/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department administers a range of funding schemes and programmes to support the provision of youth services to young people throughout the country including those from disadvantaged communities. The funding schemes support national and local youth work provision to some 380,000 young people and involve approximately 1,400 youth work staff in 477 projects and 40,000 volunteers working in youth work services and communities throughout the country. In 2016, funding of €51m has been provided to my Department for these schemes. In addition €2.6m in capital funding, also provided in Budget 2016, will be used to support small scale projects, including refurbishment, health and safety fit-outs and accessibility improvements in local youth services.

In 2016, an amount of €500,405 has been allocated for the projects and services under Kildare Youth Services, which operates under Youth Work Ireland. My Department provides funding to Kildare Youth Services under the Special Projects for Youth Scheme in respect of six local youth projects in Athy, Naas, Leixlip, Newbridge, the Curragh and Kildare town and a Youth Information Centre in Naas.

I, and officials of my Department have met, and continue to meet, regularly with many voluntary organisations and groups providing services to children and young people to see how we can work together to bring about the best possible outcomes for young people, having regard to resources available to us and to ensure that the programmes and services being provided are relevant and responsive to young people's needs. Ongoing engagement and dialogue with the youth sector organisations and with young people themselves are priorities in the development of the policies and services to support young people's development and learning.

The Department is engaging with Kildare Wicklow ETB with regard to the provision of a full-time youth officer for County Kildare. In the interim, the county shares a youth officer with Wicklow, who is very active in both counties.

Ministerial Advisers Appointments

790. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the appointment of additional special advisers by her and Ministers of State in her Department. [37884/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I have appointed two Special Advisers in this Department in accordance with the Instructions for Ministerial Appointments published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Departmental Staff Redeployment

791. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of staff from his Department currently seconded to other Departments or agencies in the Civil Service per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36962/16]

792. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of staff from his Department who have appealed against secondment per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the appeals mechanism involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36978/16]

793. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of staff from his Department currently seconded to a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36994/16]

794. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of staff from his Department currently seconded from a firm in the private sector per annum from 2010 to date in 2016, in tabular form; the details of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37010/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 791 to 794, inclusive, together.

The following table below sets out details of staff seconded from the Department of Defence to other Government Departments or agencies in the Civil Service and organisations in the private sector in the period 2010-2016.

Year	Áras an Uachtaráin	Department of Foreign Affairs (Brussels)	Legal Aid Board	European Defence Agency (EDA) (Brussels)	CPSU	Total
2010	3	1	1	-	1	6
2011	3	1	1	-	1	6
2012	3	1	1	-	1	6
2013	3	1	1	-	1	6
2014	3	1	1	-	1	6
2015	3	1	1	1	1	7
2016	2	1	-	1	1	5

I can confirm that no appeals were made to my Department in relation to secondment in the period in question.

There are no staff currently seconded to my Department from an organisation in the private sector.

Departmental Funding

795. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the funding that has been provided to County Louth over the previous three years 2014 to 2016 by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37219/16]

796. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the applications submitted for funding projects from Louth County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016, in tabular form; and if the applications were successful. [37235/16]

797. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the funding for projects in 2017 in County Louth to be funded by his department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37251/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 795 to 797, inclusive, together.

Expenditure by my Department is mainly on pay and allowances and the operational costs and capital investment across the Defence Forces. My Department does not provide funding on a geographic basis, with the limited exception of the funding provided from the Defence Vote in respect of Civil Defence and for the upgrade and development of military installations.

Civil Defence training and operations are funded by a combination of a central grant from the Department of Defence and a contribution from the relevant local authority on a 70/30 basis. The annual operational grant from Defence covers 70% of the running costs of Civil Defence each year and the Local Authority provides the remaining 30%. Applications for funding from Local Authorities are based on the actual expenditure incurred during the year and are submitted retrospectively.

Grants are also issued to the Local Authorities on application, from time to time, towards the purchase of vehicles and equipment. There are no outstanding grant applications from Louth County Council at present.

As funding is provided respectively, there are no details yet available in relation to funding for Louth County Council for 2017.

The relevant information in relation to County Louth, for the years 2014 to 2016, is presented in the following table.

Civil Defence Funding - Louth

Year	Projects	Funding
2014	Annual Operational Grant for Civil Defence	€82,847
	Swiftwater Rescue Equipment Grant	€2,860
2015	Annual Operational Grant for Civil Defence	€73,273
	Grant towards purchase of two 4x4 vehicles	€35,350

Year	Projects	Funding
	Refund of costs of Hepatitis immunisation for Civil Defence volunteers	€3,825
2016	Annual Operational Grant for Civil Defence	€67,568
	Grant towards purchase of Minibus	€4,968
	Grant towards the purchase of an Ambulance	€17,750

In relation to the upgrade and development of military installations, the following table provides the relevant figures for County Louth for the years 2014 to 2016, with an estimated €40,000 planned for 2017.

Upgrade of Military Installations - Louth

Year	Location	Funding
2014	Aiken Barracks	€255,231
2015	Aiken Barracks	€87,340
2016	Aiken Barracks	€200,500

Departmental Funding

798. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the funding that has been provided to County Meath over the previous three years 2014 to 2016 by project name, location and funding amount in tabular form. [37267/16]

799. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the applications submitted for funding and projects from Meath County Council in each of the years 2014 to 2016, in tabular form; if the applications were successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37283/16]

800. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the funding for projects in 2017 in County Meath to be funded by his Department by project name, location and funding amount, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37299/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 798 to 800, inclusive, together.

Expenditure by my Department is mainly on pay and allowances and the operational costs and capital investment across the Defence Forces. My Department does not provide funding on a geographic basis, with the limited exception of the funding provided from the Defence Vote in respect of Civil Defence and for the upgrade and development of military installations.

Civil Defence training and operations are funded by a combination of a central grant from the Department of Defence and a contribution from the relevant local authority on a 70/30 basis. The annual operational grant from Defence covers 70% of the running costs of Civil Defence each year and the Local Authority provides the remaining 30%. Applications for funding from Local Authorities are based on the actual expenditure incurred during the year and are submitted retrospectively.

Grants are also issued to the Local Authorities on application, from time to time, towards the purchase of vehicles and equipment. There are no outstanding grant applications from Meath County Council at present.

As funding is provided respectively, there are no details yet available in relation to funding for Meath County Council for 2017.

The relevant information in relation to County Meath, for the years 2014 to 2016, is presented in the following table.

Civil Defence Funding - Meath

Year	Project	Funding
2014	Annual Operational Grant for Civil Defence	€115,086
	Fit-out of a new Communications Control Vehicle	€5,000
	Cost of Hepatitis Immunisation for Civil Defence volunteers	€14,430
	Participation in Rope Rescue Competition in Belgium	€2,500
	Swiftwater Rescue Equipment	€3,000
2015	Annual Operational Grant for Civil Defence	€117,536
	Participation in Rope Rescue Comp., Belgium	€3,000
	Cost of Hepatitis Immunisation for Civil Defence volunteers	€8,540
	Grant towards the purchase of two vehicles	€20,000
2016	Annual Operational Grant for Civil Defence	€116,771
	Cost of Hepatitis Immunisation for Civil Defence volunteers	€4,910
	Grant towards purchase of Search-Dog Vehicle	€12,750

In relation to the upgrade and development of military installations, the following table provides the relevant figures for County Meath for the years 2014 to 2016, with an estimated €20,000 planned for 2017.

Upgrade of Military Installations - Meath

Year	Location	Funding
2014	Gormanston Camp	€7,486
2015	Gormanston Camp	€81,720
2016	Gormanston Camp	€118,693

Defence Forces Reorganisation

801. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the estimated savings to the State since the standing down of the Fourth Western Brigade by the Government in 2012; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that this decision may have had a negative impact on the overall morale in the Defence Forces; if consideration will be given to review this decision in the near future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37315/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Following a comprehensive review of expenditure carried out in 2011, the strength ceiling of the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) was stabilised at 9,500 personnel. It was clear from the review that the three brigade Army structure was no longer viable, particularly when compared to international norms.

Accordingly, a major re-organisation of the Defence Forces was implemented in order to ensure that the Defence Forces could operate efficiently and effectively within the revised strength ceiling of 9,500 personnel and was not focused on achieving savings. The re-organisation encompassed the consolidation of the three under-strength brigades into two full strength brigades. Key aspects of the re-organisation, which was introduced in 2012, included the consolidation of under-strength units into a smaller number of full strength units, a reduction in the number of headquarters and the associated re-deployment of personnel from administrative and support functions to operational units.

The re-organisation has maintained the operational capacity of the Defence Forces to the greatest extent possible within the available resource envelope and has improved the deployability and sustainability of the Defence Forces, both at home and overseas. This remains a key focus for the future. It is important to note that the re-organisation did not reduce the numbers of PDF personnel serving in locations within the former 4th Western Brigade area and I am satisfied that a return to a three brigade structure would cause a range of unnecessary inefficiencies, such as an increased administrative burden arising from the need to reintroduce a layer of non-operational middle management, and a return to under-strength units.

The White Paper on Defence 2015 confirmed the Government's commitment to retain a PDF strength of at least 9,500 personnel and the continued retention of the Army's two Brigade structure.

Defence Forces Properties

802. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of premises owned and or managed by his Department in each county; and the number of these currently unoccupied. [37423/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe) : The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table:

Premises	Occupied	Unoccupied
Clare		
Knockalisheen	Partly Occupied	
RDF Premises Ennis	Yes	
Total Clare	2	
Cork		
Kilworth Camp	Yes	
Bere Island	Yes	
Naval Base, Haulbowline	Yes	
Fort Davis, Whitegate	Yes	
Fort Templebreedy, Crosshaven	Yes	
Collins Barracks Cork	Yes	
Showgrounds Fermoy	Yes	
RDF Kilcrohane	Yes	
RDF Skibereen	Yes	
RDF Mallow	Yes	
Total Cork	10	
Donegal		
Finner Camp	Yes	
Total Donegal	1	
Dublin		
Cathal Brugha Barracks, Rathmines	Yes	
Cathal Brugha Barracks , Former Married Quarters – 12 units	9 occupied	3 unoccupied
McKee Barracks, Blackhorse Avenue	Yes	
No 64 McKee Park , Blackhorse Avenue	Yes	
St. Bricin's Hospital, Dublin 7	Yes	
Old School House, Arbour Hill	Yes	
2 Tomar Court, Arbour Hill	Yes	
Casement Aerodrome , Baldonnel	Yes	

Questions - Written Answers

Premises	Occupied	Unoccupied
Esplanade Collins Barracks	Yes	
Total Dublin	17	3
Galway		
Oranmore Rifle Range	Yes	
Dún Uí Mhaoilíosa	Yes	
Total Galway	2	
Kerry		
Ballymullen Barracks Tralee	Yes	
Fort Shannon, Tarbert	Yes	
RDF Premises Kilorglin	Yes	
Total Kerry	3	
Kildare		
Curragh Camp	yes	
2 Orchard Park	Yes	
23 Orchard P ark		Yes
78 Orchard Park	Yes	
85 Orchard P ark		yes
96 Orchard P ark	yes	
Total Kildare	4	2
Kilkenny		
Stephen's Barracks Kilkenny	Yes	
Total Kilkenny	1	
Laois		
RDF Portlaoise	Yes	
Total Laois	1	
Longford		
Connolly Barracks, Longford	Yes	
Total Longford	1	
Louth		
Aiken Barracks, Dundalk	Yes	
Red Barn Rifle Range, Dundalk	Yes	
Total Louth	1	
Mayo		
Military Barracks Castlebar	Yes	
Total Mayo	1	
Meath		
Gormanston Camp and Aerodrome	yes	
RDF Navan	yes	
Total Meath	2	
Roscommon		
Military Barracks, Boyle	Yes	
Total Roscommon	1	
Tipperary		
Military Barracks Nenagh		yes
Park of McCann Barracks, Templemore	yes	
Total Tipperary	1	1
Waterford		
Military Barracks Waterford	yes	
Total Waterford	1	
Westmeath		
Columb Barracks, Mullingar	Partly occupied	

Premises	Occupied	Unoccupied
Custume Barracks, Athlone	Yes	
Total Westmeath	2	
Wexford		
Military Barracks Wexford	yes	
Total Wexford	1	
Wicklow		
Kilbride Camp and Rifle Range	Yes	
Coolmoney Camp	Yes	
Rockbrae House Bray	Yes	
Range Warden's Post, Seskin	Yes	
Total Wicklow	4	

Departmental Reports

803. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the reports commissioned by his Department since 2006 which while completed or are in final draft form have not been published; the reason they have not been published; the expected publication date; the cost to date of each such report; if tenders were invited; if it is not intended to publish any such report the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37545/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table.

Year	Company	Tender	Nature of Report and Implementation	Cost
2006	Millward Brown, IMS	Subject to a Request for Tender in October 2005.	A commissioned Public Attitude Survey and Report from carrying out a market research programme into public attitudes and awareness of emergency planning in Ireland. The aim was to assist in the development of a communication strategy and to inform future Government public information and awareness campaigns. The survey and report findings were for internal use and have , therefore, not been published.	€30,912
	Grayling Communications Consultants	Subject to a Request for Tender in March 2006.	A commissioned Report on developing a Communications Strategy for a Government public information and awareness campaign on emergency planning based upon the Millward Brown research and from consultation with stakeholders in lead Government Departments. The report findings were for internal use and, therefore, have not been published . A public information and awareness campaign was subsequently launched in April 2008.	€14,520
2015	Mr John Kearon	There was no tender competition due to the specialised nature of the research project.	Research on vessels linked to Roger Casement. The work involved a considerable amount of research both in Kerry and London by an expert on boats of the period. The National Museum of Ireland was consulted but did not have the required expertise. However, it suggested Mr. Kearon who had the skills and experience required. The report findings were for internal use and, therefore, have not been published .	€4,605

Non-Disclosure Agreements

804. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if his Department, or the agencies that report to his Department, entered into any non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements with any organisation due to court action or a threatened court action; and if so, the persons or groups with which these agreements exist. [37625/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Chief State Solicitor's Office and the State Claims Agency manage and provide legal representation in relation to all cases taken against the Minister for Defence.

In cases where the State is considered liable or which involve an apportionment of liability as between the State and the claimant, I am informed that both the State Claims Agency and Chief State Solicitor's Office approach is to settle such cases expeditiously in so far as it is possible and to do so on reasonable terms. In cases where liability is fully disputed by the State, all necessary resources are applied to defending such claims robustly.

Non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements may be attached on a case by case basis depending on various factors. The Department does not hold separate statistics in relation to cases involving non-disclosures or confidentiality agreements and each case file would have to be individually examined in order to ascertain this information. As this task would involve inordinate effort, it is not possible to supply the Deputy with this information.

Defence Forces Properties

805. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence further to Parliamentary Question No. 223 of 23 November 2016, the total number of hectares the Gormanstown Army Camp lands currently stand at; the total number of hectares currently operational and in day to day use; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37673/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Gormanston Army Camp stands on 105.93 Hectares (261.77 acres). The Department of Defence has let 62.3 Hectares (154 acres) of this land to a local farmer. The remaining lands are operational and used day to day as part of the permanently occupied Gormanston Army Camp.

The Department of Defence also leases additional land of 7.29 Hectares (approximately 18.024 acres) adjacent to the camp from a landowner which is used as a gallery firing range.

Ministerial Advisers Appointments

806. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the status of the appointment of additional special advisers by him and Ministers of State in his Department. [37886/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I appointed Special Advisers Mr. John Coughlan and Ms. Clare Mungovan under Section 11 of the Public Service Management Act 1997. Their contracts of employment commenced with effect from 6 May 2016 and with effect from 18 May 2016 respectively.

Their appointments are to temporary, unestablished positions in the Civil Service. The term of office of each Special Adviser shall cease on the date of expiration of my assignment as Minister of State at the Department of Defence.