Cabinet Committee Meetings

9. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Taoiseach when the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform last met. [18008/17]

**The Taoiseach:** The Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform last met on 10th April 2017. The next meeting of the Committee has been scheduled for 15th May.

**Questions Nos. 10 and 11 resubmitted.**

National Security Committee

12. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Taoiseach the number of meetings of the National Security Committee that have taken place in the past 12 months. [18227/17]

**The Taoiseach:** Having regard to the confidential nature of the work of the National Security Committee, it would not be appropriate to disclose information about the dates of individual meetings or about its proceedings.

The Committee is chaired by the Secretary General to the Government and comprises representatives at the highest level of the Departments of Justice & Equality, Defence and Foreign Affairs and Trade, and of the Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces.

It is concerned with ensuring that the Government and I are advised of high level security issues and the responses to them, but not with operational security matters.

The Committee meets as required and will continue to do so. In addition to the meetings, the members liaise on an ongoing basis to monitor developments that might have national security implications, in particular in the international arena.

Commissions of Investigation

13. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on the second Fennelly Commission report and when his Department received same. [18282/17]

**The Taoiseach:** I received the final report of the Fennelly Commission on 31 March 2017
and it was published on my Department’s website on 6 April 2017.

The commission’s Final Report found that it is “reasonable to conclude, based on the evi-
dence before it, that no widespread or systematic, indeed probably no significant, misuse of
information derived from non-999 recordings took place”.

The commission also found no evidence of knowledge of the recording of non-999 tele-
phone calls on the part of relevant Ministers for Justice, the Department of Justice, or other
State agencies.

However, the Report made many findings of great concern to the Government, and I am sure
to this House.

The commission found that recording and retaining non-999 calls was not authorised by
common law or by statute, and that An Garda Síochána therefore infringed the Constitutional
rights of those recorded.

The commission also made damning findings about the lack of effective oversight and pro-
cedures within An Garda Síochána over a lengthy period of time, and the failure to respond
when some technicians and officers raised concerns and questions.

Taken together, the findings of the Fennelly Commission reinforce the Government’s deter-
mination to carry-out a fundamental review of the future of policing in Ireland.

In April, the Government approved draft terms of reference for a commission on the future
of policing in Ireland and the Tánaiste is consulting with all Parties in this House before these
are finalised.

This review will look at all functions carried out by An Garda Síochána, including commu-
nity safety, state security and immigration.

It will also consider the full range of bodies that provide oversight and accountability for
policing in Ireland.

It will take account of the changing nature of crime, society and public expectations; best
practices in other countries; previous reports concerning policing in Ireland; and any specific
challenges to delivering consistent reform in policing.

In addition to this comprehensive reform agenda, the Government has also agreed that the
Tánaiste will:

- refer the Fennelly Report to the Policing Authority to oversee implementation of its recom-
 mendations in the context of its oversight of An Garda Síochána;

- examine the need for legislation in relation to the recording of calls and related matters, on
 foot of the recommendations of the Fennelly Commission, and

- refer matters in the report relating to the Bailey case to GSOC to consider whether they
 believe any further investigation is necessary against the background of the investigation they
 have been carrying out already into the case.

Questions Nos. 14 to 43, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 44 to 49, inclusive, answered orally.
50. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the work of the implementation group overseeing the rollout of the 40 actions contained in the taskforce on mobile phone and broadband to help to address shortfalls in coverage in the amber areas of the national broadband plan in particular; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21892/17]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** I am critically aware of the frustration currently being experienced across Ireland where telecommunications networks are not always delivering the services people expect. Recognising this frustration, I specifically included in the Programme for Government a commitment to a Mobile Phone and Broadband Task force. In July 2016, I established the Task Force together with Minister Humphreys to identify immediate solutions to broadband and mobile phone coverage deficits and investigate how better services could be provided to consumers prior to the full build and roll-out of the network planned under the NBP State intervention. The report of the Task Force was published in December and is available on my Department’s website.

In producing this report, the Task Force worked with Departments, local authorities, ComReg, State agencies, the telecoms industry and other key stakeholders. The report contains 40 actions that will alleviate some of the telecommunications deficits across Ireland and the implementation programme on mobile phone and broadband access identifies 19 of these actions as areas where immediate and direct action by Departments and State agencies can ensure accelerated benefits to consumers.

Implementation of the actions identified by the Taskforce will allow the business opportunities and benefits that the growth in the digital economy is bringing to be felt across the entire country. It will also assist in the creation of a digital infrastructure that can support this growth, and that can provide nationwide coverage with sufficient capacity to ensure that data can flow at the volume, speed and reliability required to meet the demands of modern life. Implementation of these actions will also assist local authorities in preparing for the roll-out of the new NBP network once contracts are in place.

In order to maintain momentum created by the Task Force, I, together with Minister Humphreys, have established an Implementation Group. This group is driving and monitoring the implementation of the actions, bringing together all key stakeholders identified in the Task Force report with responsibility for delivery. This group will be formally reporting every 90 days on progress made on all actions to both myself and Minister Humphreys.

The first meeting of the Implementation Group took place on 8 March, and was followed by a series of bilateral meetings with action holders. These discussions have formed the basis of the first quarterly progress report, which I together with Minister Humphreys expect to publish shortly. This report will show that considerable progress has been made, particularly in relation to the implementation of actions identified for Q1 2017.

The Implementation Group is also tasked with comprehensively reviewing progress made after twelve months, and producing an annual report summarising progress across all actions. The Group is also mandated to recommend further actions that would result in an improved service for consumers.

The benefits that the implementation of the actions in the Task Force report will bring will be felt across Ireland, including in the AMBER NBP Intervention Area.

*Questions Nos. 51 to 54, inclusive, answered orally.*
Climate Change Advisory Council

55. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has satisfied himself with the observations and recommendations of the advisory council in its first report; the number of recommendations that will be implemented in the final report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21559/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Climate Change Advisory Council was established under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015. Under this legislation, the Advisory Council is an independent body whose key function is to provide advice and recommendations to me, to relevant sectoral Ministers and to the Government as a whole in relation to the development of national mitigation plans and national adaptation frameworks. The Advisory Council is also tasked with advising on matters relating to the achievement of the Ireland’s objective to transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and sustainable economy by 2050.

I very much welcome the publication by the Advisory Council of its first report in November of last year. In this report, the Advisory Council very clearly articulates the scientific understanding underpinning of the nature of climate change, the resulting imperative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the policy implications this presents Ireland. In these respects, I would commend the report to every member in these Houses. The Advisory Council also arrives at some initial conclusions in relation to the issues that the first National Mitigation Plan should consider both for individual sectors covered by the Plan as well as on a cross-sectoral basis.

In order for the Advisory Council to meet its mandate under the 2015 legislation, I invited it, following my publication of the draft National Mitigation Plan, to engage directly with me and with other relevant Government Ministers with a view to providing my colleagues and me with its recommendations to feed into the preparation of the final Plan. All input received from the Advisory Council is being considered in finalising the National Mitigation Plan which will go to Government for approval in early June. I also understand that the Advisory Council intends to publish its first Periodic Report in July of this year and that this report will include the Council’s overall response to the final National Mitigation Plan as published.

In this regard, it is important to note that the Advisory Council is also required, under the 2015 legislation, to report annually on progress made during the previous year in achieving greenhouse gas emissions reductions and to make recommendations, as it considers necessary or appropriate, in relation to the most cost-effective manner of achieving reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in order to enable the achievement of the national transition objective.

Renewable Energy Projects

56. Deputy Timmy Dooley asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the proposed renewable heat incentive scheme; the date by which this scheme will become operational; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21830/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The introduction of a Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) is a commitment in the White Paper on Energy and the 2016 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, 6.5% of heat was derived from renewable sources in Ireland.

The final public consultation on the design and implementation of the new RHI closed in March 2017, and all 119 submissions are currently being reviewed by my Department. The findings from this public consultation will be used to help inform the final design of the scheme. Once this review process is complete the final cost and design of the RHI will need Government and State Aid approval.

I hope to be in a position to announce the details of the new scheme by the end of the year.

**National Broadband Plan**

57. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if there will be a universal service obligation retained in terms of the national broadband plan. [21834/17]

76. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to address the gaps in broadband coverage in rural areas around the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21821/17]

78. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the current projected commencement date and completion date for the national broadband plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21561/17]

79. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the national broadband plan; the deadline by which 100% of premises around the country will have access to broadband; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21827/17]

83. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the steps he will take to address the gap in broadband coverage for the Oldtown area of north County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21820/17]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 57, 76, 78, 79 and 83 together.

The National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to deliver high speed broadband 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 a State intervention in those areas where commercial investment has not been fully demonstrated.

A key principle of the NBP is to support and stimulate commercial investment through policy and regulatory measures. Commercial investment since the publication of the NBP has considerably exceeded expectations. To date, the commercial telecommunications sector has invested over €2.5bn in upgrading and modernising networks which support the provision of high speed broadband and mobile telecoms services.

There has been significant progress in relation to broadband rollout so that today, approximately 1.4m or 61% of premises in Ireland can get high speed broadband of a minimum of 30 Megabits per second. The NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms
sector, which is continuing to expand this footprint.

On the 4 April, I signed a commitment agreement with eir in relation to its plans to provide broadband to an additional 300,000 premises in rural areas on a commercial basis. Eir has committed to concluding this work over a 90 week period, an average of nearly 500 premises per day. My Department will be monitoring this rollout to ensure that eir meets its obligations under the Agreement. A copy of the Commitment Agreement is available on my Department’s website. On the same day I published an updated High Speed Broadband Map which finalises the State Intervention area. The updated Map shows the following categories of areas for delivery of broadband:

- The BLUE areas represent those areas where commercial telecommunications providers are either currently delivering or have indicated plans to deliver high speed broadband services,

- The AMBER areas on the High Speed Broadband Map represent the areas that will require State Intervention and are the subject of the current procurement process.

It is intended that all premises will have access to services of at least 30 megabits per second when the procurement process is completed and the network rolled out.

There are approximately 2.3m premises covering Ireland’s 26 counties, of which approximately 23% (542,000) premises are located in the AMBER area on the Map. These premises will require State intervention and are the focus for the State Intervention procurement process. The remaining 1.8m premises are located in the BLUE areas and will be served by commercial operators.

The map shows that 100% of Oldtown Co Dublin falls within eir’s plans to deliver rural high speed broadband between now and end 2018 (Light Blue on the Map). Individuals can themselves check whether their premises is in a BLUE or an AMBER area by accessing the High Speed Broadband Map and entering their Eircode at www.broadband.gov.ie. Information on eir’s planned rural deployment is available at http://fibrerollout.ie/eircode-lookup/.

A formal procurement process is in train to select a company or companies who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network within the State Intervention Area. 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 finalisation of the State Intervention Area for the procurement process is an important milestone as it means that bidders can progress their business plans and the Department can move to the next stage of the procurement. The three bidders have indicated that they are proposing a predominantly fibre-to-the-home solution. A fibre-to-the-home solution means that householders and businesses may get speeds not just of 30 Megabits per second but much higher, potentially up to 1000 Megabits per second.

The State Intervention network will be a wholesale network and retail service providers will be able to use the network to provide enhanced broadband services to their customers.

The timeframe for 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. 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 once contracts are in place.

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 and a prioritisation programme.
The Programme for Government also commits to measures to assist in the rollout of the network once a contract is awarded.

In this regard, I established a Mobile Phone and Broadband Task Force in July 2016 together with Minister Humphreys to identify immediate solutions to broadband and mobile phone coverage deficits and investigate how better services could be provided to consumers prior to the full build and roll-out of the network planned under the National Broadband Plan State intervention. The report of the Task Force was published in December and is available on my Department’s website. In producing this report, the Task Force worked with Departments, local authorities, ComReg, State agencies, the telecoms industry and other key stakeholders. The report contains 40 actions that will alleviate some of the telecommunications deficits across Ireland and the implementation programme on mobile phone and broadband access identifies 19 of these actions as areas where immediate and direct action by Departments and State agencies can ensure accelerated benefits to consumers. The work of the Task Force is being led by an Implementation Group. This group brings together all key stakeholders identified in the Task Force report with responsibility for delivery of actions. This group will formally report every 90 days on progress made on all actions to both myself and Minister Humphreys. I am expecting the first such quarterly report shortly.

In addition, I have signed regulations allowing ComReg to proceed with a 2017 allocation of spectrum in the 3.6 GHz radio spectrum band. This will provide an 86% increase in total spectrum available for mobile and fixed wireless services. In my Department’s Estimates for 2017, I have secured an €8 million provision for RTE to allow it to free up the 700 MHz spectrum band. ComReg in turn will make plans to allocate this spectrum to provide for significantly enhanced mobile coverage. The 700 MHz band is particularly suited to rural environments where the signal can travel long distances. These initiatives should assist in enhancing the quality of mobile phone and data services across Ireland and particularly in rural Ireland.

There is no universal service obligation (USO) for high speed broadband provision or mobile voice services in Ireland. The current EU and national regulatory framework for telecommunications relates solely to voice telephony and Functional Internet Access (28.8 kilobits per second) and is provided for under the current EU regulatory framework governing telecoms. In September 2016, the European Commission published an ambitious proposal for the regulation of the European telecoms sector, which aims to incentivise and encourage increased investment in high speed broadband networks. I have raised the issue of a USO for high speed broadband at EU level and I am seeking inclusion of a specific provision in the new framework that would allow Member States to apply a USO for high speed broadband, where such networks are available.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

58. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount likely to be paid by Ireland due to missing carbon emission targets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21494/17]

67. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the estimated costs of fines he expects Ireland to incur based on current projections of the failure to reach emissions targets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21497/17]

82. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to ensure Ireland is not fined for failing to reach targets for reducing its greenhouse gas emissions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21822/17]
585. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the way in which his Department is planning for the possibility of up to €5.5 billion in fines in 2030 if the State does not meet its climate targets (details supplied); the way in which his Department has been liaising with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in relation to same, particularly with reference to the national mitigation plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18968/17]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 58, 67, 82 and 585 together.

The release of the latest projections of greenhouse gas emissions by the Environmental Protection Agency on 13 April last clearly indicated the enormous challenge facing Ireland to reduce its emissions. The projections indicate that emissions from those sectors of the economy not covered by the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) could be between 4% and 6% below 2005 levels by 2020, a deteriorating position in respect of the achievement of Ireland’s targets for 2020 when compared with previous projections. Though not unexpected, given the welcome return to economic growth in Ireland, it nevertheless confirms that Ireland’s greenhouse emissions continue to track broader trends in the economy and serves to underline the difficult decisions ahead of us as we try to reduce emissions in line with our international commitments.

In relation to the targets for 2020, Ireland has an emissions reduction target for each year between 2013 and 2020 under the 2009 EU Effort Sharing Decision. For the year 2020 itself, the target set for Ireland is that emissions should be 20% below their level in 2005. This will be Ireland’s contribution to the overall EU objective to reduce its emissions by the order of 20% by 2020 compared to 1990 levels. Ireland’s target is jointly the most demanding 2020 reduction target allocated to EU Member States under this Decision, which is shared only with Denmark and Luxembourg.

The projected shortfall to our targets in 2020 reflects both the constrained investment capacity over the past decade due to the economic crisis, and the extremely challenging nature of the target itself. In fact, it is now accepted that Ireland’s 2020 target was misinformed and not consistent with what would be achievable on an EU wide cost-effective basis.

In order to maximise Ireland’s emissions reductions and address the gap to the 2020 target, it will also be necessary to pursue other available options, in addition to the introduction of further policies and measures planned through the National Mitigation Plan.

The legislative framework governing the EU’s 2020 emissions reductions targets includes a number of flexibility mechanisms to enable Member States to meet their annual emissions targets, including provisions to bank any excess allowances to future years and to trade allowances between Member States. Ireland expects to make use of both of these mechanisms in meeting our compliance obligations. In relation to likely costs that Ireland will incur, this would arise in the context of a possible requirement to purchase additional allowances to meet our annual compliance requirements. At this stage, it is not possible to accurately quantify the potential cost of such purchases as this will depend on both the volume of purchases required and the price of allowances to be purchased.

In relation to 2030, I do not accept the contention in Deputy Martin’s Question in relation to the scale of costs related to failure to meet Ireland’s 2030 targets as these targets have not yet been agreed. I would, however, note that while the scale of investment required in order to help Ireland meet these targets will be significantly in excess of current levels of expenditure, such productive investment in our economy will contribute to sustainable economic growth and job creation over the next decade and beyond.
59. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the timescale for the national fibre broadband plan to be delivered to offshore islands; if his attention has been drawn to the particular problems offshore islands face regarding sustaining a working population without high speed internet; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21895/17]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to deliver high speed broadband services to every city, town, village and individual premises in Ireland including those on our offshore islands, 66 of which are inhabited and have a total population of over 9,000. 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 a State intervention in those areas where commercial investment has not been fully demonstrated.

A key principle of the NBP is to support and stimulate commercial investment through policy and regulatory measures. Commercial investment since the publication of the NBP has considerably exceeded expectations. To date, the commercial telecommunications sector has invested over €2.5bn in upgrading and modernising networks which support the provision of high speed broadband and mobile telecoms services.

There has been significant progress in relation to broadband rollout so that today, approximately 1.4m or 61% of premises in Ireland can get high speed broadband of a minimum of 30 Megabits per second. The NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector, which is continuing to expand this footprint.

On the 4 April, I signed a commitment agreement with eir in relation to its plans to provide broadband to an additional 300,000 premises in rural areas on a commercial basis. Eir has committed to concluding this work over a 90 week period, an average of nearly 500 premises per day. My Department will be monitoring this rollout to ensure that eir meets its obligations under the Agreement. A copy of the Commitment Agreement is available on my website [www.dccae.gov.ie](http://www.dccae.gov.ie).

On the same day I published an updated High Speed Broadband Map which is available at [www.broadband.gov.ie](http://www.broadband.gov.ie) which shows the extent of the State Intervention area and the areas targeted for commercial services.

- The BLUE areas represent those areas where commercial telecommunications providers are either currently delivering or have indicated plans to deliver high speed broadband services,
- The AMBER areas on the High Speed Broadband Map represent the areas that will require State Intervention and are the subject of the current procurement process.

It is intended that all premises will have access to services of at least 30 megabits per second when the procurement process is completed and the network rolled out.

There are c.2.3m premises in Ireland, of which approximately 23% (542,000) premises are located in the AMBER area on the Map. These premises will require State intervention and are the focus for the State Intervention procurement process. The remaining 1.8m premises are located in the BLUE areas and will be/are served by commercial operators. Individuals can themselves check whether their premises is in a BLUE or an AMBER area by accessing the High Speed Broadband Map and entering their Eircode at [www.broadband.gov.ie](http://www.broadband.gov.ie). Information
on eir’s planned rural deployment is available at http://fibrerollout.ie/eircode-lookup/.

A formal procurement process is in train to select a company or companies who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network within the State Intervention Area. 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 finalisation of the State Intervention Area for the procurement process is an important milestone as it means that bidders can progress their business plans and the Department can move to the next stage of the procurement. The three bidders have indicated that they are proposing a predominantly fibre-to-the-home solution. A fibre-to-the-home solution means that householders and businesses may get speeds not just of 30 Megabits per second but much higher, potentially up to 1000 Megabits per second.

The State Intervention network will be a wholesale network and retail service providers will be able to use the network to provide enhanced broadband services to their customers.

The timeframe for 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. 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 once contracts are in place.

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 and a prioritisation programme.

The Programme for Government also commits to measures to assist in the rollout of the network once a contract is awarded.

In this regard, in July 2016, together with Minister Humphreys I established the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to identify immediate solutions to broadband and mobile phone coverage deficits and investigate how better services could be provided to consumers prior to the full build and roll-out of the network planned under the National Broadband Plan State intervention. The report of the Task Force was published in December and is available at the following link: http://www.dcaae.gov.ie/communications/en-ie/Pages/Publication/Report-of-the-Mobile-Phone-and-Broadband-Taskforce.aspx. In producing this report, the Task Force worked with Departments, local authorities, ComReg, State agencies, the telecoms industry and other key stakeholders. The report contains 40 actions that will alleviate some of the telecommunications deficits across Ireland and the implementation programme on mobile phone and broadband access identifies 19 of these actions as areas where immediate and direct action by Departments and State agencies can ensure accelerated benefits to consumers. The work of the Task Force is being led by an Implementation Group. This group brings together all key stakeholders identified in the Task Force report with responsibility for delivery of actions. This group will formally report every 90 days on progress made on all actions to both myself and Minister Humphreys. I am expecting the first such quarterly report this month.

In addition, I have signed regulations allowing ComReg to proceed with a 2017 allocation of spectrum in the 3.6 GHz radio spectrum band. This will provide an 86% increase in total spectrum available for mobile and fixed wireless services. In my Department’s Estimates for 2017, I have secured an €8 million provision for RTE to allow it to free up the 700 MHz spectrum band. ComReg in turn will make plans to allocate this spectrum to provide for significantly enhanced mobile coverage. The 700 MHz band is particularly suited to rural environments where the signal can travel long distances. These initiatives should assist in enhancing the quality of mobile phone and data services across Ireland and particularly in rural Ireland.
60. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the North-South interconnector project. [21899/17]

65. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when the terms of reference will be finalised in respect of the study to be undertaken with regard to the proposed North-South interconnector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21888/17]

71. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when he will implement the motion regarding the North-South interconnector which was passed on 16 February 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21829/17]

80. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if there will be further consultations with local community groups prior to the finalisation of the terms of reference for the study in relation to the proposed North-South interconnector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21889/17]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 60, 65, 71 and 80 together.

On 19 December 2016 An Bord Pleanála granted planning permission for the North-South Interconnector project in Ireland. The decision concluded a lengthy planning process which included an Oral Hearing completed over eleven weeks from March to May last year. The planning decision is currently the subject of Judicial Review proceedings. The planning process for the section of the project in Northern Ireland is ongoing with an oral hearing concluding on 27 February 2017.

In light of the motions passed by Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann, I requested officials in my Department to prepare a proposal for an updated independent study that will bring further clarity to the relative cost and technical merits of overhead and underground solutions for the North South Interconnector.

In preparing the terms of reference for this study, and also to fulfil the commitment made at a meeting I held with public representatives and local community groups in Leinster House on 8 February, my officials held meetings with representatives of the North East Pylon Pressure Campaign on 28 March and the Monaghan Anti-Pylon Committee on 3 April. This engagement was important in facilitating local representative groups input into the terms of reference drafting process.

I have approved the terms of reference for the study and published them on my Department’s website yesterday.

Construction of the project is not planned to commence before 2018 and I intend that this study be completed and published before the end of this year.

**Electric Vehicles**

61. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the steps he will be taking to increase the uptake of hybrid and electric vehicles; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21831/17]
Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The EU Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC set Ireland a legally binding target of meeting 16% of our energy demand from renewable sources by 2020, including 10% of transport with this target also being legally binding. In the transport sector, Ireland aims to meet its renewable target mainly through the increased use of sustainable biofuels, with electric vehicles (EVs) also making a small contribution. At end 2015, 5.7% of our energy needs in the transport sector were met from renewable sources.

The Electric Vehicles Grant Scheme provides grant aid of up to €5,000 towards the purchase of a new full battery EV (BEV) or Plugin Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEV). The scheme, which will be kept under review, is continuing this year and an allocation of €5 million has been provided in my Department’s Vote for this purpose. These grants are in addition to the VRT reliefs of up to €5,000 that also apply to EVs. Budget 2017 extended VRT reliefs on PHEVs to end 2018 and on BEVs to end 2021.

Increasing numbers of EVs have been registered in Ireland. Since the introduction of the EV Grant Scheme in 2011, the purchase of 2,060 electric vehicles has been supported to date under the scheme to the value of almost €9.7 million. Almost 75% of the vehicles supported received grant aid since 2015.

In accordance with the commitment in the Programme for Government, my Department and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport are co-chairing a Low Emission Vehicles (LEV) Task Force involving relevant Government Departments and agencies. The work of this Task Force has been divided into two phases with the first phase focusing solely on EVs. The topics being examined include the potential for market growth of EVs and policy levers to stimulate this growth. Options under consideration include tax incentives, access to restricted areas and preferential rates for tolls and parking. Having considered the available options, the Task Force expects to report on an interim basis to Government on the first phase shortly with associated recommendations for decision.

Brexit Issues

62. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has made provision with regard to roaming charges when Britain leaves the European Union in view of the abolition of roaming charges across the EU in 2017. [21836/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The EU Roaming Regulations aim to abolish retail roaming charges within the EU on 15 June 2017, subject to Fair Use Policy. At that point in time, the UK will still be a member of the EU and will thus be required to abide by EU law in place at that time.

It is not yet possible to say what impact Brexit will have on cross border roaming charges once the UK formally leaves the Union. This will be largely dependent on the future relationship between the EU and UK.

The UK Government White Paper on Brexit sets out that the UK wishes to ensure that the UK telecoms companies can continue to trade as freely and competitively as possible with the EU.

I can assure the Deputy however that my Department will continue to engage with the key stakeholders on this matter both domestically and at EU level and has identified this policy area as a priority.
63. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of his Department’s ongoing interaction with a company (details supplied) on the roll out of broadband in the newly highlighted light blue areas of the national broadband plan; when he expects formal timelines to be put on these rollouts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21893/17]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naugha-ten):** The National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to deliver high speed broadband 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 a State intervention in those areas where commercial investment has not been fully demonstrated.

A key principle of the NBP is to support and stimulate commercial investment through policy and regulatory measures. Commercial investment since the publication of the NBP has considerably exceeded expectations. To date, the commercial telecommunications sector has invested over €2.5bn in upgrading and modernising networks which support the provision of high speed broadband and mobile telecoms services.

There has been significant progress in relation to broadband rollout so that today, approximately 1.4m or 61% of premises in Ireland can get high speed broadband of a minimum of 30 Megabits per second. The NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector, which is continuing to expand this footprint.

In accordance with procedures set out by my Department in December 2015, in late 2016 my Department initiated a review of an eir proposal to rollout fibre to over 300,000 premises in rural areas on a commercial basis. These premises were in areas that had formed part of the procurement process for the NBP State Intervention area. This analysis is complete and on 4 April, I signed a commitment agreement with eir in relation to its plans to provide broadband to an additional 300,000 premises in rural areas on a commercial basis. Eir has committed to completing the rollout over a 90 week period, an average of 500 premises passed per day. In line with the published Agreement there are regular Review Meetings the purpose of which is to monitor this rollout and ensure that eir meets its obligations under the Agreement. A copy of the Commitment Agreement is available on my website www.dccae.gov.ie.

Quarterly updates will be published on the Departments website. The Q1 2017 update will be published in May and I am pleased to announce that the eir rollout is in line with the Commitment Agreement. My Department has informed me that in the period from 1 January to end March 2017 30,064 premises have been passed. This brings to 40,114 the total subset of the 300k premises that eir has passed since they commenced work in late 2016.

Information on eir’s planned rural deployment is available at [http://fiberrollout.ie/eircodelookup/](http://fiberrollout.ie/eircodelookup/).

**Broadcasting Sector**

64. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will ensure any future funding model for the national broadcaster will examine the way companies such as (details supplied) and others pay nothing to terrestrial broadcasters for access to their linear channel; and if he will make a statement on the matter.
Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I recognise the important part that public service broadcasters play in our democratic society and the consequent importance of providing stable and adequate funding to ensure the continued delivery of their role in this regard.

While the TV Licence system faces a range of challenges, including the current unacceptable levels of evasion, my Department is continuing to work with An Post and RTÉ so that all steps are being taken to ensure that, to the extent possible, it continues to deliver the necessary levels of public funding.

In addition, I am in the process of bringing proposals to Government for the amendment of the Broadcasting Act 2009 including a legislative amendment to provide for the tendering of licence fee collection. In connection with this, on foot of a request from my Department, the Office of Government Procurement recently issued a Request for Information to ascertain what the market might be able to deliver in relation to licence fee collection. A total of nine responses have been received and these are now being reviewed and the information provided will be used to inform any proposed tender that may be issued once the necessary legislative amendment is approved and in place.

In terms of future funding models for the national broadcaster, I am aware of the issue referred to by the Deputy and it is one that has been subject to much debate in other jurisdictions, including in the UK. As the Deputy may be aware, I have requested the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment to examine the longer term issue of the future funding of the public service media and, while the scope of its deliberations is a matter for the Committee to determine, I am confident that its review will be comprehensive and thorough and will involve due consideration of all relevant issues such as that referred to by the Deputy. I very much look forward to receiving the Committee’s report in due course, which will inform future funding policy for public service broadcasting.

Question No. 65 answered with Question No. 60.

Alternative Energy Projects

66. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans for the development of the alternative energy sector in line with current and future requirements in view of the need to meet carbon emission reduction targets and the necessity to ensure a robust and reliable energy grid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21861/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The 2015 Energy White Paper sets out a vision to promote the development and diversification of renewable energy in Ireland in a competitive, secure and sustainable manner. A well balanced fuel mix that provides reliable and sustainable energy, minimises costs and protects against supply disruptions and price volatility, is essential to Irish consumers and businesses.

The 2009 EU Renewable Energy Directive sets Ireland a legally binding target of meeting 16% of our energy requirements from renewable sources by 2020. Ireland is committed to achieving this target through meeting 40% of electricity demand, 12% of heat and 10% of transport from renewable sources of energy, with the latter target also being legally binding.
Questions - Written Answers

Data from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) shows that 25.3% of electricity, 6.5% of heat and 5.7% of transport energy requirements were met from renewable sources at end 2015. Overall, SEAI analysis shows that 9.1% of Ireland’s energy requirements in 2015 were met by renewable energy.”

The Government has a range of policy measures and schemes to incentivise the use of renewable energy and although good progress towards the target has been made to date, meeting the 16% target remains challenging. The REFIT schemes underpin the development of a range of renewable electricity technologies. In addition, my Department is working on the development of a new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme and a Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) Scheme, designed to assist in meeting our RES-E and RES-H targets. The introduction of any new scheme - including the overall costs and technologies to be supported - will be subject to Government approval and State Aid clearance from the European Commission.

In the transport sector, Ireland aims to meet its renewable target mainly through the increased use of sustainable biofuels, with electric vehicles also making a small contribution. The Biofuel Obligation Scheme (BOS) was increased from 6% to 8% by volume from 1 January 2017. A public consultation on future increases to the BOS, required to meet the 2020 renewable transport target will take place later this year.

The 2014 National Policy Position on Climate Action and Low Carbon Development, which is underpinned by the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, provides the high-level policy direction for the State to move to a low-carbon economy by 2050. The development of sectoral mitigation measures for the electricity generation, built environment, transport and agriculture sectors to be set out in a National Mitigation Plan (NMP) is nearing finalisation. The primary objective of the first NMP will be to monitor measures already underway and identify potential additional measures that, in the medium to longer term, will reduce GHG emissions. This will assist Ireland to achieve our national transition objective to become a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. The NMP will be submitted to Government for approval in June.

Question No. 67 answered with Question No. 58.

Post Office Network

68. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding post offices; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21720/17]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** It is Government policy that An Post remains a strong, viable company in a position to provide a high quality, nationwide postal service and that it maintains a nationwide customer-focused network of post offices in the community. A fundamental review of An Post, including the post office network, which will identify the strategic changes and restructuring necessary to maintain the company on a sound financial footing is ongoing. Regarding the provision of new services in post offices, there are opportunities to develop new or enhanced product lines for the network including the concept of ‘digital assist’ whereby the Post Office would become a default option for the provision of Government services for those who are not comfortable in the digital space. These opportunities will be assessed by An Post in the context of the current strategic review.

On foot of a reconfiguration of Government Departments in July last year, responsibility
for the post office network transferred to the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. That Department published the Final Report of the Post Office Hub Working Group in March in which it was outlined that they are pursuing the possible opportunities for services such as community banking and motor tax renewal for the network. Arrangements are in hand to reassign responsibility for the post office network to my Department given my overall responsibility for An Post and the recommendations of the Post Office Hub Working Group will continue to be finalised.

Decisions in relation to the operation of the post office network are operational matters for the Board and management of An Post and not ones in which I, as Minister, have a statutory function. Nonetheless, I will continue to monitor the position closely.

Postal Services

69. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on the implications stamp price increases will have for post offices as private companies begin to compete with lower stamp prices; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21832/17]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** In recognition of the exceptionally difficult financial situation facing An Post the Government agreed, in late 2016, to give An Post increased pricing freedom in order to enable the company to increase prices in the short term and generate much needed cash flow. In this regard the Communications Regulation (Postal Services) (Amendment) Bill 2016 was published on 22 December 2016. The Bill passed through the Oireachtas and was signed by the President on 15 March 2017. I made the necessary Commencement Order giving effect to the repeal of the price cap mechanism on the 21 March 2017.

An Post increased the price of the stamp with effect from 13 April 2017. Ireland fell well below the European average in terms of stamp prices and the increases (€1.00 for national and €1.35 for international) bring the price in line with European norms. The European average for a national stamp currently sits at €1.10.

The Communications Regulation (Postal Services) Act 2011 fully opened the Irish postal market to competition. An Post is the designated universal postal service provider which requires it to provide a minimum level of postal service throughout the State, the essential element of which is the collection and delivery of mail to every address on every working day, which is effectively each day from Monday to Friday. An Post has and will continue to compete with other postal operators in the market on a level playing field in order to provide a range of postal options to consumers. As a commercial State company, pricing strategies and related matters are the responsibility of the Board and management of An Post.

Waste Disposal Charges

70. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the deferred pay by weight waste collection system; when it will be implemented; the steps he will take to ensure waste collection companies do not inflate prices; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21833/17]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The charges applied by waste management companies are a matter between those
companies and their customers, subject to compliance with all applicable environmental and other relevant legislation, including contract and consumer legislation.

My Department is currently reviewing, together with the regulatory authorities and industry representatives, the introduction of an incentivised system which encourages people to prevent, reduce and segregate their waste. This approach is in line with Government waste policy to reduce our reliance on landfill for waste disposal and will also facilitate the provision of a range of options for people to manage their waste costs.

Question No. 71 answered with Question No. 60.

National Mitigation Plan

72. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will include the suggestions and recommendations of environmental groups on the draft national mitigation plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21495/17]

81. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the national mitigation plan; the timeframe for the publication of the plan; the resources being made available for the implementation of the plan; the reason the draft plan was not published in Irish; if the final plan will be published in Irish; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21558/17]

584. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the way in which his Department is tackling climate change. [15143/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 72, 81 and 584 together.

The objective of Ireland’s first National Mitigation Plan is to set out what Ireland is doing and is planning to do to further our transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050.

Work on the development of the first Plan is nearing completion and I intend to submit it to Government for approval in early June. The Plan is being prepared on a whole-of-Government basis reflecting in particular the central roles of key Ministers responsible for the Electricity Generation, Built Environment, Transport and Agriculture, Forest and Land Use sectors.

A public consultation on the Plan closed on 26 April 2017. Submissions received through this consultation are currently being examined by my Department as well as by the Departments with responsibility for the key sectors listed above and each submission will be given due consideration in the finalisation in the Plan.

I also recognise the need to engage wider society more generally with the climate challenge, motivate changes in behaviour, and create structures at local, regional and national levels to support the generation of ideas and their translation into appropriate cost-effective actions. To progress this, I recently announced a National Dialogue on Climate Action to provide for an inclusive process of engagement and consensus building across society towards enabling the transformation to a low carbon and climate-resilient future.

It must also be recognised that the first Plan is a work in progress reflecting the reality of where we are in our decarbonisation transition having regard to a number of factors including
curtailed public and private investment over the course of recent years. The first Plan cannot, therefore, provide a complete roadmap to achieve the national transition objective to 2050 but it will begin the process of development of medium to long term options to ensure that we are well positioned to take the necessary actions in the next and future decades.

This will be an ongoing process aimed at incremental and permanent decarbonisation. The Plan will become a living document: it will be made accessible on my Department’s website; will be subject to annual progress reports; and will be updated on an on-going basis as analysis, dialogue and technological innovation generate further cost-effective sectorial mitigation options. Recognising that funding climate action to the required level presents an enormous challenge for Ireland, a key part of this process will be to evaluate exchequer and non-exchequer options for financing Ireland’s transition.

In relation to the translation of the draft Plan, my Department is fully aware of its responsibilities under the Official Languages Act and every effort has been made to ensure that an Irish version of the draft Plan can be made available as soon as possible. My Department is currently undertaking final proofing of the Irish language text of the draft Plan and I will publish this version on my Department’s website as soon as possible. I also intend that an Irish language version of the final Plan be made available following its approval by Government.

*Question No. 73 answered with Question No. 49.*

**Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan**

74. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the policies or initiatives he is considering from the offshore renewable energy development plan; and the progress of these options. [21838/17]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** Ireland has some of the best offshore renewable resources in Europe, and the development of this abundant resource will be an increasingly important element of Ireland’s future energy policies. The 2014 Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDP) sets out Government policy in relation to the sustainable development of this resource. The Plan identifies policy actions and enablers that are key to the development of this sector. Progress on these policy actions and enablers is on-going under the aegis of the Offshore Renewable Energy Steering Group (ORESG). The ORESG, which includes representation from all relevant Government Departments and agencies, is responsible for the implementation of the Plan across three work-streams: Job Creation; Infrastructure; and Environment. A Working Group for each stream was established with a view to ensuring that offshore renewable energy is developed in line with EU environmental obligations and best practice and significant progress is being made on a number of fronts.

Work items progressed in 2016, and continuing into 2017, include the creation of an inventory of environmental, social and economic data relevant to offshore renewable energy developments; the development of guidance documents for industry on the preparation of Environmental Impact Statements, Natura Impact Statements and on environmental monitoring requirements; and work on mapping opportunities and constraints for the development of offshore renewable energy projects around Ireland. The latter will be a useful tool to help inform future decision making in relation to the most suitable locations for offshore renewable energy development. A Communications Strategy has also been developed to showcase Ireland’s significant potential and strong offering in this area, to raise the profile of the Irish ocean energy industry and to communicate that Ireland is “open for business”.

139
In addition, legislative proposals for a new streamlined development consent process for offshore renewable energy in the maritime area are being progressed under the Maritime Area and Foreshore (Amendment) Bill.

Finally it should be noted that the OREDP mandates an interim review of the Plan itself and its associated Strategic Environmental Assessment, to be carried out in 2017. This task is being progressed in 2017 and a full review of the OREDP will take place in 2020.

**Renewable Energy Generation Targets**

75. **Deputy Brid Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he expects the target for renewable energy for electricity of 40% to be met; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21825/17]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The overarching objective of the Government’s energy policy is to ensure secure and sustainable supplies of competitively priced energy to all consumers. A well balanced fuel mix that provides reliable energy, minimises costs and protects against supply disruptions and price volatility, is essential to Irish consumers. The 2009 EU Renewable Energy Directive set Ireland a legally binding target of meeting 16% of our energy requirements from renewable sources by 2020. In order to meet this target, Ireland is committed to meeting 40% of electricity demand from renewable sources. Good progress is being made towards increasing the share of renewable energy in our generation portfolio.

Policies and schemes are in place to incentivise the use of renewable energy. The REFIT schemes underpin the development of a range of renewable electricity technologies. In addition, my Department is working on the development of a new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme designed to assist in meeting our renewable electricity target.

To date, wind energy has been the largest driver of growth in renewable electricity. At end January 2017, the total amount of renewable generation connected to the grid was 3,120 MW of which 2,796 MW was wind. A further 3,570 MW of renewable generation is contracted for connection to the grid. Provisional figures provided by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland indicate that the total contribution from renewable generation to gross electricity consumption last year was 26.5%. In addition, solar and biomass have the potential to also contribute to our renewable electricity target. Eirgrid estimates that a total of between 3,900 and 4,300 MW of onshore renewable generation capacity will be required to allow Ireland to achieve 40% renewable electricity by 2020.

Looking to the European Union’s emerging climate and energy targets for 2030, it is likely that all Member States will be required to expand their renewable electricity generation portfolios beyond their 2020 capacities. This will be subject to negotiation in the context of the Commission’s Clean Energy Package proposals and Ireland’s share of any EU binding renewable target to be agreed would have to be fair, affordable and deliverable.

*Question No. 76 answered with Question No. 57.*

**Renewable Energy Projects**

77. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his future plans for support mechanisms for solar power; and the options which
Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Programme for Government contains a commitment to facilitate the development of solar energy projects in Ireland. This builds on the commitment in this area in the 2015 Energy White Paper.

My Department is currently developing a proposed new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) which will be designed to assist Ireland in meeting its renewable energy contributions out to 2030. Analysis is on-going against a range of commercial renewable technologies at various scales and includes an assessment of the cost of supporting Solar Photovoltaics (PV) - both rooftop and ground-mounted. The assessment also includes analysis of the optimum support mechanisms for renewable technologies, in line with the 2014 EU State Aid Guidelines.

Once this assessment is complete, my Department will publish a public consultation on the design of the new support scheme in the coming months. Following the outcome of this public consultation, and before any new scheme is introduced, it will need to secure Government approval and state aid clearance from the European Commission. Subject to this, it is expected that the new scheme will become operational in the first half of 2018.

I am fully aware of the level of interest in the solar PV sector in Ireland. I am advised that there have been over 550 applications, amounting to about 3,900 Megawatts of solar capacity, seeking a connection to the electricity grid in the last 18 months.

Notwithstanding the level of solar applicants seeking connection to the grid, my stated position is that while solar has a role to play in Ireland’s energy future, we cannot have a situation where a new support scheme leads to a disproportionate increase in people’s electricity bills through the Public Service Obligation levy. In designing the new RESS, the cost implications for people and businesses will, therefore be a high priority.

Finally, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland currently provides supports for the use of solar thermal heating technology to both large industry and SMEs. Households can also avail of grant support for investment in renewable energy installations, including solar thermal, under the Better Energy Homes Scheme.

Questions Nos. 78 and 79 answered with Question No. 57.

Question No. 80 answered with Question No. 60.

Question No. 81 answered with Question No. 72.

Question No. 82 answered with Question No. 58.

Question No. 83 answered with Question No. 57.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

84. Deputy Catherine Martin asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the economic analysis which underpins the climate targets he has set out. [21897/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I understand the Deputy’s Question refers to analysis of Ireland’s proposed emission reduction targets for the period 2021-2030 under the draft Effort Sharing Regulation pro-
This proposal seeks to give effect to the European Union’s commitment, under the Paris Agreement, to a reduction of at least 40% in EU-wide emissions by 2030 compared with 1990 levels, which will be met through reductions of 43% in the Emissions Trading System (ETS) and 30% in the non-ETS sector compared with 2005 levels.

The Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR) proposal, which applies specifically to emissions reductions in sectors of the economy outside of the EU ETS, proposes targets for each Member State based on GDP per capita, adjusted to reflect the cost-effectiveness of making emissions reductions within each Member State. In the case of Ireland a target of 39% has been proposed, which has been adjusted downwards to 30% to reflect a cost-effectiveness criterion. The proposal also recognises the mitigation potential of land use, land-use change and forestry, and contains a one-off flexibility between the ETS and the non-ETS, to ensure that all Member States are collectively enabled to reduce their emissions as cost effectively as possible, while ensuring progress towards the overall EU 2030 target can be maintained on a robust basis. Technical and economic analysis is ongoing on a cross-Departmental basis to understand the implications of the ESR proposal for Ireland. The proposal continues to be negotiated at EU level and Ireland’s analysis of the impacts of the proposal will continue to evolve during this process. The final outcome of these negotiations will determine Ireland’s contribution to the EU’s commitments for 2030 under the Paris Agreement.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

85. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when his Department first announced plans to introduce the national broadband plan; the dates on which various Ministers held press conferences to publicise it; the expected commencement and completion dates given by Ministers at each of these press conferences; the current projected commencement and completion date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21560/17]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naugha-ten):** The National Broadband Plan (NBP) was published in August 2012. Progress continues to be made in delivering on this Government’s commitment to ensure every household and business in Ireland has access to high speed broadband, regardless of where they are located.

Through the NBP the Government has committed to intervening to ensure high speed broadband is available in parts of the country where commercial providers acting alone will not provide this essential service. This commitment to intervene will ensure that no part of Ireland, no household, no school, no business is left behind.

There has been significant progress in relation to broadband rollout so that today, approximately 1.4m or 61% of premises in Ireland can get high speed broadband of a minimum of 30 Megabits per second. The NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector, which is continuing to expand this footprint.

I set out in reply to Question Nos. 72 of 6 December 2016 the position is relation to previous announcements on the development of the NBP. The updated position is as follows:

- On the 4 April 2017 I signed a commitment agreement with eir in relation to its plans to provide broadband to an additional 300,000 premises;

- I also published on 4 April an updated High Speed Broadband Map which is available
at www.broadband.gov.ie which gives certainty to the bidders in terms of the State Intervention Area for the procurement process. This is an important milestone as it means that bidders can progress their business plans and the Department can move to the next stage of the procurement;

- On 5 April I held a briefing for Deputies and Senators in Leinster House to update on progress.

A formal procurement process is in train to select a company or companies who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network within the State Intervention Area. 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 finalisation of the State Intervention Area for the procurement process is an important milestone as it means that bidders can progress their business plans and the Department can move to the next stage of the procurement. The three bidders have indicated that they are proposing a predominantly fibre-to-the-home solution. A fibre-to-the-home solution means that householders and businesses may get speeds not just of 30 Megabits per second but much higher, potentially up to 1000 Megabits per second.

The timeframe for 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. 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 once contracts are in place.

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 and a prioritisation programme.

The Programme for Government also commits to measures to assist in the rollout of the network once a contract is awarded.

In this regard, in July 2016, together with Minister Humphreys I established the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to identify immediate solutions to broadband and mobile phone coverage deficits and investigate how better services could be provided to consumers prior to the full build and roll-out of the network planned under the National Broadband Plan State intervention. The report of the Task Force was published in December and is available on the Departments website. In producing this report, the Task Force worked with Departments, local authorities, ComReg, State agencies, the telecoms industry and other key stakeholders. The report contains 40 actions that will alleviate some of the telecommunications deficits across Ireland and the implementation programme on mobile phone and broadband access identifies 19 of these actions as areas where immediate and direct action by Departments and State agencies can ensure accelerated benefits to consumers. The work of the Task Force is being led by an Implementation Group. This group brings together all key stakeholders identified in the Task Force report with responsibility for delivery of actions. This group will formally report every 90 days on progress made on all actions to both myself and Minister Humphreys. I am expecting the first such quarterly report in May.

In addition, I have signed regulations allowing ComReg to proceed with a 2017 allocation of spectrum in the 3.6 GHz radio spectrum band. This will provide an 86% increase in total spectrum available for mobile and fixed wireless services. In my Department’s Estimates for 2017, I have secured an €8 million provision for RTE to allow it to free up the 700 MHz spectrum band. ComReg in turn will make plans to allocate this spectrum to provide for significantly enhanced mobile coverage. The 700 MHz band is particularly suited to rural environments
where the signal can travel long distances.

These initiatives should assist in enhancing the quality of mobile phone and data services across Ireland and particularly in rural Ireland.

**Live Register Data**

86. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Taoiseach the number of persons on the live register for each of the years 2011 to 2016 and up to 1 May 2017 for towns (details supplied) in County Cork in tabular form. [21803/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Live Register series gives a monthly breakdown of the number of people claiming Jobseeker’s Benefit, Jobseeker’s Allowance and other registrants as registered with the Department of Social Protection.

The most recent Live Register figures available are for April 2017.

Table 1 shows the average number of persons on the Live Register in the local offices requested for each of the years 2011 to 2016.

Table 2 shows the number of persons on the Live Register in the local offices requested for each of the months January to April 2017.

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

**Table 1 Average number of persons on the Live Register in requested Local Offices, 2011 to 2016.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fermoy (Includes Mitchelstown)</td>
<td>2,762</td>
<td>2,661</td>
<td>2,516</td>
<td>2,174</td>
<td>1,864</td>
<td>1,604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallow</td>
<td>2,737</td>
<td>2,746</td>
<td>2,616</td>
<td>2,321</td>
<td>2,012</td>
<td>1,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobh</td>
<td>1,170</td>
<td>1,185</td>
<td>1,157</td>
<td>1,093</td>
<td>986</td>
<td>856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youghal</td>
<td>1,891</td>
<td>1,818</td>
<td>1,773</td>
<td>1,638</td>
<td>1,462</td>
<td>1,306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midleton</td>
<td>3,363</td>
<td>3,203</td>
<td>3,066</td>
<td>2,770</td>
<td>2,466</td>
<td>2,130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CSO Live Register.

**Table 2 Number of persons on the Live Register in requested Local Offices January-April 2017.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Office</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fermoy (Includes Mitchelstown)</td>
<td>1,475</td>
<td>1,489</td>
<td>1,409</td>
<td>1,368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallow</td>
<td>1,499</td>
<td>1,514</td>
<td>1,426</td>
<td>1,484</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Local Office | January | February | March | April
---|---|---|---|---
Cobh | 777 | 775 | 711 | 710
Youghal | 1,225 | 1,207 | 1,147 | 1,128
Midleton | 1,930 | 1,921 | 1,798 | 1,778

Source: CSO Live Register.

**Taoiseach’s Meetings and Engagements**

87. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his meeting with the Croatian President. [21874/17]

**The Taoiseach:** I met with the President of the Republic of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic in Government Buildings on 4th April as part of her three day State Visit to Ireland.

During our meeting we discussed the bilateral relationship between our two countries; EU-UK negotiations, following triggering by the UK of Article 50; and the Future of Europe, including EU enlargement. President Grabar-Kitarovic also briefed me on regional issues in South-East Europe, touching on economic, political and social challenges.

The Croatia President requested our advice in planning for their EU Presidency in 2020. In light of our extensive experience of seven EU Presidencies, I was pleased to be able to offer our assistance, and our officials will follow up in this regard.

**Cabinet Committee Meetings**

88. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Taoiseach when the Cabinet committee on regional and rural affairs last met. [21875/17]

**The Taoiseach:** The Cabinet Committee on Regional and Rural Affairs last met on the 12th December 2016 and is due to meet again today, Tuesday May 9 2017.

**Departmental Expenditure**

89. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach the details of payments made by his Department or a public body under the aegis of his Department to a person (details supplied) in the past 36 months. [21393/17]

**The Taoiseach:** I can confirm that no payments have been made by my Department to Kieran Mulvey over the past 36 months to date.

Sanction was obtained from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for work to be carried out during 2016 by Mr Mulvey on the independent report on the North East Inner City based on standard approved rates for the sum of €11,800, but this amount has not been drawn down.

**Cabinet Committee Meetings**

90. **Deputy Brid Smith** asked the Taoiseach when the Cabinet committee on social policy
and public service reform last met; and when the next meeting will take place. [21516/17]

**The Taoiseach:** The Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform last met on 10th April 2017. The next meeting of the Committee has been scheduled for 15th May.

**National Minimum Wage**

91. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Taoiseach the ratio of workers here earning below the minimum wage or at the minimum wage compares to other EU countries. [21234/17]

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

The Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) is the official source of estimates of employment (ILO) in the State and this is the best source of information on the ratio of workers earning the National Minimum Wage or less as this survey covers all employees. The most recent figures available are for Q4 2016 when the proportion of employees aged 15 years and over reporting earning the National Minimum Wage or less in the State was 8.6% (134,500).

The CSO introduced a new series of questions to the QNHS in Q2 2016 to facilitate the production of these new estimates to meet the needs of the Low Pay Commission. There are no comparable estimates of the ratio of workers earning the National Minimum Wage or less for other EU countries as the regulation governing the operation of the Labour Force Survey (implemented in Ireland using the QNHS) does not include a requirement to collect such estimates.

**Garda Equipment**

92. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the person or body which checks the stocks of Garda breath-testing kits; the locations at which the unused kits are stored; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21911/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I refer to my response to the Deputy’s Question 122 for written answer on 2 May 2017, in which I indicated that the Garda authorities had informed my Department that stocks of breath-testing equipment are managed through Garda Central Stores, which is located in Santry, Dublin.

**Property Services Regulatory Authority Remit**

93. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if there is a statutory duty on estate agents to inform persons of past and potential future flood risks in respect of houses they are selling; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [22166/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Property Services Regulatory Authority (PSRA) was established under the provisions of the Property Services (Regulation) Act 2011. The primary function of the PSRA is to control and supervise licensed property service providers, such as Auctioneers, Estate Agents, Letting and Property Management Agents. While I am precluded from giving legal advice, I can inform the Deputy that there is no statutory provision in the Property Services (Regulation) Act to require licensed property service providers to inform persons of the past and potential flood risks in respect of any houses they are selling.
Dublin Port Tunnel

94. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality when the anti-speeding cameras installed in the Dublin Port tunnel are expected to be operational for the purposes of prosecutions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21425/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I have requested a Garda report on the matter referred to in the Deputy’s question and will contact the Deputy directly on receipt of a Garda report.

Humanitarian Access

95. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the steps her Department is taking to ensure that Ireland has a humanitarian admission programme for families fleeing conflict; her plans to allow persons to co-sponsor family reunification applications; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21505/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Before the migration crisis escalated, my predecessor introduced a Syrian Humanitarian Admissions Programme (SHAP), which was subject to certain conditions, including economic dependency being met by the sponsor. This was superseded by the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP), which allows for Syrians and other eligible nationalities to benefit from resettlement and relocation schemes, and offers them protection status in Ireland in their own right including all the rights and privileges that that entails. This is a much improved programme allowing thousands to benefit from protection here. I gave an undertaking that Ireland would accept 520 persons for resettlement over an 18-month period to the end of 2017. This was almost double the figure proposed for Ireland by the European Commission and was delivered a year ahead of the Commission deadline. As a result, I announced that Ireland would extend the resettlement programme to take in a further 520 refugees from Lebanon in 2017, most of whom are of Syrian origin. To date, 627 programme refugees have arrived under the resettlement aspect of the programme and 1,040 will arrive in total. In relation to the relocation scheme, a monthly schedule has been agreed with the Greek authorities which will sustain the pace of intakes throughout 2017 at the levels required to allow Ireland to meet its commitments to Greece within the time frame envisaged by the Programme. Ireland will have accepted approximately 1,100 asylum seekers from Greece by September.

My current emphasis is to increase the number of people arriving in Ireland under the programmes currently in place. I am satisfied that we are making considerable progress now and that there is still capacity to ensure more vulnerable people can come to Ireland under our resettlement and relocation programmes. All of our focus needs to be on meeting these targets. In addition, existing avenues remain open as pathways for family reunification.

Significant resources are currently being invested in these humanitarian efforts through the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration and the International Protection Office. As a result, we have established functioning mechanisms and associated expertise to deal with resettlement and relocation. Our response to the migrant crisis, in terms of accepting refugees, is through the IRPP and all available resources are being directed to that Programme in order to meet the commitments entered into.
96. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the position and status regarding Garda vetting for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21506/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Additional information received from the Deputy regarding the person referred to has been forwarded to the Garda authorities in seeking information about the status of this vetting application. I will correspond with the Deputy when that report is to hand.

### Immigration Status

97. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if stamp 4 can issue in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21567/17]

**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 concerned was granted permission to remain in the State, on a stamp 4 basis, on 11 April 2008. This permission was subsequently renewed with the latest permission granted up to 23 April 2018. This is the same position as was set out in my reply to Parliamentary Question No. 671 of 22 September, 2015.

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

### Immigration Status

98. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality when stamp 4 can issue in the case of a person (details supplied); the progress to date in the determination of their application for same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21568/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I understand that the person concerned made an application to the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) for permission to remain in the State as the spouse of an Irish National. I have been informed that this application is currently being processed and that the person concerned will be contacted in due course. 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.
99. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the current residency status in the case of a person (detail supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21569/17]

**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 they have received no application from the person concerned. It seems that this person entered the State as a visitor in June 2007 and has remained in the State illegally since July 2007.

This person should be aware that it is unlawful for them, under the Immigration Act 2004, to reside in the State without permission from the Minister for Justice and Equality. A person found guilty of such an offence is liable, under section 13 of the Immigration Act of 2004, to a fine not exceeding €3,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or to both. As the person in question does not have immigration permission to remain in the State, they are not entitled to work. Against this background, they should be advised to write to Unit 2 Residence Division in INIS without delay and to include their current address, an outline of their history in the State, a copy of the birth certificate for the person’s child, and a full copy of their passport or passports issued to either of them since their arrival in the State.

Might I remind the Deputy, 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 questions where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy’s view, inadequate or too long awaited. In the cases of persons who are illegally present in the State they should always be advised to make an application to INIS.

---

100. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the expected residency status in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21571/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I have been informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that this person registered as a student in the State on 10 March 2014. This permission expired on 2 March 2015. No further application has been received in my Department from this person.

It appears that this person has been unlawfully in the State since March 2015. A non-national may not be in the State other than with the terms of any permission given to the person concerned by the Minister for Justice and Equality. A person who contravenes this requirement may have committed an offence and if found guilty is liable, under section 13 of the Immigration Act of 2004, to a fine not exceeding €3,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or to both. As this person does not have current immigration permission they are not entitled to work in the State.

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
Questions - Written Answers

the e-mail service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy’s view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Immigration Status

101. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the procedure to be followed to regularise residency status in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21572/17]

**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 they have no record of the person named by the Deputy.

From the limited information provided, it appears that the person concerned may never have had permission to remain in the State, and they should be aware that under section 5 of the Immigration Act, 2004 it is unlawful for a non-national to be in the State other than in accordance with the terms of any permission given by the Minister for Justice and Equality. A person who contravenes such a requirement may have committed an offence and if found guilty is liable, under section 13 of the Immigration Act of 2004, to a fine not exceeding €3,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or to both. As the person in question does not appear to have immigration permission to remain in the State, they are not entitled to work. Against this background, they should be advised to write to Unit 2 Residence Division INIS without delay and to include their current address, an outline of their history in the State, and a full copy of their passport or passports since their arrival in the State.

Might I remind the Deputy, 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.

Immigration Status

102. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the position in respect of residency status in the case of a person (details supplied). [21573/17]

**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 concerned applied for a right of residency, accompanied by a right to work, based on their parentage of an Irish citizen child. The application was received in the relevant section of the INIS on 13 October 2016. I am further informed that INIS wrote to the applicant on 7 March 2017 requesting further information and the application will be considered further when a reply is received.

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

103. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of an application for asylum in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21576/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy is aware, following the commencement of the International Protection Act 2015 on 31 December 2016, new arrangements for the investigation and determination of applications for international protection (refugee status and subsidiary protection) and cases involving permission to remain in the State have been introduced. Such applications are being processed, as part of a single application procedure, by the new International Protection Office (IPO) which has replaced the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) from that date. The staff of the International Protection Office (the Chief International Protection Officer and International Protection Officers) are independent in the performance of their protection functions.

If an application for asylum or subsidiary protection has been made in the State, for confidentiality reasons it is not the practice to comment on such applications and the applicant should contact the International Protection Office directly either by email to info@ipo.gov.ie, by telephone to the IPO Customer Service Centre at 01 6028008 or in writing to the Customer Service Centre, International Protection Office, 79-83 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2.

For your information, on 27 February 2017 the Chief International Protection Officer, following consultation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), published a statement on the Prioritisation of Applications for International Protection under the International Protection Act 2015. The IPO statement in relation to the prioritisation of applications is available on their website (www.ipo.gov.ie).

Citizenship Applications

104. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of an application for citizenship in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21579/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I refer the Deputy to my answer to his Parliamentary Question No. 112 of 30 March 2017. The position remains as stated. I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the processing of the application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy is under consideration and has not yet reached a conclusion.

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

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

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

**Immigration Status**

105. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of an application for stamp 4 or equivalent in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21580/17]

**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 concerned has had their permission to remain in the State renewed for a further three year period to 17 April 2020. This decision was conveyed in writing to the person concerned by registered post dated 24 April 2017.

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

**Family Reunification Applications**

106. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if stamp 4 or an equivalent family reunification application or visa can be facilitated for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21581/17]

**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 “Join Family” applications referred to were refused on appeal by the Visa Office in Abu Dhabi in 2014 and the applicants were advised accordingly. No further applications were made.

It is open to any visa required national to apply for a visa for any purpose. Each application is considered on its individual merits with the Visa Officer having regard to all of the information available including any previous applications made. The onus rests at all times with the applicant to satisfy the Visa Officer that any visa sought should be granted.

Further information on the circumstances in which a person can seek to sponsor a family member to join them in the State are set out in the Policy Document on Non-EEA Family Reunification published on the INIS website at www.inis.gov.ie

The Deputy may wish to note that queries 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 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. In addition, members of the public may themselves e-mail queries relating to visa applications.
Garda Deployment

107. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí for Dublin metropolitan region west; the number of gardaí for each of the past five years in Dublin metropolitan region west by station; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21657/17]

**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 have been advised by the Commissioner that as of the 31 March 2017 there were 660 Garda with 27 Garda Reserves and 46 civilians attached to the Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR) West Division. 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

I am informed by the Commissioner, since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, that 981 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, 87 of which were assigned to the DMR West Division. I am also informed that another 600 trainee Garda are scheduled to attest this year which will see Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, increase to around the 13,500 mark by year end - an increase of 500 since the end of 2016.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across the organisation, including the DMR West Division.

This investment in personnel is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government’s Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will benefit all areas of Garda activity.
The number of Gardaí assigned to DMR West by Station for each of the years 2013-2016 and to 31 March 2017, the latest for which figures are currently available, is as set out in the table.

**Garda Strength D.M.R. West 2013 -2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Station</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BLANCHARDSTOWN</td>
<td>BLANCHARDSTOWN</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CABRA</td>
<td></td>
<td>83</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINGLAS</td>
<td></td>
<td>108</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td></td>
<td>353</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLONDALKIN</td>
<td>BALLYFERMOT</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLONDALKIN</td>
<td></td>
<td>91</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RATHCOOLE</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td></td>
<td>201</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUCAN</td>
<td>LUCAN</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RONANSTOWN</td>
<td></td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td></td>
<td>163</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.M.R. WEST TOTAL:</td>
<td>8 STATIONS</td>
<td>717</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>673</td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*As of 31 March 2017

**Refugee Data**

108. **Deputy Jonathan O’Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons applying for refugee status that have applied on the grounds of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender status during each of the past five years; the number of those persons which were successful; the overall percentage success rate for refugee applications through the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, INIS; the INIS criteria involved for a person to prove they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender; if there is an appeals process; the details of the appeals process; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21670/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Section 8 of the International Protection Act 2015, as commenced on 31 December, 2016, sets out the applicable reasons for persecution when considering an application for international protection on the grounds referred to by the Deputy. Applications are processed by the International Protection Office (IPO). The Chief International Protection Officer and the International Protection Officers of the Office are independent by law in the exercise of their international protection functions. They are also bound by confidentiality provisions in respect of applicants, as set out in the 2015 Act. I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the International Protection Office does not keep statistics specific to the grounds on which protection applications are made.

All applicants for international protection are carefully interviewed and their cases are individually assessed by experienced caseworkers. The circumstances of each individual case is assessed having regard to both the subjective elements (the applicant’s own account or personal history) and objective elements (up-to-date information on the applicant’s country or place of origin). Supporting documentation submitted by applicants is also taken into account. Country of Origin information is obtained from a variety of legitimate sources such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Amnesty International and other NGOs, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the US State Department and the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board.
Applicants for international protection can appeal the recommendation of the IPO to the International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT) and may also seek remedies through the Courts. The procedures for appeal are set out in Part 6 and Part 10 of the International Protection Act 2015 as well as in the International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) Regulations 2017.

The overall recognition rate in relation to refugee status is approximately 20% per annum over the last five years. It should be noted that, in addition, many other applicants would have subsequently acquired subsidiary protection status, humanitarian leave to remain or other forms of status allowing them to remain in Ireland.

**Criminal Assets Bureau**

109. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the way in which audits are conducted for goods, money and drugs seized by the Criminal Assets Bureau; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21676/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** In accordance with its statutory remit, as set out in the Criminal Assets Bureau Act 1996, the Bureau takes action to deprive or to deny persons of assets which derive, or are suspected to derive, directly or indirectly from criminal conduct; or the benefit of such assets.

As required by the Criminal Assets Bureau 1996, the financial accounts of the Bureau must be submitted on an annual basis for examination to the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG).

The Office of the C&AG, in accordance with its statutory functions, conducts an annual audit of the Bureau.

In addition, my Department’s Internal Audit Unit provides support to the Bureau in monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the Bureau’s arrangements for governance, risk management and internal control.

**Immigration Status**

110. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the current residency status and eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in view of the fact that an application for naturalisation was made in July 2015; the progress to date in respect of same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21693/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I refer the Deputy to my answer to his Parliamentary Question No. 47 of 19 January 2017. The position remains as stated. I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the processing of the application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy is under consideration and has not yet reached a conclusion.

The records show that the person’s permission to reside expired on 10 March 2017. 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 adversely affect an application for a certificate of naturalisation. It is open to the individual concerned to apply to the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department to have his permission renewed.
As the Deputy will appreciate, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

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

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

Family Reunification Applications

111. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the determination of an application for family reunification in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21694/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I refer to my response to Parliamentary Questions Number 90 of 16 February 2017 and Number 66 of 9 March 2017.

As previously advised, this person entered the State on 23 June 2015 and was granted permission to remain on student conditions until 17 June 2016. There is no record that this person has made any further application to my Department. It appears that this person may be in the State without immigration permission. The person should be aware that under section 5 of the Immigration Act, 2004 it is unlawful for a non-national to be in the State other than in accordance with the terms of any permission given by the Minister for Justice and Equality.

A person who contravenes such a requirement may have committed an offence and if found guilty is liable, under section 13 of the Immigration Act of 2004, to a fine not exceeding €3,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or to both. It is incumbent on them to present themselves to their local Immigration Officer without delay.

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.

Immigration Status

112. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality when a decision will be reached in the case of an application for residency status in respect of a
person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21695/17]

**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 this person’s request for immigration permission is currently under consideration and INIS will be writing to the person concerned very shortly.

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

**Immigration Status**

113. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the current and expected residency status of a person (details supplied) who wishes to apply for stamp 4; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21696/17]

**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 person concerned is currently registered under Stamp 3 permission with an expiry date of 12 March 2018. To date, they have not made an application for Stamp 4 residency based on family dependency. If they wish to make such an application they may do so by writing to the Family Dependent Unit, Residence Division Unit 5, PO Box 12695, Dublin 2. The Family Dependent Unit will advise them of the requirements for same. If the person is not the dependent of an Irish National they may wish to consult the INIS website for information on the various options for obtaining a Stamp 4 permission and they may make the appropriate 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 email 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 email service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy’s view, inadequate or too long awaited.

**Immigration Status**

114. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the current and expected residency status of a person (details supplied) who wishes to apply for stamp 4; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21697/17]

**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 person concerned is currently registered under Stamp 3 conditions with an expiry date of 12 March 2018. To date, they have not made an application to Unit 5 Residence Division for Stamp 4 residency based on family dependency. If they wish to make such an application they may do so by writing to the Family Dependent Unit, Residence Division Unit 5, PO Box 12695, Dublin 2. The Family Dependent Unit will advise them of the requirements for same. If the person is not the dependent of an Irish National they may wish to consult the INIS website for
information on the various options for obtaining a Stamp 4 permission to assist them in making the appropriate 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 email 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 email service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy’s view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Immigration Status

115. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the current and expected residency status of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21698/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I have been informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that they have no record of an application for residency in respect of the person concerned based on the information provided by the Deputy.

The Deputy may wish to note that queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to INIS by email 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 email service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy’s view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Immigration Status

116. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the current and expected residency status of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21700/17]

**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 processing of an application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy, who currently has permission to reside in the State until 30 April 2020, is under consideration and has not yet reached a conclusion. However I understand a decision is expected to issue in the near future.

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

It is recognised that all applicants for citizenship would wish to have a decision on their application without delay. While most cases are now generally processed within six months, the nature of the naturalisation process is such that, for a broad range of reasons, some cases will take longer than others to process. In some instances, completing the necessary checks can take a considerable period of time.
The Deputy may wish to note that queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been established specifically for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy’s view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Residency Permits

117. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if a temporary residency card will issue in the case of persons (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21701/17]

**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, in response to a notification pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the persons concerned have submitted written representations.

These representations, together with all other information and documentation on file, will be fully considered, under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and all other applicable legislation, in advance of final decisions being made.

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

Residency Permits

118. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if an application for stamp 4 has been received in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21702/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I am advised by Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that they have no record of receipt an application for Stamp 4 in relation to the person named by the Deputy.

It appears that, in June 2015, the person mentioned by the Deputy made an application to INIS for an extension of visitor permission which was refused with the person concerned receiving instructions to make arrangements to leave the State as their visitor permission had expired.

From the limited information provided by the Deputy, it appears that the person concerned has failed to abide by the instructions to leave the State and has remained in the State to date without the permission of the Minister for Justice and Equality. They should be aware that under Section 5 of the Immigration Act, 2004 it is unlawful for a non-national to be in the State other than in accordance with the terms of any permission given by the Minister for Justice and Equality. A person who contravenes such a requirement may have committed an offence and if found guilty is liable, under section 13 of the Immigration Act of 2004, to a fine not exceed-
ing €3,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or to both. As the person in question does not appear to have immigration permission to remain in the State, they are not entitled to work. INIS inform me that they will be writing to the person concerned very shortly.

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

**Immigration Status**

119. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the current and expected residency status of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21703/17]

**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 an application for residency for the person concerned was received and is currently under consideration. INIS will be writing to the person concerned shortly.

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

**Garda Reserve**

120. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if the function of the Garda Reserve can be expanded in order that there is a greater visible presence of An Garda Síochána and the Garda Reserve on the streets; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21713/17]

**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.

The Garda Reserve was established in accordance with the Garda Síochána Act 2005 to enhance the links between An Garda Síochána and local communities and consists of voluntary unpaid members, drawn from the community, to support the work of An Garda Síochána. The Reserve perform policing duties as determined by the Garda Commissioner, while accompanied by full time Gardaí. Their role is to provide local patrols and participate in crime prevention initiatives targeted at specific local problem areas. Reserve members are also involved in policing major incidents and events, and in providing other operational support to full time Gardaí. In recent years the Garda Commissioner has conferred further powers on reserve mem-
bers under the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 1994 and the Road Traffic Act 1961 and has also decided that they should carry out more duties including the serving of summonses, and the issuing of Fixed Charge Penalty Notices where offences are detected.

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. This year, 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves this year. I am pleased to say that a new recruitment campaign for Garda Reserves which closed on 13 April attracted considerable interest.

Reserve members have undergone training in many of the skills required to be an effective full-time member of An Garda Síochána and it is important that as we expand the Reserve we build on their contribution to the policing of communities right across the country and ensure that they are used to optimum effect. In this regard I am informed that An Garda Síochána is undertaking an audit of the experience and skills of Reserves which, when completed, will assist Garda management in considering the future role to be played by the Reserve including whether additional powers should be conferred on Reserve members.

**Electronic Tagging**

121. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality when legislation to introduce electronic tagging will be finalised; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21716/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Under the Criminal Justice Act 2006, electronic monitoring is permitted in relation to the monitoring of persons on temporary release from prison where such release is subject to certain restrictions on movement.

With respect to persons on bail, section 6B of the Bail Act 1997 (inserted by section 11 of the Criminal Justice Act 2007) permits a court granting bail to make it a condition of bail that the person’s movements are monitored electronically so that his or her compliance with conditions of bail can be monitored. This provision, however, was never brought into force. The Criminal Justice Bill 2016 (changed from the Bail (Amendment) Bill 2016) amends section 6B so that a court will be enabled to make electronic monitoring a condition of bail only on the application of the prosecution, enabling the use of electronic monitoring to be managed and controlled. The Bill is currently before the Houses of the Oireachtas and completed Committee Stage in Dáil Éireann on 5 April 2017.

The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 amends the Schedule to the Bail Act by adding a number of the new offences created under that Act, including those relating to child sexual exploitation, to the scope of the Bail Act.

I would also like to inform the Deputy that officials in my Department are preparing provisions to introduce electronic tagging for the purpose of monitoring compliance with sex offender orders. These provisions will be included in the General Scheme of a Sex Offenders (Amendment) Bill which I intend to publish later this year.
Questions - Written Answers

Garda Investigations

122. **Deputy Jonathan O’Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the status of investigations by An Garda Síochána into alleged death threats made over the telephone against the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources on 18 October 2006; the number of statements that were taken by An Garda Síochána relating to this case; the number of persons who provided these statements; the number of persons who were questioned regarding their potential or constructive knowledge of the incident; if a file was sent to the DPP on this case; the prosecutions that arose in this case; the convictions that came as a result of this case; the current status of the investigation into this incident; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21537/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department has sought information from the Garda authorities in relation to the matters raised and I will communicate further with the Deputy when a Garda report is to hand.

Immigration Controls

123. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the review of the decision making process in respect of applications for extension or change of status for those seeking leave to remain in the State; the expected timescale for the completion of this review, in view of the judgment in a case (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21543/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): In light of the Court of Appeal judgment in the case referred to by the Deputy, the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department, in reviewing the judgment and in conjunction with the Offices of the Attorney General, has made an application for leave to appeal to the Supreme Court.

In the meantime, it can be taken that all current requests for permission in respect of extension of student conditions or requests to renew or vary a permission will be determined within the immigration legislation and published student guidelines.

Road Traffic Offences Data

124. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons detected driving while holding a mobile telephone in each of the years 2015 to 2016 and to date in 2017; the number of persons who paid a fixed charge notice for driving while holding a mobile telephone within the 56 day limit in each of the years 2015 to 2016 and to date in 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21607/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I have requested a Garda report on the matter referred to in the Deputy’s question and will contact the Deputy directly on receipt of a Garda report.

Courts Service Data

125. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equal-
ity the number of persons summoned to court listed cases for not paying a fixed charge notice relating to driving while holding a mobile telephone and convicted of this offence, per district court in each of the years 2015 to 2016 and to date in 2017; the number of licences recorded upon conviction of this offence, summons struck out and not served for this offences, per district court in each of the years 2015 and 2016 and to date in 2017; the reasons for non-conviction of this offence, per district court in each of the years 2015 to 2016 and to date in 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21608/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The information sought by the Deputy is contained in the following tables from the Courts Service. The Courts Service does not record the reasons for non-conviction.

1) January – December 2015

Report on Number of Persons before the court for driving while holding a mobile phone.

Note 1: Report is for Persons before the court between 1 January 2015 – 31 December 2015

Note 2: A person could be convicted and not convicted and will appear twice on the report

Note 3: Report is on persons where offences has been finally determined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
<th>Column 3</th>
<th>Column 4</th>
<th>Column 5</th>
<th>Column 6</th>
<th>Column 7</th>
<th>Column 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persons Listed</td>
<td>No of Driver Numbers recorded on Conviction</td>
<td>No of Persons Convicted</td>
<td>No of Persons non convictions</td>
<td>No of Persons Strike Out</td>
<td>No of Persons Strike out not Served</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AN CLOCHAN LIATH</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AN DAINGEAN</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARDEE</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARKLOW</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATHLONE</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATHY</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BALLAGHADERREEN</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BALLINA</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BALLINASLOE</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BALLYSHANNON</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BANDON</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BANTRY</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEALAN MHUIRTHHEAD</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRAY</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUNCRAANA</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARLOW</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARNDONAGH</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARRICK ON SHANNON</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARRICK ON SUIR</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column 1</td>
<td>Column 2</td>
<td>Column 3</td>
<td>Column 4</td>
<td>Column 5</td>
<td>Column 6</td>
<td>Column 7</td>
<td>Column 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARRICK-MACROSS</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASHEL</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASTLEBAR</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASTLERA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAVAN</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLIFDEN</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLONAKILTY</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLONMEL</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORK CITY</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOIRE AN FHEICH</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DONEGAL</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DROGHEDA</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUBLIN METROPOLITAN DISTRICT</td>
<td>1,808</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>1,826</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table contd.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
<th>Column 3</th>
<th>Column 4</th>
<th>Column 5</th>
<th>Column 6</th>
<th>Column 7</th>
<th>Column 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persons Listed</td>
<td>No of Driver Numbers recorded on Conviction</td>
<td>No of Persons Convicted</td>
<td>No of Persons non convictions</td>
<td>No of Persons Strike Out</td>
<td>No of Persons Strike out not Served</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUNGRVAN</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENNIS</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FERMOY</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GALWAY</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOREY</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GORT</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILCOCK</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILKENNY</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILLALOE</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILLARNEY</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILLORGLIN</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILRUSH</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LETTERKENNY</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIMERICK</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LISMORE</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LISTOWEL</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LONGFORD</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOUGHREA</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MACROOM</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALLOW</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANORHAMILTON</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIDLETON</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONAGHAN</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MULLINGAR</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA GLEANNTA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAAS</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAVAN</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NENAGH</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEWCASTLE WEST</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PORTLAOISE</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROSCOMMON</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SKIBBEREEN</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLIGO</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STROKESTOWN</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THURLES</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIPPERARY</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRALEE</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRIM</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUAM</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUBBERCURRY</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TULLAMORE</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIRGINIA</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WATERFORD CITY</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WESTPORT</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEXFORD</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WICKLOW</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOUGHAL</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5,460</td>
<td>1,224</td>
<td>2,024</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>1,366</td>
<td>1,632</td>
<td>5,527</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) January - December 2016

Report on No of Persons before the court for driving while holding a mobile phone.

Note 1: Report is for Persons before the court between 1 January 2016 – 31 December 2016

Note 2: A person could be convicted and not convicted and will appear twice on the report

Note 3: Report is on persons where offences has been finally determined

<p>| ACAILL | 1 | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| AN CLO-CHAN LIATH | 3 | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| AN DAIN-GEAN | 2 | | | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| ARDEE | 20 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 3 | 10 | 20 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
<th>Column 3</th>
<th>Column 4</th>
<th>Column 5</th>
<th>Column 6</th>
<th>Column 7</th>
<th>Column 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARKLOW</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATHLONE</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATHY</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BALLYSHANNON-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BALLINA</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BALL-</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAGHADER-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RREEN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BANDON</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BANTRY</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEAL AN</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHUIRT-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEAD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRAY</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUNCRA NA</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIRCIVEEN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARLOW</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARN-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DONAGH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARRICK ON</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHANNON</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARRICK ON</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUIR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARRICK-</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MACROSS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASHEL</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASTLEBAR</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASTLEREA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAVAN</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLIFDEN</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLONAKILTY</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLONMEL</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORK CITY</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOIRE AN</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FHEICH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOUNEGAL</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DROGHEDA</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUBLIN</td>
<td>1,586</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METROPOLITAN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISTRICT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table continued
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
<th>Column 3</th>
<th>Column 4</th>
<th>Column 5</th>
<th>Column 6</th>
<th>Column 7</th>
<th>Column 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persons Listed</td>
<td>No of Driver Numbers recorded on Conviction</td>
<td>No of Persons Convicted</td>
<td>No of Persons non convictions</td>
<td>No of Persons Strike Out</td>
<td>No of Persons Strike out not Served</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUNDALK</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUNGARVAN</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENNIS</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FERMOY</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GALWAY</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOREY</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GORT</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KENMARE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILCOCK</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILKENNY</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILLALOE</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILLARNEY</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILLORGLIN</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILRUSH</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LETTERKENNY</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIMERICK</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LISMORE</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LISTOWEL</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LONGFORD</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOUGHERA</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MACROOM</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALLOW</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEATH</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIDDLETON</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONAGHAN</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MULLINGAR</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAAS</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAVAN</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NENAGH</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEWCASTLE WEST</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PORTLAOISE</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROSCOMMON</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLIGO</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STROKESTOWN</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THURLES</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIPPERARY</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRALEE</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRIM</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUAM</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUBBERCURRY</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TULLAMORE</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIRGINIA</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Questions - Written Answers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
<th>Column 3</th>
<th>Column 4</th>
<th>Column 5</th>
<th>Column 6</th>
<th>Column 7</th>
<th>Column 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WATERFORD CITY</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WESTPORT</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEXFORD</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WICKLOW</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOUGHAL</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>5,082</td>
<td>1,111</td>
<td>1,850</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>1,265</td>
<td>1,478</td>
<td>5,124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) Report on No. of Persons before the court for driving while holding a mobile phone:

January – March 2017

**Note 1:** Report is for Persons before the court between 1 January 2017 – 31 March 2017

**Note 2:** A person could be convicted and not convicted and will appear twice on the report

**Note 3:** Report is on persons where offences has been finally determined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
<th>Column 3</th>
<th>Column 4</th>
<th>Column 5</th>
<th>Column 6</th>
<th>Column 7</th>
<th>Column 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Persons Listed</strong></td>
<td><strong>No of Driver Numbers recorded on Conviction</strong></td>
<td><strong>No of Persons Convicted</strong></td>
<td><strong>No of Persons non convictions</strong></td>
<td><strong>No of Persons Strike Out</strong></td>
<td><strong>No of Persons Strike out not Served</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AN CLOCHAN LIATH</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AN DAINGEAN</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARDEE</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARKLOW</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATHLONE</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATHY</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BALLAGHAD-ERREEN</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BALLINA</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BALLINASLOE</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BALLYSHANNON</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BANDON</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BANTRY</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bray</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUNCRAANA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARLOW</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARNDONAGH</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARRICK ON SHANNON</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARRICK-MACROSS</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASHEL</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASTLEBAR</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAVAN</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column 1</td>
<td>Column 2</td>
<td>Column 3</td>
<td>Column 4</td>
<td>Column 5</td>
<td>Column 6</td>
<td>Column 7</td>
<td>Column 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLIFDEN</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLONAKILTY</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLONMEL</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORK CITY</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DONEGAL</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DROGHEDA</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUBLIN METROPOLITAN DISTRICT</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUNDEAL</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUNGANVARAN</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENNIS</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FERMOY</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GALWAY</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOREY</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GORT</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KENMARE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILCOCK</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILKENNY</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILLALOE</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILLARNEY</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILLORGLIN</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILRUSH</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table contd.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
<th>Column 3</th>
<th>Column 4</th>
<th>Column 5</th>
<th>Column 6</th>
<th>Column 7</th>
<th>Column 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letterskenny</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limerick</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lismore</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listowel</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longford</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loughrea</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macroom</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallow</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meath</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midleton</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monaghan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mullingar</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naas</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nenagh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle west</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column 1</td>
<td>Column 2</td>
<td>Column 3</td>
<td>Column 4</td>
<td>Column 5</td>
<td>Column 6</td>
<td>Column 7</td>
<td>Column 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PORTLAOISE</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROSCOMMON</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SKIBBEREEN</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLIGO</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STROKESTOWN</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THURLES</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIPPERARY</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRALEE</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUAM</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUBBERCURRY</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TULLAMORE</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIRGINIA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WATERFORD CITY</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WESTPORT</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEXFORD</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WICKLOW</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOUGHAL</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,601</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>1,603</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Road Traffic Offences Data**

126. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons detected driving while not wearing a seat belt or having their passenger wearing a seat belt in each of the years 2015 to 2016 and to date in 2017; the number of persons who paid a fixed charge notice for this offence within the 56 day limit in each of the years 2015 to 2016 and to date in 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21609/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I have requested a Garda report on the matter referred to in the Deputy’s question and will contact the Deputy directly on receipt of a Garda report.

**Garda Operations**

127. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if An Garda Síochána carried out checks on or searches of an airplane (details supplied) while it was at Shannon Airport, in view of the fact that the call sign of the airplane indicated that it was on US military business and the gardaí were in close proximity to the airplane while it was at Shannon. [21738/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I have sought the information requested by the Deputy from the Garda Authorities on the matter raised by the Deputy and I will correspond with her when the information is to hand.

The general position in respect of the powers of search available to An Garda Síochána in respect of aircraft has been set out to the House on many occasions previously. An Garda Síochána has statutory powers of search and entry available to it under various legislative provisions and these apply to civil aircraft as much as to any other type of private property. However,
these powers may only be exercised in circumstances where a member of An Garda Síochána reasonably suspects that an offence has been or is being committed. Of course these powers must be exercised in accordance with law. The mere suggestion or assertion of wrongdoing would plainly not be sufficient in this regard. An Garda Síochána has no role in relation to the inspection of foreign State or military aircraft which, in accordance with international law, enjoy sovereign immunity. An Garda Síochána has previously investigated allegations made to it of unlawful activity at Irish airports and the Garda Authorities remain fully committed to investigate all alleged breaches of the criminal law, including alleged offences involving the use of aircraft at Shannon Airport or other Irish airports.

**Prison Committals**

128. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if authorisation will be given for an independent audit of the prison system relative to the methodology used to calculate fines and warrants for persons who had served time in prison and were being released on payment of the fine imposed; the number of persons who were overcharged in the past due to the wrong calculation being made; the amount of overpayment; if the overpayments in question will be refunded; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21750/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I have asked the Irish Prison Service for a report on the issues raised by the Deputy. I am informed by the Irish Prison Service that the information being sought to facilitate a full report on this matter is not readily available. The information is currently being collated and I will respond to the Deputy directly as soon as the report is to hand.

**Prison Service Staff**

129. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the action she will take to ensure the safety of prison officers who are now being videoed by some members of the public using mobile telephones while on prisoner escort duties; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21751/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that escorts of prisoners, primarily to court and hospital appointments, undertaken by prison officers are by their nature conducted in the view of the general public.

It is not considered that the recording of staff conducting such escort duties poses any new or undue threat to any prison officer.

Staff safety is a priority for the Irish Prison Service and in this regard they have recently acted upon a State Claims Agency recommendation to standardise escort practices across the prison estate. This standard provides all staff with the requisite safety equipment and requires specific risk assessments for any escorts deemed to be in the category High Risk.

**Prison Service Staff**

130. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if her attention has been drawn to the fact that prison officers are being disciplined for not wearing full uniform while escorting prisoners to hospitals and so on in spite of the fact that there is not
a sufficient number of stab proof vests, batons and radios to cover all prison officers on escorts each day; if she will authorise an audit of all of the prisons to ensure that this issue is addressed without delay; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21752/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised by my officials of the Irish Prison Service (IPS) that the wearing of uniform on Escort Duties is required by the IPS Escort Standard. All prisons are supplied with the appropriate amount of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that they request or indicate is needed i.e. stab proof vests, batons, radios etc. Such PPE is only authorised for use on High Risk escorts, and this only after a risk assessment (HIRARC) is completed. I am also advised that no disciplinary code is ongoing for the non wearing of full uniform while conducting escorts to hospitals.

Garda Reports

131. Deputy Jonathan O’Brien asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number and titles of all reports completed by the Garda internal audit unit during each year since 2008. [21760/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I have asked the Garda Commissioner for the specific information requested and I will write directly to the Deputy when it is to hand.

Garda Procedures

132. Deputy Jonathan O’Brien asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she will make available the programme of work currently in use by the Garda internal audit unit. [21761/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I have asked the Garda Commissioner for the specific information requested and I will write directly to the Deputy when it is to hand.

Garda Data

133. Deputy Jonathan O’Brien asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the persons who are members of the Garda audit committee. [21762/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Garda audit committee comprises a chairperson and 4 members all of whom are to be appointed by the Policing Authority.

A new audit committee has been appointed by the Authority with effect, from 1 May, 2017 and the members are: Dr. Cyril Sullivan – Chairman, Ms. Anne Tynan, Ms. Áine Cornally, Professor Niamh Brennan and Deputy Commissioner Dónal Ó Cualáinn.

Garda Reports

134. Deputy Jonathan O’Brien asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number and titles of all reports completed by the Garda professional standards unit during
Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Section 24(1) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 provided for the establishment of the Garda Professional Standards Unit (GPSU). The function of the GPSU is to examine and review, as directed by the Commissioner, the operational, administrative and management performance of the Garda Síochána at all levels, and to propose measures to improve that performance and promote the highest standard of practice.

The Garda Commissioner is required, under section 24(2) of the Act to submit a report by 31 March each year on the activities of the Professional Standards Unit in the preceding year. Prior to the establishment of the Policing Authority that report was made to me, as Minister. Since 2016 the report is made by the Garda Commissioner to the Policing Authority.

While there is no statutory requirement to publish the GPSU annual report, I published the annual reports for 2013 and 2014 on my Department’s website. I have also published reports from the GPSU in 2013 and 2015 on their examination of processes in relation to the cancellation of Fixed Charge Notices.

I have asked the Garda Commissioner to provide me with details on other reports completed by the GPSU. When that information is to hand I will write directly to the Deputy.

Legal Services Regulation

135. Deputy Jonathan O’Brien asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the work of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority. [21764/17]

136. Deputy Jonathan O’Brien asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the implementation of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 and outstanding provisions yet to be implemented. [21765/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 135 and 136 together.

The setting-up of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority, whose establishment day I had set by Order for 1 October 2016, has been underway since July 2016. At that time, I commenced Parts 1 and 2 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 as necessary to get the new Authority underway, particularly in terms of its nomination and appointment with the necessary motions of approval of the Houses of the Oireachtas. As part of the commencement of Part 2 of the 2015 Act, the Law Society, the Bar Council and the Honorable Society of the King’s Inns furnished the Legal Services Regulatory Authority with copies of their professional codes as required within one month of the Authority’s establishment under section 23(6)(a). In December 2016 sections 118 to 120 of the 2015 Act were commenced to enable the conduct of public consultations and reports by the new Regulatory Authority within the statutory periods concerned. These relate to Legal Partnerships (between solicitors and barristers or barristers and barristers - solicitors can already operate partnerships), Multi-Disciplinary Practices (where legal practitioners can provide their services together with other non-legal services providers) and certain restrictions on the work of barristers. The Authority, for which initial office accommodation has been provided by my Department along with the secondment of an officer at Assistant Principal level, also appointed an Interim Chief Executive on 1 January 2016. It is currently conducting a public recruitment campaign for a long-term Chief Executive. The Authority has met five times since its inaugural meeting on 26 October 2016 with its next such meeting set for 25 May 2017. Funding support of €1 million was provided to the new Authority
by my Department in December 2016. This is being done on a strictly recoupable basis as the Authority will be self-funding by levy with a similar allocation available to the Authority under my Department’s Vote for this year.

On 31 March 2016, the Regulatory Authority presented respective reports under sections 118 and 119 to me as Minister for Justice and Equality and these have been laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas. These reports, which were completed under very tight statutory deadlines, are historical as the first formal outputs of the Authority in the discharge of its legislative functions. They are also available along with minutes of meetings and other information on the web page of the new Regulatory Authority which is under development at www.LSRA.ie. On 6 April 2016 the Authority commenced its public consultations process under section 120 of the Act about certain restrictions on the work of barristers - these arise with regard to the holding of clients monies and to the direct provision of services to a client in relation to contentious matters. More recently, the Authority has submitted its first Annual Report which, under the relevant terms of the Act, covers its activities for the quarter since establishment on 1 October to the end of 2016 and this will soon be laid, as required, before each House of the Oireachtas.

Alongside these developments, the working focus right now is on the managed roll-out of the Authority’s remaining functions with the matching development of its organisational capacities and office and staffing resources. This includes, under Part 10 of the 2015 Act, the introduction of a more transparent legal costs regime and the parallel transition, within the courts system, of the Office of the Taxing-Master to that of the Legal Costs Adjudicators; the establishment of a Roll of Practising Barristers under Part 9; the introduction of new regulations for the advertising of legal services under section 218 and the separate introduction, by my Department, of Pre-Action Protocols in medical negligence cases under Part 15. Following these steps the key structural reforms of Part 6 of the Act relating to public complaints, professional conduct and the appointment of the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal, will be commenced.

The Chairperson and members of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority, its Interim Chief Executive and my Department are working closely to ensure that we can successfully coordinate the identification of the necessary steps and commencements by the Department, and the delivery, by the Authority as the new independent statutory regulator, of the various remaining provisions concerned. While it remains the intention that the Legal Services Regulatory Authority will come into substantive regulatory mode in these areas during the latter part of this year and early in 2018, the phased start-up of its various functions will need careful project management and the identification over coming weeks, and in conjunction with the Authority, of more specific delivery dates for the respective functions involved.

**Garda Information and Communications Technology**

137. **Deputy Jonathan O’Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the State’s implementation of the Schengen information system under Council Decision 2002/192/EC; the technical and legal preparations needed to connect to SIS; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21766/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Ireland was authorised to participate in certain non-border aspects of the Schengen Acquis by Council
Decision 2002/192/EC, principally in relation to police and judicial cooperation. Those provisions have yet to be implemented in full, and Ireland has yet to join the second generation Schengen Information System “SIS”. I am prioritising Ireland’s full implementation of our Schengen decision and our joining SIS. SIS is a valuable policing tool and will help in the fight against cross-border crime and terrorism.

The national legislative measures required for participation were largely completed by 2009, although some of those legislative provisions will not be commenced until Ireland is ready to join SIS. Joining SIS involves major ICT investment, which in recent years the State was simply not in a position to make. With the easing of economic conditions, I have been able to secure funding for this valuable project, and An Garda Síochána have now entered a contract with an ICT contractor to carry out the work required for Ireland to join SIS. The contract is for full operationalisation of SIS in Ireland, that is to say creating the link to the central Schengen Information System (CS-SIS), the creation of the national copy (N-SIS), its integration with PULSE, and comprehensive training from the SIRENE Bureau to the end-user. That contract was signed in December 2016, and €4m has been provided to commence the project.

An implementation group comprising my officials, An Garda Síochána and other stakeholders is overseeing the wider Schengen implementation plan to ensure that all State bodies involved are prepared for and able to implement their responsibilities under the Schengen decision.

I have kept the EU Commission informed of our progress to implementing the Schengen decision and joining SIS, and I have been very clear that Ireland is committed joining SIS and is dedicating the necessary resources to do so.

State Pathology Service

138. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality her plans to provide funding for the appointment of two additional full time senior laboratory analysts for the Office of State Pathologist; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21768/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald)**: The staffing requirements for my Department, including associated offices and agencies, are assessed and prioritised through the workforce planning process and aligned to the annual estimates process.

Through last year’s workforce planning process, the Office of the State Pathologist identified one senior laboratory analyst vacancy in 2017 and this post was filled in January. The workforce plan indicated the potential for one laboratory analyst vacancy in 2018.

However, the process is not static and there is ongoing engagement with senior managers across the Department in relation to their staffing requirements as pressures and priorities may require that plans are amended. Funding for additional posts not identified through the workforce planning process is considered with reference to the Department’s overall current pay budget.

Inquiries into Garda Activities

139. **Deputy Jonathan O’Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality
the position regarding the statutory inquiry under section 42 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 concerning a person (details supplied). [21797/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The inquiry to which the Deputy refers is to be established following my acceptance of a recommendation by the panel of the Independent Review Mechanism. The role of the Independent Review Mechanism was to review complaints of Garda misconduct.

Officials in my Department have consulted with the Office of the Attorney General with regard to matters concerning the establishment of this inquiry, its terms of reference and who will be appointed to conduct it. In accordance with section 42 (3A) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005, as amended, there is a requirement for me to consult with the Policing Authority with regard to the setting up of the inquiry. That consultation process has been completed and I intend to proceed with the making of the necessary Order for the establishment of the inquiry shortly.

I have recently written to the solicitors for the person referred to by the Deputy with a copy of the terms of reference for the inquiry.

**Prison Facilities**

140. **Deputy Jonathan O’Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if her attention has been drawn to the closure of the training unit in Mountjoy Prison; if the activities which had taken place in the training unit will be relocated to another part of the prison; and if she will provide details of same. [21802/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I can advise the Deputy that the Irish Prison Service has commenced the repurposing of the Training Unit Place of Detention (on the Mountjoy Prison Campus) to a dedicated Unit for older prisoners. A key action of the current Irish Prison Service Strategic Plan (Action 2.5) is to ensure that older prisoners are identified as a specific group who have particular needs within the prison population. There are currently a number of such prisoners in the care of the Irish Prison Service who have significant and ongoing healthcare needs, many of whom are currently dispersed across the estate and in some cases significant distances away from the healthcare providers they rely on. The establishment of the unit will allow the Irish Prison Service to accommodate such prisoners in a purpose built unit within close proximity to a variety of medical care facilities and will also allow for appropriate remedial works to the accommodation. It is envisaged that the repurposing of the unit will take 18-24 months to complete. During this time, it will be necessary to accommodate current prisoners elsewhere in the prison estate, primarily within the Mountjoy Campus. It is intended that prisoners who are currently on programmes of temporary release will be facilitated in continuing with such programmes.

**Legislative Programme**

141. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the legislation required to authorise the use of the automatic number plate recognition systems by An Garda Síochána traffic corps, as per the advice of the Attorney General; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21805/17]
Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Garda Síochána are exploring options for the expansion and enhancement of the Automatic Number Plate Recognition System (ANPR) and as part of that process sought advices from the Office of the Attorney General. Those advices, which were copied to my Department, raised the issue of legislating for ANPR.

Arising from this, my Department is currently in consultation with the Office of the Attorney General on the need for legislation, and will carefully consider the final advices when they are received.

Refugee Resettlement Programme

142. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the criteria used for selecting refugees; the way in which persons are prioritised; and when the resettlement programme will begin in Mullingar. [21926/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): The Deputy’s attention is drawn to my response to Parliamentary Question No. 130 of the 4th of April last in which I stated that, in respect of Ireland’s resettlement programme, refugees are identified and proposed to Ireland by the UNHCR. They must meet the criteria set out in Article 1F of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (“the Geneva Convention”) and be deemed eligible for resettlement by the UNHCR. Refugees are interviewed by the resettlement team in the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration in my Department to establish that Ireland can meet their particular needs, including medical needs. They are also interviewed by members of An Garda Síochána and their fingerprints are checked against international databases for security reasons.

Resettlement to Mullingar is planned to take place during the summer but precise dates have not yet been finalised.

Immigration Support Services

143. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the steps she will take to assist a person (details supplied) living here to renew their passport. [22032/17]

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 mentioned by the Deputy entered the State in March 2012 and registered directly at the GNIB Office towards the end of March 2012 for permission to remain in the State as the spouse of an Irish National. This permission expired on 28 December 2016.

The person concerned should write to Spouse of Irish National Unit, P.O. Box 12695, Dublin 2 requesting renewal of their permission and they should provide details of their extenuating circumstances regarding the renewal of their passport. They should be aware that under section 5 of the Immigration Act, 2004 it is unlawful for a non-national to be in the State other than in accordance with the terms of any permission given by the Minister for Justice and Equality. A person who contravenes such a requirement may have committed an offence and if found guilty is liable, under section 13 of the Immigration Act of 2004, to a fine not exceeding €3,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or to both.
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 Deployment**

144. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí by rank that are currently stationed in the Ballyfermot Garda station; and the number that were stationed there on 9 May in each year from 2008 to 2017. [22051/17]

**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.

Ballyfermot Garda Station is in the Clondalkin Garda district which forms part of the Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR) West Division and I have been advised by the Commissioner that as of the 31 March 2017, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 660 Garda with 27 Garda Reserves and 46 civilians attached to the DMR West Division. 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

I am informed by the Commissioner, since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, that 981 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, 87 of whom were assigned to the DMR West Division. I am also informed that another 600 trainee Garda are scheduled to attest this year which will see Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, increase to around the 13,500 mark by year end - an increase of 500 since the end of 2016.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across the organisation, including the DMR West Division.

This investment in personnel is complemented by substantial investment in resources across
the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government’s Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will benefit all areas of Garda activity.

For the Deputy’s information, I have set out below the strength of Ballyfermot Garda Station by rank as of the 31 March 2017, the latest date for which figures are available and the Garda strength for the years 2008-2016.

**Ballyfermot Garda Station Strength 31 March 2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Total Strength</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspector</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergeant</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garda</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>83</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ballyfermot Garda Station Strength May 2008-2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Strength</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Garda Investigations**

145. **Deputy Jonathan O’Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the status of investigations by An Garda Síochána into alleged criminal damage done on 10 November 2007 to the property of persons (details supplied) who supplied materials to a company in north County Mayo; the number of statements that were taken by An Garda Síochána in relation to this case; the number of persons that provided these statements; the number of persons questioned in relation to their potential or constructive knowledge of the incident; if a file was sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions, DPP, in relation to this case; if there were prosecutions in relation to this case; if so, the convictions that came as a result of this case; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [22147/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** My Department has sought information from the Garda authorities in relation to the matters raised and I will communicate further with the Deputy when a Garda report is to hand.

**VAT Rate Reductions**
146. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Finance his views on reducing the VAT rate on the construction of new apartments to reduce construction costs and stimulate new supply; and if his Department has had discussions with other Departments on same. [21939/17]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** EU VAT law, with which Irish VAT law must comply, does not in general allow the application of a reduced VAT rate on construction services. However, Ireland applies the 13.5% reduced rate of VAT to construction services under a derogation from the EU VAT Directive, because Ireland applied a reduced rate to such services on 1 January 1991.

The Programme for Partnership Government committed to ask the Oireachtas to consider the merits of a temporary targeted reduction of the rate of VAT from 13.5% to 9% on new, affordable houses and apartments, both public and private, timed to generate the maximum impact on supply and to target principally the purchasers of affordable homes.

In its June 2016 Report, the Oireachtas Committee on Housing and Homelessness reviewed the costs of construction including VAT, in the light of the Programme for Partnership Government commitment. They recommend that the Housing Agency annually review construction costs but did not recommend that the VAT rate on new residential property be reduced.

Ahead of last year’s Budget I decided that relief would be better operated through the income tax rather than the VAT system, as applying the 9% VAT rate to the construction of new residential properties would involve having two separate VAT rates applying to construction services.

As the deputy will be aware, I also introduced the Help-to-Buy incentive in Budget 2017 to help encourage the building of additional new homes. That scheme will run until the end of 2019.

### Consumer Credit

147. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he has conducted a detailed study of the size of the motor finance market here; if so, the level of household exposure if there was to be a change in circumstances in the car market such as a change to residual values of contracts or increases in interest rates; the potential economic impact of such a change in the motor finance market; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22111/17]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** To date, the focus of my attention in relation to personal credit has been on the mortgage market because this is the most significant in terms of its impact on the borrower and the broader economy. I, as Minister for Finance, have not conducted a detailed study of the size of the motor finance market here. In addition, I understand that neither the Central Bank nor the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) have published a report specifically on this issue. That said, I am not aware of any consumer protection issues in relation to the motor finance market.

I am taking the Deputy’s question, in the absence of detailed information, to refer to Personal Contract Plans (PCPs) or hire-purchase agreements. PCPs are in effect a type of hire-purchase agreement and my Department does not collate statistics on the number and value of such plans that are entered into.

The Consumer Credit Act, 1995, applies to the provision of hire-purchase agreements. Both the Central Bank and the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) have certain functions and legal powers in relation to the regulation of hire-purchase agreements.
While hire-purchase providers are not required to be authorised by the Central Bank, they are subject to a number of legislative and regulatory requirements supervised by the Central Bank and listed in Schedule 2 to the Central Bank Act 1942. In addition, to the extent that an entity is a ‘regulated financial service provider’, the powers in the Central Bank (Supervision and Enforcement) Act 2013 and the administrative sanctions procedure will apply.

Finally, any intermediary who is arranging credit for a consumer is acting as a credit intermediary and an intermediary arranging such credit must seek authorisation from the CCPC to act as a credit intermediary. A list of authorised credit intermediaries is available on the CCPC website (http://www.ccpc.ie/compliance-business/credit-intermediaries/authorised).

Vehicle Registration

148. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding the price of motor vehicles; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22113/17]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** There are a number of objectives of the Irish Vehicle Registration Tax (VRT) system.

VRT is an important source of Revenue for the State. It also seeks to reflect the negative externalities caused by using the vehicle in the State. These externalities are the costs to society and to the environment that, without the tax, would not otherwise be reflected in the price of the vehicle and for which the consumer would not otherwise have to pay. In the case of motor vehicles, these externalities include environment externalities such as air pollution, which is why one of the bases for imposing VRT is the vehicle’s carbon emissions. Other externalities which VRT seeks to reflect, include the costs to society of providing and maintaining the road infrastructure, traffic control, relevant emergency services, and vehicle registration and licensing. The funds raised through VRT go towards compensating the Irish State for these significant costs.

VAT Rate Reductions

149. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the possibility of reducing the VAT registration threshold for architects’ firms in view of the fact that many smaller practices, especially those in rural locations, are becoming less common. [21901/17]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** VAT registration thresholds provide a mechanism for exempting business with a low turnover from having to register for VAT. This reduces the administrative burden on both small businesses often at the developmental stage and on the Revenue Commissioners. The VAT registration thresholds for small businesses are currently €37,500 in the case of a person supplying services and €75,000 in the case of person supplying goods.

In setting registration thresholds levels, the objective is to strike an appropriate balance between the desirability of reducing the administrative burden on small businesses and the need to avoid undermining tax compliance or causing competitive distortions relative to registered firms. Reducing the VAT registration threshold for architects may increase the administrative burden on smaller firms, while raising the threshold may cause competitive distortions.

VAT is governed by the EU VAT Directive with which Irish VAT law must comply. The EU
VAT Directive provides that VAT registration thresholds may only be raised by Member States to maintain their value in real terms, that is, they may only be increased in line with inflation.

**Insurance Costs**

150. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the high costs of public liability insurance here; and if so, his plans to work with the industry to try to reduce this. [22070/17]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan) (Deputy Michael Noonan):** As Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I nor the Central Bank of Ireland can interfere in the provision or pricing of insurance products, as these matters are of a commercial nature, and are determined by insurance companies based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept. This position is reinforced by the EU framework for insurance which expressly prohibits Member States from adopting rules which require insurance companies to obtain prior approval of the pricing or terms and conditions of insurance products.

Nevertheless, it is possible for the State to play a role in helping to stabilise the market and deal with factors contributing to the availability and cost of insurance. Accordingly, I established the Cost of Insurance Working Group and appointed Minister of State Eoghan Murphy as Chair. This Working Group is examining the factors contributing to the increasing cost of insurance and identifying what short, medium and long-term measures can be introduced to help reduce the cost of insurance for consumers and businesses. The initial focus of the Working Group was the issue of rising motor insurance premiums and in this regard the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance was published in January 2017.

The Working Group is now in its second phase which is concentrating on the Employer Liability and Public Liability insurance sectors. The Working Group is building upon the previous work done in the motor phase in order to determine how it can be applied in the employer liability and public liability insurance claims areas particularly in relation to:

- Personal Injury data and information
- Effects of legal costs and litigation processes on insurance costs
- Current claims compensation arrangements and cost of claims
- Impact of unlawful activity on insurance sector

The Working Group is also considering the impact of the cost of insurance on the competitiveness of particular business sectors, the impact of health and safety issues on the cost of insurance and other market issues.

The Working Group is continuing to meet on a regular basis to examine issues related to Employer Liability and Public Liability insurance. The Working Group has held extensive consultations with a range of stakeholders including the Hotels Federation of Ireland, IBEC, ISME, the Vintners’ Federation of Ireland (VFI), the Licensed Vintners’ Association (LVA), the Retail Grocery Dairy & Allied Trades Association (RGDATA), Chambers Ireland and the Health and Safety Authority. Further consultations are also planned and submissions have been invited from interested parties.

It is envisaged that the final results of the second phase will take the form of an addendum to
the existing Report. As with the first phase, the aim is for all relevant bodies and stakeholders to work together in order to deliver fairer premiums for businesses without unnecessary delay.

**Customs and Excise Protocols**

151. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Finance if he will examine the case of a person (details supplied) who wishes to bring personal property here: the way in which the person can apply for VRT exemption; the location the application must be made; the time limits to make an application; the legislation and revenue rules which apply; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21426/17]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The procedure for applying for relief from customs duties and VAT on transferring residence to Ireland can be found at [http://www.revenue.ie/en-customs/leaflets/pn1875.html](http://www.revenue.ie/en-customs/leaflets/pn1875.html) and the procedures relating specifically to relief from VRT are at [http://www.revenue.ie/en/tax/vrt/leaflets/tax-relief-transfer-residence.html](http://www.revenue.ie/en/tax/vrt/leaflets/tax-relief-transfer-residence.html).

The information supplied on the revenue website is primarily designed for persons who are moving house, with considerable belongings being shipped rather than carried as luggage. In most such cases, a customs agent is used to arrange the shipment, and the agent will be able to deal with any formalities. Duty and VAT do not normally arise, unless there are high value items which are capable of resale. For personal luggage such as would be carried by a normal passenger, no advance customs declaration is required.

In this case, it appears that a motor vehicle is being imported. Vehicle Registration tax (VRT) may be waived as described in the leaflet referred to above, which also provides contact details for further information. The claim for relief should be made at the local Revenue office within seven days of the arrival of the vehicle. It will be necessary to show that the vehicle was owned and used abroad for at least six months; that the person concerned resided abroad for at least one year; and that the person is now transferring permanent residence to Ireland, or has transferred residence within the previous year.

**Tax Reliefs Data**

152. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of mortgage holders in receipt of Tax Relief at Source, TRS in 2017; the cost of such relief; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21591/17]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by Revenue that the number of mortgage holders in receipt of tax relief at source in respect of mortgage interest for the year 2016, the latest year for which data are available, is in the order of 419,400 claimants. The provisional cost to the Exchequer in 2016 for such claimants is €184.2 million. A forecast for 2017 is not available.

In my Budget speech last October, I confirmed my intention to extend MIR beyond the current 2017 end date on a tapered basis to 2020, in line with the commitment in the programme for Government. The details of the extension will be set out in Budget 2018. A review of policy considerations and potential costs of such an extension was contained in the Income Tax Reform Plan published by my Department in July last year and may be of interest to the Deputy. The plan is available at: [http://www.finance.gov.ie/sites/default/files/Income%20Tax%20Reform%20Plan-FINAL_0.pdf](http://www.finance.gov.ie/sites/default/files/Income%20Tax%20Reform%20Plan-FINAL_0.pdf).
153. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to act on reports that there is a ticking time bomb regarding the practice of banks concerning revenue recognition before earned income from interest free credit cards in view of reports that a number of lenders (details supplied) are offering these introductory 0% balances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21681/17]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I understand that the accounting rules around income recognition are covered primarily under International Accounting Standard IAS 18 which requires that the following conditions are met before income can be recognised:

- it is probable that any future economic benefit associated with the item of revenue will flow to the entity, and

- the amount of revenue can be measured with reliability.

While it is the responsibility of the auditors of the banks to give an independent opinion that the banks’ accounts give a true and fair view of their assets, liabilities and financial position, supervisors are aware of the risk and continue to monitor the assumptions used by banks around income recognition on all their loan books.

Through the Central Bank’s supervision and inspection work, I am informed that they continually evaluate aspects of the business model of institutions to address areas of concern and where issues are identified, they require the relevant credit institutions to remediate these issues.

In terms of the specific issue around introductory rates for credit card transfers in the Irish market, I understand that the duration of these offers are typically in the range of 6/7 months.

In addition, I understand that for those banks that offer such deals in the Irish market, the proportion of credit card accounts on such offers, is limited (<10% of total credit card accounts).

**Motor Insurance**

154. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the fact that insurance companies are not accepting National Car Test, NCT, certificates as proof of road worthiness in claims cases; his views on whether it is unfair and unjust to expect persons to employ the services of mechanical engineers to prove road worthiness in such cases; his further views on whether the stance of insurance companies erodes the authority and reputation of the NCT; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21717/17]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** As Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I nor the Central Bank of Ireland can interfere in the provision or pricing of insurance products, as these matters are of a commercial nature, and are determined by insurance companies based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept. This position is reinforced by the EU framework for insurance which expressly prohibits Member States from adopting rules which require insurance companies to obtain prior approval of the pricing or terms and conditions of insurance products.

Policy in relation to the NCT lies with the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport. The NCT was introduced to comply with an EU Roadworthiness Testing Directive aimed at improving road safety and environmental protection. The NCT is an inspection or general “health
check” of what is visible and accessible on the day of the test and includes a check of the road-
worthiness of such safety features, amongst others, as lighting, brakes and tyres. It goes beyond
the current Directive’s requirements in many areas and the Department of Transport, Tourism
and Sport is of the view that the Irish system is one of the best roadworthiness testing regimes
in the EU.

The NCT however does not replace or purport to replace the regular maintenance of a ve-
hicle by a qualified mechanic and does not convey a warranty or guarantee of future reliability.
While the NCT is one component of having safer vehicles on our roads, every vehicle owner
also has a personal and legal responsibility to ensure that their vehicles are roadworthy and well
maintained.

In terms of the assessment of individual insurance claims by vehicle insurers, this is a mat-
ter between the insurance companies concerned and their clients. I understand however from
Insurance Ireland that further investigations of roadworthiness may be warranted in some cases
particularly when a claim occurs a certain length of time after the NCT has taken place.

Financial Services Sector

155. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance the number of vulture
funds operating here; the name of each vulture fund; the number of distressed mortgages in
each portfolio; the protections in place for the tenants of such funds; and if he will make a state-
ment on the matter. [21621/17]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** There is no agreement on its precise
meaning of the term “vulture funds” and it has come to have pejorative connotations. I presume
that the Deputy intends referring to private equity funds. The Deputy will be aware that inter-
national private equity funds invested much needed capital in our economy during a period of
high risk and uncertainty.

Central Bank data published on 16 March 2017 provided the following data in respect of
mortgages held by what they called “unregulated loan owners”.

The total number of Principal Dwelling House (PDH) mortgages held by unregulated loan
owners stands at 12,234, valued at €2.4 billion. The total number of mortgages in the Buy to
Let (BTL) category was 5,955, valued at €1.7 billion. Of these loans, the number of PDH mort-
gages in arrears was 7,445. The number of BTL mortgages in arrears was 4,494.


Other than that, the Central Bank does not routinely publish data on entities which are not
regulated by the Central Bank and it is not possible to provide the list sought by the Deputy.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Consumer Protection (Regulation of Credit Servicing
Firms) Act, 2015 was enacted in July 2015. It was introduced by the previous Government to
fill the consumer protection gap where loans were sold by the original lender to an unregulated
firm. The Act introduced a regulatory regime for a new type of entity called a ‘credit servicing
firm’. Credit Servicing Firms are now subject to the provisions of Irish financial services law
that apply to ‘regulated financial service providers’.

Under the Act, purchasers of loan books must either be regulated by the Central Bank them-
selves or else the loans must be serviced by a credit servicing firm that is regulated by the Central Bank. The significant point is that the regulation is focussed at the point of contact with the customer. Therefore relevant borrowers, whose loans are sold to third parties, maintain the same regulatory protections they had prior to the sale, including under the various statutory codes (such as the Consumer Protection Code, Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears) issued by the Central Bank of Ireland and the Central Bank (Supervision and Enforcement) Act 2013 (Section 48) (Lending to Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises) Regulations 2015 which came into operation in July 2016. It is also important to highlight that the transfer of a loan from one entity to another does not change the terms of the contract or the borrower’s rights and obligations under the original contract.

A register of Credit Servicing Firms authorised or transitionally authorised by the Central Bank is available on their website at http://registers.centralbank.ie/DownloadsPage.aspx.

Finally I would highlight that tenant relations are governed by multiple pieces of legislation mainly under the aegis of my colleague, the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government.

**Tax Reliefs Data**

156. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons claiming relief under the special assignment relief programme for each year it has been in operation, in tabular form; the total value of tax relief on income granted for each year it has been in operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21790/17]

157. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Finance the number of relevant employees entitled to make a claim for relief under the special assignment relief programme that have made a claim in relation to tuition fees for each year of operation, in tabular form; and the total value of such claims for each year of operation. [21791/17]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 156 and 157 together.

I am advised by Revenue that for each of the years 2012, 2013 and in 2014 (the most recent year for which figures have been published) the table sets out the number of persons who availed of the special assignee relief programme (SARP) and the total cost of the programme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Claimants</th>
<th>Total Claimed €,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>1,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>5,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Employees who qualify for SARP may receive, free of tax, certain expenses of travel and certain costs associated with the education of their children in the State. The table sets out the total value claimed annually and the number of eligible claimants in respect of tuition fees for 2012, 2013 and 2014. It should be noted that under SARP only school fees of up to €5,000 per annum for each child of the relevant employee or for each child of his or her spouse or civil partner are allowed. Due to the nature of the SARP employer returns for the years 2012, 2013 and 2014, there are no statistics available to estimate a net cost to the exchequer for claims involving tuition fees.
In relation to 2012, there was a very small number of claimants and an exact figure is not provided in order to protect confidential taxpayer information.

It should also be noted that the total tuition claimed figures are the total amount of tuition fees in respect of which claims were made and not the amount of tuition fees that qualified for SARP. The amount of tuition fees which qualified for SARP relief is not readily available.

Finally, I am also advised by Revenue that detailed reports regarding the Special Assignee Relief Programme (SARP) are published on the Revenue Commissioners’ webpage located at http://www.revenue.ie/en/about/research/statistical-reports.html. These reports provide information on the conditions, eligibility and the calculation of the relief. Furthermore, there are statistics covering the uptake of the relief and the cost to the Exchequer up from 2012 to 2014, the latest year for which figures are available. I understand that an update including figures for 2015 will be published shortly.

Insurance Costs

158. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding plans to meet and engage with insurance companies here regarding excessive premiums being charged to persons, particularly in counties Cavan and Monaghan. [21794/17]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan)**: As Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I nor the Central Bank of Ireland can interfere in the provision or pricing of insurance products, as these matters are of a commercial nature, and are determined by insurance companies based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept. This position is reinforced by the EU framework for insurance which expressly prohibits Member States from adopting rules which require insurance companies to obtain prior approval of the pricing or terms and conditions of insurance products. Consequently, I am not in a position to review individual cases nor to direct insurance companies as to the pricing level that they should apply to particular categories of individuals.

However, I do accept that it is possible for the State to play a role in helping to stabilise the market and deal with factors contributing to the cost of insurance. Consequently, I established the Cost of Insurance Working Group and appointed Minister of State Eoghan Murphy as Chair. The Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance was published in January 2017. It contains 33 recommendations and 71 actions which are detailed in an action plan contained in the Report with agreed timelines for implementation.

Meeting the Report’s objective of delivering fairer motor insurance premiums for consumers without unnecessary delay requires the cooperation and commitment of all relevant bodies and stakeholders, none more so than the insurance industry itself. In this respect, there has been continuous ongoing engagement between my Department and the Working Group with Insurance Ireland on the implementation of the recommendations since the publication of the Report in January. Insurance Ireland, as the representative body of the insurance industry in Ireland with approximately 95% of insurance companies operating within the country being members,
is a key party in respect of the implementation of many of the recommendations.

In parallel with the implementation of the Report’s recommendations, the Working Group in its second phase is currently examining the Employer Liability and Public Liability insurance sectors. Consultation with stakeholders is ongoing, and will also involve an appropriate engagement with the insurance industry.

Environmental Schemes

159. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to introduce new initiatives for the purchase of motor vehicles other than diesel vehicles in view of the new evidence that suggests that diesel vehicles are prone to high emissions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21819/17]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** A number of supports already exist to incentivise the purchase of hybrid and electric vehicles, such as relief from vehicle registration tax and, in the case of electric vehicles, a grants towards the cost of such vehicles. Any new initiatives aimed at introducing policies to address emerging issues are considered as part of the annual Budget process. This process starts with the presentation of papers to the Tax Strategy Group setting out options around taxation, including environmental taxes.

The Programme for Partnership Government seeks to make Ireland a leader in the take-up of electric vehicles. On that basis, a low emissions vehicle taskforce has also been established to examine initiatives which could further incentivise the early adoption of electric vehicles and other low emissions vehicles. It is expected that the taskforce will make recommendations to Government to assist the transition towards cleaner vehicles.

Insurance Industry

160. **Deputy Michael Collins** asked the Minister for Finance if compensation has been sought by the Government from Malta arising from the unpaid claims of a company (details supplied); if compensation has been sought from Gibraltar arising from the unpaid claims of a company (details supplied); if a strategy is in place to prevent the same from happening again; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21928/17]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** Setanta Insurance was placed into liquidation by the Malta Financial Services Authority in April 2014 and this liquidation is being carried out under Maltese law. Progress in the liquidation has been delayed due to court proceedings in the case of Law Society of Ireland v the Motor Insurers’ Bureau of Ireland (MIBI). The focus of the court action is to determine whether it is the Insurance Compensation Fund (ICF) or the MIBI which is responsible for the payment of third party claims. No date has been specified for the judgment in relation to the MIBI appeal to the Supreme Court, which was heard in October 2016. It should be noted that first party claims are not affected by the court action and are being processed by the Office of the Accountant of the Courts of Justice.

A liquidator was appointed in October 2016 to Enterprise Insurance, which is a Gibraltar incorporated company and, therefore, the Enterprise liquidation is being carried out under the laws of Gibraltar. I am advised that a letter has been received from the Government of Gibraltar outlining that there are currently 233 live claims from Irish policyholders with a reserve value of €7.4m. However, the reserve figure is under review. Wrightway Underwriting Ltd have been appointed to manage claims to enable the liquidator to adjudicate and admit them as insurance
claims in the liquidation. Claims are therefore being actively managed.

In relation to the question of compensation being sought from the governments of Malta and Gibraltar, it should be noted that both countries are common law jurisdictions. The legal unit of the Department of Finance is of the view that an action against the Maltese or Gibraltar regulators would likely be difficult. However, in order to establish this definitively it would be necessary to seek legal advice from Maltese and Gibraltar lawyers as well as to seek to establish further information in respect of any failures in their legal duties on the part of the regulators which might give rise to such a compensation claim. The Department of Finance’s legal unit does not consider that there is sufficient likelihood of a successful action being brought to justify the costs which would be incurred in seeking such advice and information.

Regarding any proposal to take such legal action, it should also be noted that the two companies concerned availed of the ‘passporting’ provisions of the European Union “Freedom of Services” rules in order to sell insurance business in Ireland. This allows an insurance company prudentially regulated in any Member State to operate throughout the Union and is an important aspect of Ireland’s obligations as an EU Member State. While there have been cases, such as the liquidations of Enterprise and Setanta, which have caused difficulties, Ireland has also positively benefitted from these EU rules through, for example, the building up of our large life insurance sector.

In response to the liquidation of Setanta Insurance and the subsequent uncertainty in relation to compensation arrangements, a Review of the Framework for Motor Insurance Compensation was initiated with a report published in July 2016. Work is well underway on the implementation of the review’s recommendations; in particular the drafting of the Heads of Bill is being progressed and is on course to be submitted to Government for approval for publication by the end of Q2 2017. This once enacted will bring clarity on the respective roles of the ICF and the MIBI in the event of the future collapse of a motor insurer.

More generally, insurers operating throughout the EU are regulated according to the set of demanding standards required by the Solvency II Directive. This took effect in Ireland on 1 January 2016. The Government is supportive of the principle of the freedom to provide services across the European Union and is of the view that the legislative framework underpinning this principle is robust. Additionally the Central Bank has informed me that it works closely with relevant foreign National Competent Authorities and EIOPA (the insurance European Supervisory Authority), which has identified as one of its key strategic objectives ‘to improve the quality, efficiency and consistency of the supervision of EU insurers and occupational pensions.’ The Central Bank of Ireland fully supports EIOPA’s work in this regard and has actively engaged with it in its revision of the General Protocol which will enhance the exchange of information between supervisory authorities.

Ireland Strategic Investment Fund Investments

161. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the way in which the proposed dividend of €250 million from the State’s holding in a bank (details supplied) announced in March will impact on fiscal space for 2018; the impact the proposed sale of the bank will have on this dividend; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21979/17]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) holds the AIB shares on behalf of the State. Dividend payments are therefore made to the ISIF. Payments from the ISIF to the Exchequer arising from the proceeds of the disposal of the State’s shareholdings in the Banks are provided for under the NTMA (Amendment) Act.
2014. This legislation allows the Minister to direct the Agency to make such payments after having consulted the Agency.

Regarding proceeds from dividends, these are typically recorded as property income in the European System of Accounts (ESA) framework. Therefore any dividend payments would be recorded as General Government Revenue and, as such, would improve the General Government Balance. However, the payment of any dividend is exclusively a matter for the board and management of AIB based on the bank’s financial performance and future prospects, and subject to regulatory approval. As such, it is not classed as a discretionary revenue measure and, as the Deputy is aware, has no impact on the fiscal space for 2018.

The proposed dividend will be payable on 9 May 2017 to holders of ordinary shares on the Company’s register of members at close of business on 24 March 2017. Therefore, any proposed sale of the State’s shares in AIB later this year will have no impact on the payment of 99.9% of this dividend to the State.

Revenue Commissioners Audits

162. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Finance the number of audits and prosecutions taken by the Revenue Commissioners in connection with evasion or fraud in the non-payment of categories of tax (details supplied). [22040/17]

163. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Finance if the figure of €555 million savings for 2017 (details supplied) is a figure that reflects all moneys recouped from audits and compliance interventions or a projected assumption similar to assumptions used in calculating moneys saved from welfare fraud; the number of Revenue Commissioner officials involved in conducting the revenue audits and compliance interventions; and the number of audits conducted over the past five years. [22077/17]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 162 and 163 together.

Revenue is a fully integrated tax and customs administration. Revenue has approximately 2,000 staff engaged on activities that focused on confronting non-compliance. These activities include anti-smuggling and anti-evasion, investigation and prosecution, audit, assurance checks, anti-avoidance, returns compliance and debt collection activities and interventions. This level of resources has been maintained by Revenue notwithstanding the challenges since 2009 in regard to the overall reduction in Civil Service numbers which included Revenue.

Revenue carries out a programme of compliance interventions that seek to achieve the optimum balance between minimising the burden on the compliant taxpayer and tackle, in an appropriate way the non-compliant taxpayer.

Not all interventions are in the form of audit – other less resource-intensive interventions are also used (Aspect Queries and Profile Interviews). The intervention selected is the one considered to be the most effective in targeting the specific risk or risks identified, and to influence the compliance behaviour of the taxpayer.

I am advised by Revenue that the recently published Annual Report for 2016 included a table at Page 99 ([www.revenue.ie/en/about/publications/annual-reports.html](http://www.revenue.ie/en/about/publications/annual-reports.html)) which provides details of Audit and Compliance activity for the year 2016, with comparative figures for 2015. The amount of €555.6 million shown as yield for 2016 comprised of:-
- Payments received as a result of compliance activities
- Payments included in phased payment arrangements and
- Amounts of tax that were referred for collection activity including sheriff/solicitor enforcement.

Revenue do not include in the settlement figures any future savings element.

I am informed by Revenue that a detailed breakdown per the categories requested in Parliamentary Question No. 163, ref 22040/17 (trading and non-trading income) is not captured or maintained, as a matter of course, and is therefore not available.

The numbers of audits conducted over the last five years are included in the table together with the number of audits identified where Corporation Tax and Capital Gains Tax were examined. The table also shows the total number of non-audit interventions but it is not possible to provide a breakdown of those non-audit interventions into the categories requested in Parliamentary Question No. 162, ref 22040/17.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total No. of Audits/Investigations</th>
<th>Audits/Investigations which included an examination of Corporation Tax</th>
<th>Audits/Investigations which included an examination of Capital Gains Tax</th>
<th>Total Non-Audit Interventions (Aspect Queries and Profile Interviews)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>9,066</td>
<td>713</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>37,294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>8,037</td>
<td>816</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>72,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>7,636</td>
<td>1,131</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>91,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>6,618</td>
<td>1,121</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>90,617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>6,211</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>90,990</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I am advised by Revenue that figures, year-on-year, are not directly comparable due to classification changes of compliance interventions and the continuing evolution of their compliance programmes to reflect changes in the economy and the efficient use of resources.

Investigating cases with a view to the institution of prosecutions is a key element of Revenue’s strategy for confronting non-compliance and files are prepared for the consideration of the Director of Public Prosecutions in instances where it is considered that the facts and circumstances warrant such a course of action and evidence to sustain such a course of action is available.

In respect of matters relating to CT in the period from 2012 to 2016, there have been two such prosecutions. One of those cases concluded, in 2012, with the entering of a *nolle prosequi*. The other case is before the Courts at present. There have also been two convictions in respect of matters relating to CGT in the same period.

There were 18 convictions in 2016 for serious tax and duty offences, which related to matters concerning income tax, value added tax, relevant contracts tax and excise duty. At the end of 2016, there were 31 cases relating to alleged serious tax and duty offences in which prosecutions had been instituted and where the matter was before the Courts. In addition, there were 108 cases that were under investigation by Revenue’s Investigations and Prosecutions Division, with a view to prosecution, at that date.
164. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Finance if a 1998 registered car can be insured here; the options open to a person who has been refused insurance for a car registered in 1998; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22164/17]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** As Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I nor the Central Bank of Ireland can interfere in the provision or pricing of insurance products, as these matters are of a commercial nature, and are determined by insurance companies based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept. This position is reinforced by the EU framework for insurance which expressly prohibits Member States from adopting rules which require insurance companies to obtain prior approval of the pricing or terms and conditions of insurance products. Consequently, I am not in a position to review individual cases regarding cars registered in particular years nor to direct insurance companies as to the pricing level or terms or conditions that they should apply in particular cases.

I am advised that insurers use a combination of rating factors in making their individual decisions on whether to offer cover and what terms to apply. These rating factors can include the type and age of car, as well as the age, driving experience, claims record and penalty points of the driver, the number of drivers, how the car is used, etc. My understanding is that insurers do not all use the same combination of rating factors, and as a result prices and availability of cover varies across the market. In addition, insurance companies will price in accordance with their own past claims experience.

The Deputy should note that Insurance Ireland operates a free Insurance Information Service for those who have queries, complaints or difficulties in relation to obtaining insurance. Insurance Ireland can be contacted at feedback@insuranceireland.eu or 01-6761914.

**Higher Education Authority Funding**

165. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the academic library tender, which is due for renewal in July 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21991/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department allocates recurrent funding to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for direct disbursement to the HEA designated higher education institutions. The HEA allocates this funding to the institutions and the internal disbursement of funding is then a matter for the individual institution.

Higher education institutions are autonomous bodies and my Department has no role in their day to day operational affairs including the tendering of goods and services it requires. Higher education institutions are bound by public procurement procedures in relation to spending.

**SOLAS Training and Education Programmes Certification**

166. **Deputy Michael Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the British
construction plant competence scheme is recognised here; if not, the reason therefor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22010/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** SOLAS and the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) have an agreement in place to facilitate people who hold a valid Construction Plant Competence Scheme (CPCS) Plant Operator’s Card to acquire the equivalent SOLAS Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) Plant Operator Card.

To avail of this arrangement applicants must:

- hold a valid CPCS Plant Registration Card;
- have met all the CPCS entry requirements including NVQ/SVQ certification;
- hold a valid SOLAS Safe Pass Registration Card.

**Higher Education Authority Funding**

167. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount of funding granted to the Mayo campus of the GMIT for each of the years 2012 to 2016 and to date in 2017; if he will consider proposals for future allocations to be ring fenced for the Mayo campus; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21398/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department allocates the recurrent funding to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for direct disbursement to the HEA designated higher education institutions including Institutes of Technology (IoTs) such as Galway Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT). The HEA allocates this funding to the institutions and the internal disbursement of funding is then a matter for the individual institution. Core funding is driven primarily by student numbers, either via the Recurrent Grant Allocation Model which is the mechanism used by the HEA to allocate funding or ‘free fees’ funding.

Higher Education Institutions are autonomous bodies and are responsible for their own day to day affairs, including the allocation of all of its income (both public and private).

My Department and the HEA recognise the particular challenges attached to multi-campus provision in both GMIT and other institutes of technology. The HEA has begun a major review of the funding allocation model for higher education and this review will include looking at how the future model can take account of the additional costs associated with such arrangements. The Department and the HEA are committed to such multi-campus provision, including Castlebar.

My Department and I along with the HEA and GMIT Governing Body are fully committed to and are in the process of establishing and implementing a viable development plan for the continuance of the GMI Castlebar campus. GMIT has appointed an Interim Head of the campus in Castlebar to lead this process.

In addition, Taoiseach Enda Kenny, TD, and I recently announced the establishment of a working group which will formulate a plan for a sustainable future of the GMIT Mayo Campus in Castlebar. The Working Group will be required to present a full report to the HEA’s Finance Committee in Q3 2017.
168. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the access initiatives currently in operation by third level institutions; the number of participants on each; the annual expenditure on each; the number of staff employed in each institution for the purposes of promoting or implementing access initiatives; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21399/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Two of the main initiatives that are available in HEIs to promote access by students from under-represented groups are the Student Assistance Fund and the Fund for Students with Disabilities.

The Student Assistance Fund provides financial assistance for full-time students who are experiencing financial difficulties whilst attending college. Students can apply for assistance to help them with either temporary or ongoing financial difficulties.

The Fund for Students with Disabilities allocates funding to further and higher education colleges for the provision of services and supports to full-time students with disabilities. The Fund aims to ensure that students can participate fully in their academic programmes and are not disadvantaged by reason of a disability.

Both Funds are managed by the HEA on behalf of my Department. Details of expenditure on both Funds and the number of beneficiaries are attached.

Each HEI also operates its own specific access initiatives that are most appropriate to its institutional and geographical context. This may include outreach programmes, scholarships, and mentoring programmes.

My Department does not collate data on the number of personnel specifically employed on access initiatives within individual HEIs. Individuals may be engaged on access initiatives as well as other activities within an individual institution. It is a matter for each HEI, as autonomous institutions, to manage its staffing resources within the overall context of overall public sector policy requirements.

**Table 1.**

**The Fund for Students with Disabilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Total Allocated 2012-13</th>
<th>Total Allocated 2013-14</th>
<th>Total Allocated 2014-15</th>
<th>Total Allocated 2015-16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>7,744,590</td>
<td>7,595,393</td>
<td>7,689,645</td>
<td>7,593,906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Education</td>
<td>2,496,769</td>
<td>2,394,736</td>
<td>2,372,927</td>
<td>2,400,272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other EU</td>
<td>349,059</td>
<td>315,521</td>
<td>345,826</td>
<td>374,801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,590,418</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,305,650</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,408,398</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,368,979</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student Beneficiaries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>6755</td>
<td>7413</td>
<td>8524</td>
<td>8920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Education</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>1224</td>
<td>1350</td>
<td>1362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other EU</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>7897</strong></td>
<td><strong>8809</strong></td>
<td><strong>10050</strong></td>
<td><strong>10486</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.

The Student Assistance Fund

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>€10,999,995</td>
<td>€7,937,817</td>
<td>€6,599,999</td>
<td>€7,840,159</td>
<td>€7,9M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student Beneficiaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>17,840</td>
<td>15,166</td>
<td>14,959</td>
<td>15,772</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Youth Employment Initiative

169. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount drawn down by his Department each year since 2014 and to date in 2017 under the youth employment initiative; the programmes and initiatives funded in whole or in part with these moneys; the number of participants on each; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21400/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):**

The Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) is one of the main EU financial resources to support the implementation of the EU youth guarantee. It is integrated into European Social Fund (ESF) programming as a dedicated priority axis within the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020 (PEIL) that was adopted by Commission Decision in February 2015. The specific YEI allocation for Ireland of €68m is matched by equal amounts from our ESF allocation and from the Exchequer, giving an overall allocation of €204m.

The ESF Regulations provide for initial pre-financing/advances of EU support at 1% (or 1.5% for Member States under financial assistance in 2014 and 2015) of the full programme support, payable for each year from 2014 to 2016, together with annual pre-financing of between 2% and 3% payable from 2016 to 2023. In May 2015 an amendment to the relevant EU Regulations resulted in an unprecedented increase in the YEI advances to be paid to Member States. The Commission subsequently released pre-financing payments from the dedicated YEI budget line, worth 30% of the YEI budget, to provide additional financial liquidity to support YEI implementation. However, the relevant Regulations specified that where a Member State did not submit an interim payment application by 23 May 2016 for at least 50% of the additional pre-financing amount, that the Member State must reimburse the Commission the total YEI pre-financing contribution. The ESF regulations also provide that annual pre-financing for any year in which an interim payment application is not made in that year must also be reimbursed.

As Ireland did not submit an interim YEI payment application, the €19.8m additional pre-financing received was reimbursed to the Commission. Furthermore, as there was no ESF application made in 2016, the €11.6m annual pre-financing for 2016, including €1.36m for the YEI, will be offset against the 2017 pre-financing due. The reimbursement of these amounts has not resulted in any loss of EU monies to the Exchequer. Furthermore, as the YEI activities are fully funded up-front by the Exchequer there is no resulting reduction or delay in the funding available to them. The YEI funding is available for drawdown before the end of 2018 and it is expected that the funding will be fully drawn down.

The Department of Social Protection has advised that it obtained EU funding under the European Commission’s call for proposals for preparatory actions under the Youth Guarantee Pilot, to pilot a Youth Guarantee Scheme in Ballymun which operated in 2014. The total cost of the pilot was €302,279 which included EU funding of €250,000.
Youth Employment Initiative activities are programmed within Priority Axis 4 of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020 (PEIL). Those activities are the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) Scheme, the JobsPlus Incentive Scheme, Tús, JobBridge, Youthreach, the Social inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) and Momentum. The participant figures requested by the Deputy are currently being compiled and will be provided to the Deputy separately.

**Student Grant Scheme Eligibility**

170. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason eligibility for a student grant is based on gross income rather than net income; his plans to change this criteria. [21401/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The means test arrangements of the Student Grant Scheme are applied nationally on the same basis to both employed and self-employed applicants. Gross income before the deduction of income tax or the universal social charge, is assessed with certain specified social welfare and health service executive payments excluded.

The assessment of income from the same starting point is deemed to be fair and reasonable because this approach eliminates any distortion which might arise from different spending decisions in different households.

The current system of student supports is underpinned by the Student Support Act, 2011. My officials have recently commenced a review of this legislation to identify areas where the Act needs to be updated to reflect the changes that have taken place in Irish society and to ensure that supports are targeted effectively at those most in need. All relevant issues will be considered as part of this review.

**Student Retention Rates**

171. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to address the high levels of non-progression in some courses in institutes of technology; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21402/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** In line with the overall mission of higher education in Ireland there has been a steady increase in student enrolments over recent years. The most recent report by the HEA on retention and progression, entitled ‘A Study of Progression in Higher Education’ focuses on the progression of students from their first year of study in 2013/14 to their second year of study in 2014/15. This is the fifth in a series of progression analysis released by the HEA. The report gives an in-depth analysis of the non-progression rates by NFQ level, sector, discipline, gender, age, nationality and socio-economic group. There are many factors identified as influencing the likelihood of progression such as Gender, Age at commencement, Prior Educational attainment, nationality and socio-economic grouping.

The HEA through the System Performance and Strategic Dialogue process also monitor progression rates within the institutions on an annual basis. Institutes report on retention measures in place within their institutes to combat high non-progression rates. The HEA funds retention initiatives in Computer Science disciplines in higher education institutions through the Information Technology Investment Fund. In 2015 these initiatives included additional classes,
attendance mentoring, teaching and learning initiatives, student support sessions, buddy practic-
cals and maths enabling courses.

In 2016 the National Forum for Teaching and Learning established an ICT Retention Scop-
ing Group to examine ways in which students could be enabled to complete ICT courses. The
group working with practitioners and industry recently made a number of recommendations
including capacity building within the school system, improved career guidance, sharing of
good practice on pedagogy and retention across the sector and strengthen links with the FET
and post primary sectors.

One of the key objectives of the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education
2015-2019 (National Access Plan) is to address the issue of non-completion within higher edu-
cation institutions, for those in under-represented target groups. The Plan also commits to the
further development of mechanisms to track the progression, retention and student experience
of target groups. The target student groups include entrants from socio-economic groups that
have low participation in higher education; first time mature student entrants and students with
disabilities.

To support the implementation of these objectives, a Working Group has been established
to consider the issues contributing to the non-completion of target groups in the National Ac-
cess Plan and to produce recommendations for policy and practice. The group is chaired by the
Higher Education Authority (HEA) and includes representatives of relevant stakeholders. The
HEA, with assistance from the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning,
is currently undertaking a scoping exercise to inform the work of the group.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

172. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the final numbers of
schools that have appealed their allocation under the new resource allocation model; and if he
will make a statement on the matter. [21403/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I wish to advise the Deputy
that DES Circular 0013/2017 for primary schools and 0014/2017 for post primary schools were
published on 7th March 2017.

These Circulars set out the details of the new model for allocating special education teachers
to schools.

The revised allocation model replaces the generalised allocation process at primary and post
primary school level for learning support and high incidence special educational needs, and the
National Council for Special Education (NCSE) allocation process which provided additional
resource teaching supports to schools, to support pupils assessed as having Low Incidence dis-
abilities.

The new model provides one single allocation to schools based on the profile. Schools will
be frontloaded with resources to provide additional teaching support to all pupils who need such
support.

The NCSE has published details of the appeals process on the NCSE website: [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

Schools who wished to submit an appeal were asked to do so by March 31st 2017.

The total number of appeals which have been received by the NCSE is 558.
This represents approximately 15% of schools which have appealed their special education teaching allocation for 2017. This is an appeal level ratio which is broadly similar to the number of primary schools who submitted appeals to the primary staffing appeals board for the 2016/17 school year, which also represented about 15% of schools.

The appeals will be processed in the coming weeks and it is intended that schools will be notified of the outcome by 31st May.

Schools could appeal whether the data used to calculate their school profile was correct and complete and whether it was correctly applied in the calculation of their 2017/18 allocation.

DES Circulars 0013/2017 and 0014/2017 outline the basis on which the Education Research Centre determined the allocations for all schools.

In advance of any submission of an appeal, schools were asked to read carefully the DES Circulars and in particular the relevant sections, which relate to the breakdown of the allocation, which may be under consideration for appeal.

The model will also allow for some additional provision for exceptional circumstances or where a school’s enrolment levels increase very substantially prior to the next review of the model. The National Council for Special Education will support schools in managing their special education teaching allocations in the first instance. Only in very exceptional circumstances, where it can be demonstrated that the schools profile has changed very significantly since the allocation was made to the school, may an additional allocation of hours be made to the school.

Guidelines for schools on the organisation, deployment and use of their special education teachers to address the need of pupils with special educational needs have also now been published and are available on my Departments website.

The Guidelines will support schools to reflect on how they can review and manage their timetabling practices to ensure the timetable is sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of all pupils in their school who have special needs. The Guidelines encourage schools to ensure they deploy their resources appropriately to meet the needs of all of the children in their school who require additional teaching support, including pupils with emerging needs, or new entrants.

### Teachers’ Remuneration

173. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the timeframe for the implementation of pay equality for teachers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21404/17]

186. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to address the issue of pay inequality among post 2011 entrants to teaching and ensure that workers in the education system receive equal pay for equal work; and the timeframe for addressing this issue. [21454/17]

203. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the timeframe to end the pay inequality that teachers endure (details supplied); the timeframe which will be given to act on the issue of pay inequality; if there is no plan to resolve the issue of pay inequality, the way in which a position can be justified that is contrary to the principle of equal pay for equal work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21647/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to answer Parlia-
As a consequence of the financial crisis, there was a need to enact a number of measures to reduce public expenditure so as to stabilise the country’s public finances. A previous Government reduced the salaries and allowances payable to all new entrants to public service recruitment grades by 10% with effect from 1 January 2011. This decision also required that such new entrants would start on the first point of the applicable salary scale, which in the case of teachers had the effect of reducing their starting pay by a further 4-5%. Later in 2011, the Government placed a cap on the overall level of qualification allowances that could be earned by teachers.

Subsequently in 2012, following the public service-wide review of allowances, the Government withdrew qualification allowances for new teachers altogether. However, the Government partially compensated for this by deciding that new entrant teachers would henceforth commence on a new salary scale which had a starting point higher than the starting point of the old scale.

The public service agreements have allowed a programme of pay restoration to start. I have used this to negotiate substantial improvements in pay for new teachers. The agreement reached with TUI and INTO in September 2016 will see pay rises of between 15-22% (between €4,600 and €6,700) for new entrant teachers. The agreements also provide for earlier permanency for younger teachers, new promotion opportunities and new flexibilities in working hours. The pay increases for new teachers were also available to ASTI members under the proposals which members recently balloted on.

The agreements have restored an estimated 75% of the difference in pay for more recently recruited teachers and deliver full equality at later points in the scale. This is substantial progress and strikes an equitable balance with other claims for funding on my Department, particularly needs such as enhanced service for children with special educational needs, for disadvantaged schools, for growing schools, for Higher Education and for apprenticeships.

It must be borne in mind that the pay reduction for post-2011 entrants to the public service applied to all public servants and not just teachers, and that any restoration of these measures in respect of teachers would be expected to be applied elsewhere across the public service. While I am not in a position to provide an estimate of the total cost of restoring all post-1 January 2011 entrants in all areas of the public service to the pre-2011 pay scale arrangements, I can say that in the case of education and training sector employees, including teachers, the estimated full year cost in 2017 would be in the order of €85 million. Clearly, the cost across the entire public service would be substantially higher.

Further negotiation on new entrant pay cannot focus on just one sector. A broader assessment of pay and new entrant pay across the public service will be informed by the analysis of the Public Service Pay Commission.

The Government established the Commission to examine pay levels across the public service, including entry levels of pay. The Government also supports the gradual, negotiated repeal of the FEMPI legislation, having due regard to the priority to improve public services and in recognition of the essential role played by public servants.

I accept that the teacher unions have outstanding pay demands and that the new entrant deal does not travel the full distance that they set out to achieve. However, it does represent significant progress, and the door is not closed to the trade union movement seeking to advance the issue further in the context of future public service pay talks. Indeed, negotiations on a successor agreement to Lansdowne Road will shortly get under way.
174. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of early childhood care and education scheme, ECCE, programmes that are implementing the Aistear and Síolta curriculum; the mechanisms in place to evaluate the educational outcomes for children under the ECCE scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21405/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** All pre-school services, participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme introduced in 2010, are required to implement the early childhood quality and curriculum frameworks: Síolta and Aistear. The commitment to implement these frameworks is a condition of the contract agreed between pre-school service providers and the Department of Children and Youth affairs (DCYA). Currently 4,222 services are in active contract with the DCYA providing the ECCE programme to 117,000 children. The DCYA contract also includes provision for verification and audits which require pre-school service providers to permit representatives to attend at the premises for the purposes of inspection and audits. These include regulatory inspections by the Tusla Early Years (Pre-school) Inspectorate, Pobal, and education-focused inspections conducted by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills (DES). The DES, effective from 11 April 2016, has responsibility for evaluating key aspects of education provision in the educational setting inspected and to promote improvement in that setting. Reports arising from education-focused inspections are published on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

The National Síolta Aistear Initiative, which is being led by the DES, in partnership with DCYA and the NCCA, was established in 2016, to centrally coordinate the implementation of the Síolta and Aistear frameworks. The initiative includes the provision of mentoring to support early years settings to implement Síolta and Aistear and an Aistear CPD pilot being led by the NCCA. Early-years education-focused inspections evaluate the nature, range and appropriateness of the early educational experiences for children participating in the ECCE Programme. The EYEI model of inspection is based on a quality framework informed by the principles of both Aistear and Síolta as well as national and international research relating to early childhood education and inspection.

**Special Educational Needs Service Provision**

175. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of places in autism units that will be available in the 2017 - 2018 school year; the number of new autism units that will be established; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21406/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** 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.

This policy has been informed by published research, including the Report of the Task Force on Autism (2001), the Evaluation of Educational Provision for Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) (2006) and the NCSE’s policy advice on Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (2016).
Almost 18,000 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
- 26% to attend special classes in mainstream primary and post-primary schools, and
- 11% to attend special schools.

My Department considers it essential that in assessing the need for special class placements the individual needs of children should be properly assessed to determine the appropriateness of special class provision for them.

Some students, although academically able to access the curriculum in mainstream, may find it too difficult to manage full-time placement there. This can be due to significant difficulties in areas such as behaviour or sensory needs which have not been ameliorated, even with appropriate intervention, in mainstream.

Enrolment in an ASD special class should only be considered where it has been demonstrated that a student requires the support of a special class because he/she is unable to learn effectively in a mainstream class for most or all of the school day even with appropriate supports.

Students enrolling in ASD Special Classes must have a report from a relevant professional or team of professionals (for example, psychologist, speech and language therapist, psychiatrist) stating that:

- S/he has ASD
- S/he has significant learning needs that require the support of a special class setting and the reasons why this is the case.

The National Council for Special Education (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 where there is an identified need.

The NCSE, in looking to open special classes, must take into account the present and future potential need for such classes, taking particular account of the educational needs of the children concerned. The NCSE will also take account of location and sustainability in looking to establish special classes in certain areas.

The NCSE continues to establish additional special classes to support children with Special Educational Needs including Autism as required. Since 2011 the NCSE has increased the number of such classes by over 50% from 548 in 2011 to 1153 across the country now, of which 889 are Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) special classes.

The NCSE has informed my Department that it intends to establish an additional 162 ASD Special Classes for the 2017/18 school year increasing the number of ASD Special Classes by 18% from 889 to 1,015.

The NCSE are currently finalising the list of Special Classes for the 2017/18 school year which will be published on the NCSE website www.ncse.ie.

Capitation Grants
201
176. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to reduce school costs specifically in relation to the proposal of a premium capitation payment to schools; the amount of the premium to be paid to schools; his plans to monitor the implementation of this proposal; when his Department circular will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21407/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My ambition is to make the Irish education and training service the best in Europe within a decade.

To deliver on my ambition to be the best we have to improve information and complaint procedures for parents and students, particularly in relation to costs.

I want to give parents a strong voice in ensuring costs are always kept to a minimum.

Schools have to do everything possible to keep costs down for parents, including the use of generic items, sew on or iron on crests, and making sure that various elements of the uniform can be purchased in multiple stores.

In the Action Plan for Education I have committed to the restoration of capitation payments. In restoring capitation payments, where schools have introduced these cost effective principles, they will receive a premium capitation payment.

I believe that full transparency in relation to the use of any voluntary contributions is important information for parents to have. The Parent and Student Charter will require every school to set out a financial statement, which will include information on how any voluntary contributions are used.

This is part of a suite of measures I am introducing, including the School Admissions Bill which will reform information and procedures around the process of school enrolment, and the commencement of Fitness to Teach, which allow a complaint to be made about a registered teacher to the Teaching Council for the first time.

Circular letter 32/2017 ‘Measures to be adopted by schools to reduce the cost of school uniforms and other costs’ was published at the end of April and is available on my Department’s website.

Following the implementation of the circular, school authorities will be required to adopt the following principles of cost-effective practice which will put a greater emphasis on reducing the cost of school uniforms and other costs:

- All elements of a school uniform should be purchasable from various stores;
- Only iron on or sew on crests should be used;
- Wherever possible, generic rather than branded items should be specified (e.g. uniform, clothing, IT tablets, sports equipment etc.);
- Provide parents with a list of all required items and indicate the likely costs of these required items at best value stores;
- Provide a book rental scheme;
- Phase out, between now and September 2018, the use of workbooks which cannot be reused;
- Where an exclusive supply arrangement applies, it should be tendered for regularly and
- The Board of Management in each school will have to review the cost of items which they require parents to purchase and to make this information available to the school community.

Schools will consult with parents on their views and ask for suggestions on cost reduction initiatives. Parents will be asked for their views about school uniform costs, and other costs, through a questionnaire.

As resources permit, it is my intention to reward schools that can provide evidence of having adopted the principles of cost-effective practice. It is intended that this could be done through some premium in capitation grants for schools.

The Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 outlines hundreds of actions to be implemented over the 3 year period 2016 to 2019. One of these actions aim to restore capitation funding over a three-year period as resources permit. It was not possible to provide additional funding in Budget 2017 in relation to capitation funding due to the many competing demands for the available funding. However, this commitment remains a priority for me to address as soon as possible during the lifetime of the Action Plan.

Circular 32/2017 recognises that schools may already have arrangements made for school uniforms and other school costs for September 2017. Therefore it is envisaged that it will be the school year 2018/2019 school year before schools can provide evidence of having adopted the principles of cost-effective practice.

When budgetary resources are available to provide an increase in capitation for schools, my Department will then consider the most appropriate mechanism to gather evidence on whether or not schools have adopted the principles of cost-effective practice.

**Psychological Assessments**

177. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 130 of 2 February 2017, when a response will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21410/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I would inform the Deputy that officials in my Department are currently compiling the data requested in her question and I will arrange to have it forwarded to her without further delay.

**Third Level Funding**

178. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the value of additional funding received by universities or other third level institutions for the purposes of improving access, including premium level of funding for target students; the institutions in receipt of such funding; the amount received by each institution over the past five years and to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21412/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** There are currently 3 streams of funding for the Higher Education Institutions (HEI) to support the delivery of access—a block grant through the Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (RGAM), the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) and the Student Assistance Fund (SAF). The RGAM grant goes to the higher education institutions and the FSD and SAF directly support students.

HEIs receive a block grant to support teaching, research and access. The amount that each
institution receives is informed by the number of students from target groups that are enrolled in that institution. The funding is not additional, it is part of the core allocation.

The target groups for the purposes of funding are students from under represented socio-economic groups, students from the Traveller Community, students with disabilities and mature students (new entrants).

The data collected by the Equal Access survey is drawn upon for the block grant. Each access student from the target groups receive an additional weighting of 0.33 for the purposes of funding. The standard resource varies from year to year and depends on the overall budget for higher education.

In addition to the core RGAM funding, each HEI also receives an allocation under the Student Assistance Fund and the Fund for Students with Disabilities. The amount of funding allocated to each institution under these Funds is also attached.

### The Fund for Students with Disabilities

#### Allocations since 2012-13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Total Allocated 2012-13</th>
<th>Total Allocated 2013-14</th>
<th>Total Allocated 2014-15</th>
<th>Total Allocated 2015-16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>7,744,590</td>
<td>7,595,393</td>
<td>7,689,645</td>
<td>7,593,906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Education</td>
<td>2,496,769</td>
<td>2,394,736</td>
<td>2,372,927</td>
<td>2,400,272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other EU</td>
<td>349,059</td>
<td>315,521</td>
<td>345,826</td>
<td>374,801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10,590,418</td>
<td>10,305,650</td>
<td>10,408,398</td>
<td>10,368,979</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Student Beneficiaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>6755</td>
<td>7413</td>
<td>8524</td>
<td>8920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Education</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>1224</td>
<td>1350</td>
<td>1362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other EU</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7897</td>
<td>8809</td>
<td>10050</td>
<td>10486</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### The Student Assistance Fund

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>€10,999,995</td>
<td>€7,937,817</td>
<td>€6,599,999</td>
<td>€7,840,159</td>
<td>€7,9M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Student Beneficiaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17,840</td>
<td>15,166</td>
<td>14,959</td>
<td>15,772</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2016/17 the total allocated for SAF was €7.9M and financial returns with the total number of beneficiaries supported are not submitted until last quarter of this year. However, there were approximately 15,772 students funded in 2015/16 academic year and we would expect more or less the same figure for 2016/17.
Labour Court Recommendations

179. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 183 of 5 April 2017, if a binding Labour Court decision recommending that the outcome of the job evaluation exercise will be implemented in full with effect from 12 September 2016 and will be given full effect without further delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21413/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As the Deputy is aware, on the 27th March 2017 the Labour Court issued its recommendation regarding the effective date for the implementation of the Job Evaluation Exercise carried out in the Tyndall National Institute. The Court recommended that the effective date for the re-grading of staff in accordance with the job evaluation exercise be the 12th September 2016 and my officials are currently working with officials in University College Cork on the modalities around implementation. It is hoped that this process will be brought to a speedy and satisfactory conclusion.

Education Data

180. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the mechanisms in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of access initiatives at third level; if guidelines in relation to best practice have been circulated among institutions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21414/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Higher Education System Performance Framework, and the individual compacts that are agreed by each Higher Education Institution with the HEA, provide the strategic framework for evaluating the effectiveness of the higher education system in meeting its key objectives. One of these seven key objectives relates to Equity of Access.

The last System Performance report was published by the HEA in late 2016. This illustrates the progress that is being made by institutions in this important policy area, as well as the challenges that are currently being addressed. A new System Performance Framework is currently being developed by my Department. This will provide a key accountability mechanism for the future.

The National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, 2015-19, contains a specific goal relating to evaluation of current initiatives to support equity of access in higher education institutions. Considerable progress has been made under this Goal since the National Access Plan was published in 2015.

The review of the Student Assistance Fund was completed in 2016 and implementation of the report’s recommendations has commenced. A Review of the Fund for Students with Disabilities is nearing completion. A key element of the evaluations of both Funds is on the identification and dissemination of best practice guidelines across institutions.

The HEA are currently evaluating the Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (RGAM), the mechanism to allocate funding to HEIs. A key element of this review is an assessment of how the RGAM currently supports the access infrastructure in each HEI.

There will also be a mid-term review of the National Access Plan towards the end of 2017. This will provide an opportunity to evaluate the overall direction of access policy with a view to informing future policy and practice.
As part of the implementation of the National Access Plan, the Department of Education and Skills is committed to hosting an annual forum for the dissemination of best practice. The first of these took place in January 2017.

Dissemination of best practice is also facilitated by the HEA who work with a network of access officers drawn from each Higher Education Institution. This provides an opportunity to share knowledge and experience of best practice for the benefit of the system as a whole.

One of the main access initiatives funded by my Department is the Student Grant Scheme. In 2017 the scheme is expected to benefit some 80,000 students with investment of approximately €380m. The Student Support Act, 2011, which provides the legislative basis for the Student Grant Scheme, is currently under review. This will ensure that the main provisions underpinning the Student Grant Scheme are appropriate and support broader access policy. There is also a commitment to review SUSI, the awarding authority for student grants, in 2018.

DEIS Data

181. Deputy Carol Nolan asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of current DEIS schools that would not have met his Department’s new criteria for inclusion in the programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21415/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): It is important to note that an initial assessment of all schools has been used to extend DEIS supports to those schools with the highest concentrations of disadvantage as detailed in the list of schools published on 13th February. This represents a first step in the application of the new DEIS identification process and we are moving to support pupils in those schools with effect from September 2017.

A further application of the identification process will take account of updated DES online pupil data from 2016/17 2016 National Census data when it becomes available later this year.

It is my Department’s intention to make available to all schools information relating to this process and their own individual school data. Arrangements for this are in hand and schools will be advised in due course. However it is not proposed to publish this information generally as there is a significant risk that this would allow crude comparisons to be drawn in terms of relative levels of disadvantage in schools. This would be highly divisive; unfair to parents, students and communities; place schools in an invidious position; and be contrary to the public interest.

DEIS Administration

182. Deputy Carol Nolan asked the Minister for Education and Skills if, in identifying schools to be included in DEIS, each school was given a grade or numerical measure in terms of deprivation according to indicators; the difference in this measure between the lowest new school added to DEIS and the highest school not added to the DEIS programme; if all schools were assessed according to deprivation indicators; the range between the lowest school and the highest school across all schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21416/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As I have detailed previ-
ously, the approach taken for the assessment of schools under the new DEIS identification process uses CSO Small Area data, as represented in the Haase Pratschke Index of Deprivation (HP Index), combined with DES Primary and Post Primary data supplied by schools. The key data sources are the DES Primary Online Database (POD) and Post-Primary Online (PPOD) Databases, and CSO data from the National Census of Population as represented in the Pobal HP Index for Small Areas which is a method of measuring the relative affluence or disadvantage of a particular geographical area. Variables used in the compilation of the HP Index include those related to demographic growth, dependency ratios, education levels, single parent rate, overcrowding, social class, occupation and unemployment rates. This data is combined with pupil data, anonymised and aggregated to small area, to provide information on the relative level of concentrated disadvantage present in the pupil cohort of individual schools.

The use of the HP Index in the context of educational disadvantage is consistent with its use across a broad range of Government Departments, agencies and various public sector entities. The index contains variables which provide a measure of the underlying risk of educational disadvantage and the exploratory analysis conducted by the Educational Research Centre shows that there is a moderate to strong correlation between scores on the HP index and poorer educational outcomes across the school spectrum, particularly in urban and post primary schools.

I am satisfied that the new DEIS Identification Model used to assess the level of disadvantage among the pupil cohort of a school has been applied fairly using centrally held data adopting an objective and scientific approach which has been uniformly applied for all schools.

I also wish to inform the Deputy that a communication to all schools will issue shortly to provide information on the identification model including details of how the datasets are used to determine a schools level of disadvantage; the importance of data quality to the process and the need for detailed and up to date information from schools.

Educational Disadvantage

183. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to support disadvantaged children in schools not under the DEIS programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21417/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** DEIS is my Department’s main policy initiative to tackle educational disadvantage. The DEIS Plan for 2017 sets out our vision for future intervention in the critical area of social inclusion in education policy.

The rationale for allocating resources and supports based on a schools’ level of concentrated disadvantage is based on the existence of a “multiplier effect” whereby students attending a school with a concentration of students from disadvantaged backgrounds have poorer academic outcomes.

As noted in DEIS Plan 2017, the implementation of a new objective central data-based model of identifying levels of disadvantage within school populations will be followed by a further programme of work to create a more dynamic model where levels of resource more accurately follow the levels of need identified by that model.

It is important to note that DEIS supports are just one of a suite of supports provided by the Department of Education and Skills and by other Government Departments and agencies to assist schools in meeting the identified educational needs of their pupil cohorts. These include supports for children with special educational needs, English as an additional language (EAL) supports, Educational Welfare Services and School Meals schemes.
My Department will also provide some €450m in 2017 in supports to promote students from under-represented groups to participate in higher education. The main support is the student grant scheme which will benefit some 80,000 students in 2017 through investment of more than €380million. I also recently announced funding of €2.4m for measures to widen access to initial teacher education for students from groups that are currently under-represented. This will support 120 students to access initial teacher education over the next three years. These measures are targeted at those students most in need of support and will benefit students in DEIS and non-DEIS schools who meet the relevant eligibility criteria.

Special Educational Needs Staff

184. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the work being done to develop the model of the identification of future complex needs; when the model will be developed and finalised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21418/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I wish to advise the Deputy that DES Circular 0013/2017 for primary schools and 0014/2017 for post primary schools were published on 7th March 2017.

These Circulars set out the details of the new model for allocating special education teachers to schools.

The revised allocation model replaces the generalised allocation process at primary and post primary school level for learning support and high incidence special educational needs, and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) allocation process which provided additional resource teaching supports to schools, to support pupils assessed as having Low Incidence disabilities.

The new model provides a single allocation to schools based on the profile. Schools will be frontloaded with resources to provide additional teaching support to all pupils who need such support.

The Circulars note that for the introduction of the new allocation model, from September 2017, the NCSE ‘Low Incidence’ allocations which had been made for each school during the preceding 2016/17 school year, have been used to establish the complex needs component of the new model for each school.

This means that on the introduction of the new allocation model and until allocations are reviewed, no school will receive an allocation, for the support of pupils with complex needs, which is less than the allocation they had received to support pupils with Low Incidence special educational needs during the 2016/17 school year.

This also means that no allocation for pupils made by the NCSE will be removed from schools as long as that pupil remains in the school.

Whereas schools will have greater discretion as to how they can distribute resources under the new model, based on the individual needs of pupils, no reduction in allocations have been made to schools in respect of any pupils who were previously in receipt of a Low Incidence special needs allocation in that school.

A model for the identification of pupils with complex needs in future is being finalised by the NCSE, in consultation with the Health Service Executive and National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS).
This model will take account of the decision making process and qualification criteria for the selection of children for access to HSE Children Disability Network Teams.

For the next re-profiling of the model, the Complex Needs category will be the existing low incidence allocations for schools, less any leavers included in this category, plus additional allocations for any new complex needs category pupils, over the period of time since the first school profiles were developed, to the point of the next re-profiling of the model.

School Staff Appeals Mechanism

185. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the appeals board has made a decision regarding an appeal made by a school (details supplied) in relation to staffing resources in County Leitrim; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21451/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The criteria used for the allocation of teaching posts is published annually 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 previous 30 September.

The staffing schedule operates in a clear and transparent manner and treats all similar types of schools equally irrespective of location.

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 April meeting. The Appeals Board decided to give provisional approval to the school for an additional mainstream teaching post for the 2017/18 school year. This decision is conditional on the school achieving the projected 30 September 2017 enrolments figures.

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

*Question No. 186 answered with Question No. 173.*

School Transport Eligibility

187. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a payment will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21457/17]

**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 almost 116,000 children, including some 12,000 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 eligible for transport where they reside not less than 3.2 kilometres from and are attending their nearest national school as determined by the Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

An eligible child for whom no transport service is available may, following an application
for transport within the prescribed time limits, receive a Remote Area Grant towards the cost of private transport arrangements.

This family applied for transport in August 2008, were eligible for transport, but Bus Éireann has advised that the child in question did not avail of this service. In these circumstances the family were not eligible for the Remote Area Grant when the service was subsequently withdrawn.

The family has now applied for school transport for the younger child and this application will be processed by Bus Éireann for the 2017/18 school year.

**Special Educational Needs Service Provision**

188. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there will be no provision for a new intake of children with ASD into the secondary school ASD units in a town (details supplied) in County Cork in the 2018-2019 school year; his plans to address this situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21502/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** 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.

The Department of Education and Skills considers it essential that in assessing the need for special class placements the individual needs of children should be properly assessed to determine the appropriateness of special class provision for them.

Some students, although academically able to access the curriculum in mainstream, may find it too difficult to manage full-time placement there. This can be due to significant difficulties in areas such as behaviour or sensory needs which have not been ameliorated, even with appropriate intervention, in mainstream.

Enrolment in an ASD special class should only be considered where it has been demonstrated that a student requires the support of a special class because he/she is unable to learn effectively in a mainstream class for most or all of the school day even with appropriate supports.

The National Council for Special Education (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 where there is an identified need.

The NCSE continues to establish additional special classes to support children with Special Educational Needs including Autism as required. Since 2011 the NCSE has increased the number of such classes by over 50% from 548 in 2011 to 1153 across the country now, of which 889 are Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) special classes.

The NCSE, in looking to open special classes, must take into account the present and future potential need for such classes, taking particular account of the educational needs of the chil-
dren concerned. The NCSE will also take account of location and sustainability in looking to establish special classes in certain areas.

With regard to ASD Post Primary provision in Carrigaline, the NCSE is not aware of and has not approved the arrangement referred to by the Deputy.

The NCSE has to date established 3 ASD Post Primary classes which are catering for existing need. The NCSE intends to establish an additional class for the forthcoming school year to meet identified future need. The NCSE will continue to engage with schools in the area in opening ASD special classes in future years as required.

Parents/Guardians who may need advice or are experiencing difficulties in locating a school placement should contact their local Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) who can assist in identifying an appropriate educational placement for their child. Contact details are available on www.ncse.ie.

School Patronage

189. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the safeguards to be put in place to protect minority faith schools; if his attention has been drawn to the widespread concerns of boards of management, particularly of small rural schools under the patronage of protestant churches with regard to the proposed changes to school admissions policies (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21511/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As the Deputy may be aware I ran a public consultation process from 24th January to 20th March 2017 on the role of denominational religion in the school admission process and possible approaches for making changes.

A number of submissions were received from Protestant and other minority faith schools. In this regard, as I have said throughout, I am mindful of the need to avoid possible pitfalls and unintended consequences such as possible impacts on these minority religions and on the wishes of Protestant, Jewish, Islamic and other communities to be able to run schools in accordance with their ethos and admit children from their communities to attend those schools.

The 8 week phase of receiving written submissions formed part of a broader consultation process which will include additional steps, including any follow-up consultation that is required, collation of responses and development of next steps.

My Department has begun the process of examining the submissions and formulating next steps. Clearly I will not make any decisions around next steps until such time as all of the submissions have been examined and considered.

Schools Property

190. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the release of the lease in order that the sale of a school (details supplied) can be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21594/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Officials from my Department are currently considering a request received in respect of the property referred to by the Deputy and will be in contact with the relevant property owners as soon as possible.
191. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a new secondary school for the Castleknock and Carpenterstown areas in Dublin 15; the location of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21651/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The building project for the new post-primary school to serve the Carpenterstown/Castleknock school planning areas is included in my Department’s current 6 year construction programme.

Officials in my Department are liaising with officials in Fingal County Council in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the identification and acquisition of a suitable permanent location for the school.

Due to commercial sensitivities relating to site acquisitions generally I am not in a position to provide further details at this time but the school patron will be informed of the proposed location for the school as soon as it is possible to do so.

The school will open as scheduled in September 2017 in suitable interim accommodation.

**School Enrolments**

192. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will consider a three year deferral on the decision not to allow enrolment for first year students in a school (details supplied) by the GRETB in order to allow for the proposed increase in numbers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21672/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department understands that, following recent engagement by the school and the ETB concerned with the relevant stakeholders, the school referred to by the Deputy has made the decision that first year pupils will now be enrolled for in the coming academic year.

**School Curriculum**

193. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to introduce driver education classes in post primary schools (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21685/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** It may be of interest to the Deputy that even in the primary curriculum, there is incremental provision for children to learn aspects of road safety that are particularly relevant to them, including pedestrian and cycling safety.

At post-primary level, there are no plans to introduce mandatory driver education classes, but it is important to point out that basic tuition to lay a foundation in driver education is actually featured on many school curricula already.

Transition Year is currently taken by almost 70% of post-primary students and an optional Road Safety programme for Transition Year has been developed by the Road Safety Authority in collaboration with my Department, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and the Professional Development Service for Teachers, and has been offered nationally as an option since September 2008. The programme is available in twenty hour and forty-five hour
units. It features inputs from agencies such as the ambulance service, fire service and An Garda Síochána, as well as providing for visiting speakers, trips out of school, projects and case studies.

The programme provides for an introduction to road safety for pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and motorists, and covers such issues as seatbelts and airbags, driver fatigue, drink/drug driving, enforcement, basic first aid at road crashes, emergency services and rehabilitation. The programme is also supported by digital resources, including DVD support and access to international websites on road safety issues. Relevant Driver Theory Test learning is included at the end of each module. The programme does not include driving lessons.

Schools Building Projects Status

194. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the next phase of the school building for a school (details supplied) will commence; the position regarding this project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21687/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The project referred to by the Deputy was authorised to proceed to tender in October 2016.

However, as the pre-qualification of contractors had first been conducted by the design team in April 2015 the design team, concerned about the possibility of legal challenges, asked the Office of Government Procurement for advice on this matter. The advice was that it would be prudent to run the pre-qualification again.

The Design Team has rerun the pre-qualification of suitable contractors and are due to go to tender later this month.

Subject to no issues arising it is anticipated that construction will commence in late 2017 and the project is scheduled to take approximately 18 months to complete.

Schools Building Projects Status

195. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the provision of a new site for a school (details supplied) as announced in November 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21688/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As the Deputy is aware, a project for a new school building for the school to which he refers is included on my Department’s capital programme.

Officials in my Department are working closely with officials from Fingal County Council under the Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the acquisition of a suitable permanent location for the Gaelscoil. A suitable site has been identified and discussions are ongoing with the Council in relation to this acquisition and the development of infrastructure required to facilitate the school on the site.

Due to commercial sensitivities relating to site acquisitions generally I am not in a position to provide further details at this time.

Summer Works Scheme
196. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application for the summer works programme by a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21712/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Deputy will be aware that I announced details of the successful applicants under round two of the Summer Works Scheme (SWS) (2016-2017) for categories 3 – 6, on the 3rd May last, details of which are published on my Department’s website, www.education.ie.

Funding of €47 million is being made available for vital school projects in school buildings; 438 schools nationwide will benefit from this announcement.

I am pleased to advise the Deputy that funding has been approved to the school to which he refers in respect of an application under SWS for roof works. The school has been advised of this decision through my Department’s on-line Easinet portal.

### Student Grant Scheme Payments

197. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the fact that SUSI is seeking repayment of alleged overpayments from students dating back to 2012-2013; if his attention has been further drawn to the fact that these students are not being offered clarity or detail of the review of their grant applications; if such alleged overpayments have been written off; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21597/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** SUSI operates a comprehensive set of processes and controls to manage the assessment process and to minimise the risk of incorrectly awarding grants. However, the nature of the assessment process undertaken by SUSI means that there is a risk that some students may be awarded maintenance grants and/or fee grants for which they are not eligible.

Where overpayments do occur, SUSI treats the overpayment as a debt to the exchequer and seeks to ensure that all such payments are recovered from the student. This approach is consistent with the general policy and principle regarding the recovery of debt, as set out in the Student Support Act 2011.

When an overpayment is identified, SUSI will write to the student to inform him/her of the decision to vary the grant amount and to advise that recovery (repayment) of the overpayment will be necessary. A further letter will then issue to formally advise of the overpayment amount and to request repayment. This letter includes a Grant Repayment Option Form which requests details of the preferred repayment option.

If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant, or that the rate of grant awarded is not the correct one, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI. Applicants may also appeal against decisions made by SUSI in relation to overpayments.

Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down in writing by SUSI and remains of the view that the scheme has not been interpreted correctly in his/her case, an appeal may be submitted by the applicant via www.studentgrantappeals.ie outlining the position to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board within the required timeframe.

### School Curriculum
198. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of hours the new wellbeing curriculum during the junior cycle will involve; and the source of these additional hours. [21602/17]

206. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the consultation that has taken place on the new wellbeing curriculum that is proposed in the reform programme for the junior cycle; if it is still possible for groups with an interest in this area to feed into the consultation process; when the subject will commence in schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21735/17]

210. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the way he and his Department are ensuring that hours or time spent teaching academic subjects such as German, French, science and others are not being cut to facilitate the introduction of the wellbeing scheme in secondary schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21810/17]

211. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the guidelines sent out to secondary schools on the best way to introduce the wellbeing scheme; if it is being left at the discretion of the principals in each school; if his preference is to ensure that academic subjects are not cut as a result of this scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21811/17]

212. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if academic hours in various subjects such as French, German or science are found to be cut to allow the wellbeing scheme to be introduced; his views regarding a reduction in standards or quality in these subjects; his further views on the possible impact this may have on the students’ standards for the leaving certificate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21812/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 198, 206 and 210 to 212, inclusive, together. The Wellbeing Programme will cross the three years of junior cycle and build on substantial work already taking place in schools in support of students’ wellbeing. This area of learning will make the school’s commitment to wellbeing visible to students. It will include learning opportunities to enhance the physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing of students. It will enable students to build life skills and develop a strong sense of connectedness to their school and to their community.

Planning for wellbeing in schools involves consideration of four aspects;

1. Culture
2. Relationships
3. Policy and planning
4. The curriculum

positive relationships between teachers and students, and students and their peers, along with a sense of connectedness, are the key influences on a student’s sense of wellbeing while in school.

As with all new subject specifications and programmes the development was informed by extensive consultation and engagement with stakeholders.

The Junior Cycle Wellbeing programme will begin with 300 hours of timetabled engagement in 2017 and build up to 400 hours by 2020 as the new Junior Cycle is implemented fully in schools.
Questions - Written Answers

All the curriculum components of the Wellbeing curriculum provide opportunities for ongoing classroom based assessment and formative feedback. Reporting on students’ learning in Wellbeing happens in two different ways: reporting in first and second year, and reporting as part of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) at the end of third year.

Schools can plan a wellbeing programme without loss of teaching time for other subjects. Learning in CSPE, PE and SPHE is viewed as fundamental to learning about and for Wellbeing.

Introducing a Wellbeing programme should not result in students experiencing less time in PE, SPHE or CSPE than under current provision. For this reason, there is a minimum threshold of time which should be provided in each area. Schools have the flexibility to allocate more time to these areas in line with their priorities and students’ needs.

School Staff

199. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of instances of cover for double hip replacement that have been assessed as appropriate for critical illness cover with regard to the assessment by a company (details supplied) for critical illness cover for teachers in the ETBs; the acute operative surgical treatments accepted under circular number 0063/2015 critical illness protocol appendix 3; the funding provided to the company by his Department to provide this service; if the company is the only occupational health care service operating this scheme for staff employed by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21603/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The provisions of the sick leave scheme and operating procedures are set out in the “Terms & Conditions of Employment for Registered Teachers in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools” and the “Standard Operating Procedures Manual” both of which are published on my Department’s website.

Teachers are not employed by my Department but are employed by School Boards of Management or Education and Training Boards. The decision on whether to apply the critical illness provisions is one for the employer following advice from the Occupational Health Service provider. The medical condition must have at least one of the following characteristics to qualify on medical grounds:

- Acute life threatening physical illness
- Chronic progressive illness, with well-established potential to reduce life expectancy
- Major physical trauma ordinarily requiring corrective acute operative surgical treatment
- In-patient hospital care of two consecutive weeks or greater (In the case of pregnancy related illness (natural or assisted pregnancy), the requirement for hospitalisation of two consecutive weeks will be reduced to two or more consecutive days of in-patient hospital/clinic care)

A teacher may appeal the medical decision in accordance with the procedures set out in the “Standard Operating Procedures Manual”.

My Department does not hold data on the medical conditions of teachers employed by Education and Training Boards.

The current Occupational Health service provider for registered teachers and special needs assistants employed in recognised schools is Medmark Occupational Healthcare who, following a successful tendering process, was awarded a fixed-price contract for this service. The Oc-
cupational Health Service encompasses health management and incorporates pre-employment health assessments, sickness absence management referrals, medical assessments of fitness for work and ill health retirement assessments and appeals.

The service is provided at a total cost of €935,000 (ex VAT) per annum

Cóiríocht Scoile

200. D’fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna an bhfuil sé i gceist aige deontas breise a chur ar fáil do Scoil Náisiúnta Thír an Fhia, Leitir Móir, Contae na Gaillimhe le go bhféadfaí athchóiriú a dhéanamh ar an gclós scóile ionas go mbeidh an clós feilíúnach do mhac léinn ar a bhfuil míchumas (sonrai leis seo); má tá, cén uair a chuirfear an deontas seo ar fáil; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [21619/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Mar is eol don Teachta, tá cistiú don scol i dtrácht ceadaithé ag mo Roinn chun seomraí ranga breise a chur ar fáil. Beidh mo Roinn i dteagmháil go direach leis an scol i dtrácht maidir leis an gceist a tharraing an Teachta anuas.

Schools Building Projects Status

201. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of progress for a new school build (details supplied); when it is expected a design team will be appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21635/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As the Deputy is aware, a building project for the school to which he refers is included in the Department’s 6-Year Construction Programme. In the context of progressing the building project, my Department has undertaken a site visit to the school. My Department is currently considering the options available to meet the school’s accommodation needs and my Department will be in further contact with the school’s Patron when this has been determined.

Schools Building Projects Status

202. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of each new school build and school extension currently in progress across the north Kildare constituency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21636/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department does not hold the details requested by the geographical area to which he refers.

However, the current status of the 29 school building projects in County Kildare that are included on the Department’s 6 Year Capital Programme is outlined in the attached table.

The Capital Programme also provides for devolved funding for additional classrooms to schools where an immediate enrolment need has been identified or where an additional teacher has been appointed. Responsibility for delivering such projects rests with the individual school authority.
Details of such funding approved in all schools, including Kildare, is available on my Department’s website www.education.ie and this is updated regularly.

### Capital Programme – Major projects being progressed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Roll No</th>
<th>School Name</th>
<th>School type</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>16706G</td>
<td>St Joseph’s NS, Kilcock</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Stage 2B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>70680U</td>
<td>St Conleth’s VS, Newbridge</td>
<td>Post-Primary</td>
<td>Under construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>70700A</td>
<td>Maynooth Community College</td>
<td>Post-Primary</td>
<td>Stage 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>76193Q</td>
<td>New Maynooth Community College</td>
<td>Post-Primary</td>
<td>Stage 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>19277A</td>
<td>St Anne’s Special School, The Curragh</td>
<td>Special School</td>
<td>Stage 2A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>19675N</td>
<td>St Brigid’s NS, Kilcullen</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>76194S</td>
<td>Naas Community College</td>
<td>Post-Primary</td>
<td>Stage 2B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>76253I</td>
<td>Celbridge Community College</td>
<td>Post-Primary</td>
<td>Early Architectural Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>20257C</td>
<td>Scoil Naomh Padraig, Celbridge</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Early Architectural Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>15957D</td>
<td>Rathangan BNS</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Substantial completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>61702D</td>
<td>St Paul’s Post-Primary School</td>
<td>Post-Primary</td>
<td>Stage 2A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>15040T</td>
<td>Mercy Convent, Naas</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Stage 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>18288B</td>
<td>Scoil Mhichil Naofa, Athy</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Stage 2B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>20428D</td>
<td>Gaelseocil Mhic Aodha, Kildare Town</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Under construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>19796C</td>
<td>St Patrick’s NS, Clane</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Stage 2B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>15769C16707I</td>
<td>Scoil Eimhinn Naofa &amp; St Peter’s NS, Monasterevan</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Stage 2B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>17341U</td>
<td>Maynooth BNS</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Stage 2B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>17872F</td>
<td>St Conleth’s &amp; St Mary’s, Newbridge</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Stage 2A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>Roll No</td>
<td>School Name</td>
<td>School type</td>
<td>Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>17873H</td>
<td>St Conleth’s Infant School</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Stage 2A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>17254C</td>
<td>St Corban’s BNS</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Early Architectural Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>18988G</td>
<td>St Raphael’s Special School</td>
<td>Special School</td>
<td>Site required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>19455W</td>
<td>St Mark’s Special School, Newbridge</td>
<td>Special School</td>
<td>Early Architectural Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>20292E</td>
<td>Maynooth ETNS</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Early Architectural Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>61690W</td>
<td>Cross &amp; Passion, Kilcullen</td>
<td>Post-Primary</td>
<td>Early Architectural Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>70650L</td>
<td>Athy Community College</td>
<td>Post-Primary</td>
<td>Early Architectural Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>70720G</td>
<td>St Farnan’s Post-Primary School</td>
<td>Post-Primary</td>
<td>Early Architectural Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>13902O</td>
<td>Hewetson NS</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Early Architectural Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>61681V</td>
<td>Patrician Post-Primary, Newbridge</td>
<td>Post-Primary</td>
<td>Early Architectural Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>61730I</td>
<td>St Mary’s Girls Post-Primary School, Naas</td>
<td>Post-Primary</td>
<td>Early Architectural Planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question No. 203 answered with Question No. 173.

**Schools Building Projects Status**

204. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the construction of a new school (details supplied); when it is expected that the school community can move into the new building; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21731/17]

205. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the construction of a new school (details supplied); when he expects the school community to be able to move into the new building; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21734/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 204 and 205 together. The schools referred to by the Deputy are currently under construction and the projects are due to be completed by the end of July 2017. The new school buildings will be handed over immediately following completion.

*Question No. 206 answered with Question No. 198.*
207. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a SNA will be approved for a person (details supplied); his plans regarding the lack of places in mainstream schools for children with autism in Kilkenny city; his further plans to provide funding and other supports to deal with this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21747/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** 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.

The Department of Education and Skills considers it essential that in assessing the need for special class placements the individual needs of children should be properly assessed to determine the appropriateness of special class provision for them.

Some students, although academically able to access the curriculum in mainstream, may find it too difficult to manage full-time placement there. This can be due to significant difficulties in areas such as behaviour or sensory needs which have not been ameliorated, even with appropriate intervention, in mainstream.

Enrolment in an ASD special class should only be considered where it has been demonstrated that a student requires the support of a special class because he/she is unable to learn effectively in a mainstream class for most or all of the school day even with appropriate supports.

The National Council for Special Education (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 where there is an identified need.

The NCSE continues to establish additional special classes to support children with Special Educational Needs including Autism as required. Since 2011 the NCSE has increased the number of such classes by over 50% from 548 in 2011 to 1153 across the country now, of which 889 are Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) special classes.

The NCSE, in looking to open special classes, must take into account the present and future potential need for such classes, taking particular account of the educational needs of the children concerned. The NCSE will also take account of location and sustainability in looking to establish special classes in certain areas.

With regard to the area mentioned by the Deputy, there are currently 17 ASD special classes in Kilkenny City and County. Of these, 2 are ASD early intervention classes, 9 are primary ASD special classes and 6 are post primary ASD special classes. There are also 5 special schools in the area.

The NCSE has informed my Department that they are satisfied that there are sufficient ASD special class placements to meet existing demand in the area. The NCSE will continue to engage with schools in the Kilkenny area in relation to opening additional special classes as required.

Parents/Guardians who may need advice or are experiencing difficulties in locating a school
placement should contact their local Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) who can assist in identifying an appropriate educational placement for their child. Contact details are available on www.ncse.ie.

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

The NCSE operates within my Department’s criteria in allocating such support, which is set out in Circular 0030/2014.

All schools were asked to apply for SNA support for the 2017/18 school year by 6th April 2017. The NCSE continues to accept applications in recognition that enrolments may not have been completed or where assessments were not completed. The NCSE will consider these applications and make further allocations to schools in respect of valid applications which have been received to September.

The NCSE will advise all schools of their allocations for SNA support for 2017/18 before the end of the current school year.

As the Deputy’s question relates to the allocation of SNA support by the NCSE to an individual school/student, I have referred this question to the NCSE for their consideration and direct reply to the Deputy.

**Special Educational Needs Service Provision**

208. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the action he is taking to address the lack of places at primary and secondary level for students with autism in counties Carlow and Kilkenny; if he will appoint an official from his Department to assist individual families to source places or provide alternatives; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21749/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** 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.

My Department considers it essential that in assessing the need for special class placements the individual needs of children should be properly assessed to determine the appropriateness of special class provision for them.

Some students, although academically able to access the curriculum in mainstream, may find it too difficult to manage full-time placement there. This can be due to significant difficulties in areas such as behaviour or sensory needs which have not been ameliorated, even with appropriate intervention, in mainstream.
Enrolment in an ASD special class should only be considered where it has been demonstrated that a student requires the support of a special class because he/she is unable to learn effectively in a mainstream class for most or all of the school day even with appropriate supports.

Students enrolling in ASD Special Classes must have a report from a relevant professional or team of professionals (for example, psychologist, speech and language therapist, psychiatrist) stating that:

- S/he has ASD
- S/he has significant learning needs that require the support of a special class setting and the reasons why this is the case.

The National Council for Special Education (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 where there is an identified need.

The NCSE continues to establish additional special classes to support children with Special Educational Needs including Autism as required. Since 2011 the NCSE has increased the number of such classes by over 50% from 548 in 2011 to 1153 across the country now, of which 889 are Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) special classes.

The NCSE, in looking to open special classes, must take into account the present and future potential need for such classes, taking particular account of the educational needs of the children concerned. The NCSE will also take account of location and sustainability in looking to establish special classes in certain areas.

With regard to the areas mentioned by the Deputy, there are currently 24 ASD special classes in County Carlow. Of these, 5 are ASD early intervention classes, 11 are primary ASD special classes and 8 are post primary ASD special classes. There are also 2 special schools in County Carlow. Regarding County Kilkenny, there are currently 17 ASD special classes. 2 are ASD early intervention classes, 9 are primary ASD special classes and 6 are post primary ASD special classes. There are also 5 special schools in County Kilkenny.

The NCSE has informed my Department that they are generally satisfied that there are sufficient ASD special class placements to meet existing demand in both areas. The NCSE will continue to engage with schools in the areas concerned in relation to opening additional special classes as required.

Parents/Guardians who may need advice or are experiencing difficulties in locating a school placement should contact their local Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) who can assist in identifying an appropriate educational placement for their child. Contact details are available on www.ncse.ie.

School Admissions

209. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans following the recently concluded consultation on school admissions; his further plans to publish the results; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21789/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The public consultation process referred to by the Deputy on the role of denominational religion in the school admission...
process and possible approaches for making changes ran from 24 January to 20 March 2017.

The 8 week phase of receiving written submissions formed part of a broader consultation process which will include additional steps, including any follow-up consultation that is required, collation of responses and development of next steps.

My Department has begun the process of examining the submissions and formulating next steps. Clearly I will not make any decisions around next steps until such time as all of the submissions have been examined and considered.

Submissions may be published in due course on my Department’s website subject to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Acts.

Questions Nos. 210 to 212, inclusive, answered with Question No. 198.

Schools Property

213. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when he will approve the sale of an old school building (details supplied) in County Dublin; if he will investigate this delay and take the necessary steps to ensure approval is forthcoming; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21850/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Officials from my Department are currently considering a request received in respect of the property referred to by the Deputy and will be in contact with the relevant property owners as soon as possible.

Schools Building Projects Status

214. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position in relation to the proposed provision of the walkway between two locations (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21851/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The school referred to by the Deputy was allocated a grant in June 2016 to assist with the provision of a walkway which is being part funded by two other parties. The school authority have since sought additional funding from my Department in respect of consultant fees for the project.

My Department’s Planning and Building Unit requested additional information in March and as soon as this information is received and considered the school authority will be informed of the outcome.

Schools Building Projects Status

215. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the timeline for the building of a school (details supplied) in Corduff, Dublin 15; if the funding is in place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21852/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The major school building project to which the Deputy refers is at an advanced stage of architectural planning - Stage 2(b). All statutory approvals have been secured.
However, following the necessary appointment of a replacement Mechanical & Electrical Engineer the Design Team in association with the newly appointed Engineer are working on a revised M&E report which will be submitted to the Department when it is completed. My Department will revert to the school with regard to the further progression of the project following consideration of that report.

National Educational Psychological Service Data

216. **Deputy Maria Bailey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of scheme for commissioning psychological assessments, SCPA, assessments completed for the academic year 2015-16 for which certification of completion of assessment forms have been submitted by school principals between 6 September 2015 and 30 September 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21906/17]

**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.

Schools availing of the SCPA scheme arrange and schedule the assessment with the SCPA psychologist and the parents of the pupil concerned and, when completed, the Principal submits a form to NEPS certifying that the assessment has been satisfactorily conducted and the assessment report submitted to the school and parents according to the guidelines provided for the scheme. Based on this submission NEPS make the appropriate payment to the SCPA psychologist. In the period specified by the Deputy in her question some 1,914 payments were made based on forms returned by schools.

Schools Refurbishment

217. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the refurbishment works on a school at a location (details supplied); when this building will be available for use by a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21915/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** It is my Department’s intention to relocate the school referred to by the Deputy to their proposed new location as their long-term permanent accommodation. The new proposed building will, however, require significant remediation works and my Department will be in further contact with the Patron on this matter.

In the interim, the school has been advised to extend the lease at its current location to June 2018.

Teaching Council of Ireland

218. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a reply will issue to a person (details supplied) who is awaiting a Teaching Council number; and if he will
make a statement on the matter. [21977/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Under the Teaching Council Acts the Teaching Council is, since 2006, the statutory body for the registration of teachers in the State.

Accordingly, inquires regarding registration should be made to the Teaching Council.

### Residential Institutions Redress Scheme

219. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department has failed to reach an arrangement with Caranua regarding office accommodation and rent; and his views on the suggestion that Caranua pay over €750,000 from the survivors fund for office space to which survivors have no access. [22011/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Caranua is an independent statutory body and would, therefore, be expected to procure its own accommodation and meet any related expenses. Section 30 of the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Act 2012 provides that all expenses incurred by Caranua under the Act “shall, subject to the approval of the Board, be charged on the investment account to the benefit of the Agency”. The investment account is operated on Caranua’s behalf by the NTMA and is funded by contributions from religious congregations.

Caranua has been provided with accommodation at a property in central Dublin assigned to the Department of Education and Skills by the Office of Public Works (OPW). It is understood that the lease on the property is expiring shortly and is not being renewed. Caranua will therefore have to vacate the premises later this year. It is also understood that OPW is in the process of finalising alternative accommodation arrangements for Caranua.

### Special Educational Needs Service Provision

220. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding autism units in schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22014/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** 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.

This policy has been informed by published research, including the Report of the Task Force on Autism (2001), the Evaluation of Educational Provision for Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) (2006) and the NCSE’s policy advice on Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (2016).

Almost 18,000 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

- 26% to attend special classes in mainstream primary and post-primary schools, and

- 11% to attend special schools.

My Department considers it essential that in assessing the need for special class placements the individual needs of children should be properly assessed to determine the appropriateness of special class provision for them.

Some students, although academically able to access the curriculum in mainstream, may find it too difficult to manage full-time placement there. This can be due to significant difficulties in areas such as behaviour or sensory needs which have not been ameliorated, even with appropriate intervention, in mainstream.

Enrolment in an ASD special class should only be considered where it has been demonstrated that a student requires the support of a special class because he/she is unable to learn effectively in a mainstream class for most or all of the school day even with appropriate supports.

Students enrolling in ASD Special Classes must have a report from a relevant professional or team of professionals (for example, psychologist, speech and language therapist, psychiatrist) stating that:

- S/he has ASD

- S/he has significant learning needs that require the support of a special class setting and the reasons why this is the case.

The National Council for Special Education (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 where there is an identified need.

The NCSE continues to establish additional special classes to support children with Special Educational Needs including Autism as required. Since 2011 the NCSE has increased the number of such classes by over 50% from 548 in 2011 to 1153 across the country now, of which 889 are Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) special classes.

The NCSE, in looking to open special classes, must take into account the present and future potential need for such classes, taking particular account of the educational needs of the children concerned. The NCSE will also take account of location and sustainability in looking to establish special classes in certain areas.

The NCSE has informed the Department of Educational and Skills that, in general, they are satisfied that there are sufficient ASD special class placements to meet existing demand.

The NCSE has not identified the need to establish ASD special classes in every school in the country and as such my Department has no plans to do.

My Department will continue to support the NCSE in opening ASD special classes in areas where there is an identified need.

**Student Grant Scheme**

221. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will
consider a change in policy to allow grant support and some other financial supports for persons that seek to change educational disciplines or career in order to find employment, even if the level of education in the new discipline or subject they wish to take has already been attained in another discipline; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22030/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): To satisfy the terms and conditions of the student grant scheme in relation to progression, a student must be moving from year to year within a course, having successfully completed the previous year or be transferring from one course to another, where the award for the subsequent course is of a higher level than the previous course.

The objective of this policy is to help as many students as possible to obtain one qualification at each level of study. This is necessary given the level of demand on the student grant budget from first time students and students that are progressing with their studies to a higher level.

Students who don’t qualify for support, may be able to claim tax relief at the standard rate of tax in respect of tuition fees paid for approved courses at approved colleges of higher education including approved undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Further information on this tax relief is available from the Revenue Commissioners.

Another option for prospective students is Springboard which provides free, flexible reskilling and upskilling opportunities at higher education level for unemployed and previously self-employed people in areas of emerging skills needs. Also included under the Springboard+ banner are ICT conversion courses. Further details on Springboard+ courses and eligibility are available at www.springboardcourses.ie

Motor Tax

222. Deputy Imelda Munster asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his plans to review, revise or change the current motor tax regime, in view of recent reports that the current model which is targeted at reducing CO2 emissions has had the unintended effect of increasing emissions of nitrogen oxides and PM2.5 and in view of public health concerns and concerns surrounding EU 2020 emissions targets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21987/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): There are no plans currently in train to change the basis of charging for motor tax. However, policy in the area may be subject to review at any time in the context of wider fiscal or environmental policy considerations, such as the Clean Air Strategy currently being developed by my colleague, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

Capital Assistance Scheme

223. Deputy Jan O'Sullivan asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the value of funding ring-fenced under the capital assistance scheme to provide housing for young persons exiting State care in 2017 and 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22027/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): There is no ring-fenced amount set aside under the Capital Assistance Scheme in relation to young persons exiting State care. My Department is working with the Department
of Children and Youth Affairs on the promotion of suitable projects for this particular housing need and the approach that is being followed is to monitor the demand and requirement for such housing and to meet the need from within the funding provision available under the Capital Assistance Scheme.

The funding provision for the Capital Assistance Scheme for 2017 is €66 million and good funding availability is also anticipated for 2018, as part of the €5.35 billion secured under Rebuilding Ireland. It is preferable that the Capital Assistance Scheme funding is made available on a demand-led basis to ensure it is used to the maximum, but with a commitment to respond to the needs identified in respect of housing for young persons exiting State care.

Water Charges Administration

224. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the safeguards in place to stop households being charged twice for water charges in circumstances in which a person (details supplied) operates a business from within their house which does not have a water supply; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21396/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Since 1 January 2014, Irish Water has statutory responsibility for all aspects of water services planning, delivery and operation at national, regional and local levels. The Water Services (No. 2) Act 2013 provides that Irish Water shall collect charges from its customers in receipt of water services provided by it. The Act also provides that responsibility for the independent economic regulation of the water sector is assigned to the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) and the CER has been given statutory responsibility for protecting the interests of customers. Domestic water charges have been suspended since 1 July 2016.

Any business connected to a public water supply is liable for charges as a non-domestic customer. If the premises is also used for domestic purposes it is termed a mixed-use customer. From 1 January 2015 mixed-use customers were billed separately for their domestic and non-domestic water services and had a separate account number for each. Mixed-use customers were charged for the domestic component of their usage based on occupancy. It should be noted that the charging arrangements for the non-domestic component of the customer’s water use remain the same as operated by local authorities in 2013. In the case of a metered customer, the volume to be charged at the non-domestic rate is the metered volume in excess of the current local authority domestic allowance.

The CER is progressing a review of all aspects of non-domestic water tariffs and in conjunction with Irish Water will establish an enduring non-domestic tariff framework. The CER has recently published an information note informing customers and interested parties about the project and will shortly engage in a period of public consultation on the enduring tariff framework for non-domestic water and/or wastewater customers of Irish Water.

Irish Water has established a dedicated team to deal with representations and queries from public representatives. The team can be contacted via email at oireachtasmembers@water.ie or by telephone on a dedicated number, 1890 578 578.

Furthermore, the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) has a statutory responsibility to provide a complaints resolution service to Irish Water customers who have an unresolved dispute with the utility. A Customer Care Team has been set up within the CER to deal directly with customers who have complaints. Further information about CER’s complaints procedure
Approved Housing Bodies

225. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the total allocation of funding his Department and all local authorities have given to each individual approved housing body in each of the past ten years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21513/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** There are a range of funding and delivery mechanisms available to local authorities to deliver social housing supports in partnership with Approved Housing Bodies, i.e. through the Capital Assistance Scheme, the Capital Loans and Subsidy Scheme, the Communal Facilities Scheme, the Approved Housing Body Mortgage to Rent Scheme, the Capital Advance Leasing Facility and the Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme. The funding under these programmes is provided directly to local authorities, who in turn, advance the funding to Approved Housing Bodies, as appropriate.

The funding provided by my Department since 2007 to local authorities in respect of the housing programmes listed above is set out in the following table. The data for 2015 and 2016 includes amounts which were self-funded by certain local authorities from surplus Local Property Tax receipts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2016 €m</th>
<th>2015 €m</th>
<th>2014 €m</th>
<th>2013 €m</th>
<th>2012 €m</th>
<th>2011 €m</th>
<th>2010 €m</th>
<th>2009 €m</th>
<th>2008 €m</th>
<th>2007 €m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>154.77</td>
<td>148.55</td>
<td>111.38</td>
<td>118.02</td>
<td>138.10</td>
<td>103.16</td>
<td>179.13</td>
<td>232.88</td>
<td>221.28</td>
<td>153.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rural Development Policy

226. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the timeframe for the publication of rural housing guidelines in view of the European Court of Justice ruling; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21660/17]

228. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his plans and a timeframe for the review of the rural planning guidelines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21601/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 226 and 228 together.

Arising from the 2013 Judgement of the European Court of Justice referred to, my Department is currently engaged in consultations with planning authorities regarding potential modifications required to the 2005 Planning Guidelines on Sustainable Rural Housing, with a view to ensuring that rural housing policies and objectives contained in county development plans comply with Article 43 (Freedom of Movement of People) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

A Working Group, comprising officials from planning authorities and my Department, has been established to review and revise the guidelines and is due to hold its first meeting this month. On conclusion of this review, my Department will be engaging with the European Commission on proposed changes to the Guidelines, with a view to issuing updated Guidelines to planning authorities on the matter in due course. When finalised, in the second half of 2017,
the revised guidelines will be issued under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Under the provisions of the Act, planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála are required to have regard to guidelines issued under section 28 in the performance of their functions generally under the Planning Acts.

Local Authority Housing Data

227. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the number of local authority rented dwellings in 2015 directly rented by the local authority, managed by a housing agency or under HAP. [21691/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The following table provides data on the total number of dwellings let by local authorities and the number of active Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) tenancies at end 2015:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dwellings directly let by local authorities</td>
<td>137,937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAP tenancies</td>
<td>5,853</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In relation to homes provided by Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs), there are 546 AHBs in Ireland, ranging from small voluntary-led, community-based organisations to large-scale national organisations. Together these bodies provide in excess of 30,000 social homes. It is a matter for individual local authorities to engage with AHBs in relation to letting properties.

*Question No. 228 answered with Question No. 226.*

Mortgage to Rent Scheme Data

229. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 126 of 25 January 2017, the number of households on the mortgage to rent scheme, by local authority; the number of applications pending approval; the number of applications rejected in 2017; the grounds for rejection; if his Department’s review of the scheme is now available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21622/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Since the introduction of the Mortgage to Rent (MTR) Scheme for borrowers of private commercial lending institutions in 2012, a total of 3,672 cases have been submitted under the scheme to the end of March 2017. Of the 3,672 cases submitted, 2,816 were ineligible or terminated during the process. Of the remaining cases submitted, 235 have been completed and the remaining 621 are being actively progressed.

The Housing Agency publishes, on a quarterly basis, detailed statistical information on the operation of the MTR scheme, including the number of cases that have been terminated and the reasons for same and a breakdown of cases per County. This information is available on the Agency’s website at the following link:

https://www.housingagency.ie/our-services/housing-supply-services/mortgage-to-rent.aspx

The reasons why a case has not progressed 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.

I published a Review of the Mortgage to Rent Scheme for borrowers of commercial private lending institutions on 8 February 2017 which contains a number of actions to make the MTR process quicker, more transparent, easier to navigate for borrowers and ultimately, more accessible to more households in mortgage distress. The Review is available on the Rebuilding Ireland website at the following link: http://rebuildingireland.ie/install/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Review-of-the-Mortgage-to-Rent-Scheme-February-2017.pdf.

My Department and the Housing Agency have begun implementing each of the actions set out in the Review and I am confident that these changes will make a significant impact to those households who can benefit from access to the scheme.

Commercial Rates

230. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the main headings of his proposals to reform the system of commercial rates; if there is a timeframe for the introduction of the legislation required; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21748/17]

**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. The levying and collection of rates are matters for each individual local authority.

Commercial rates form an important element of the funding of all local authorities. However, the legislative basis for the levying of rates is spread over a number of enactments, some dating back to the 19th century. Many of the provisions are outdated and not suitable for business trends in the modern era. My Department has developed legislative proposals to modernise and consolidate the legislation governing commercial rates. The main issues being addressed in the General Scheme include; the consolidation of over 20 separate pieces of legislation dealing with commercial rates into a single enactment; improved enforcement powers for local authorities to collect rates; provisions to allow the local authority to introduce rates alleviation schemes to support national and local policy objectives; and provisions for temporary abatement for vacant premises.

In this regard, the Government approved the drafting of a Rates Bill at its meeting on 11 April 2017. These proposals will be subject to pre-legislative scrutiny in due course, the outcome of which will be considered in the detailed drafting of the legislation, which will be advanced as quickly as possible.

Local Authority Boundaries

231. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if the county council administrative boundary of counties Kilkenny and Waterford corresponds with their county boundary. [21774/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The statutory provisions relating to local government areas and local authorities are
set out at sections 10 and 11 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended.

Section 11 provides that the administrative area of each local authority is the relevant county, city, or city and county, as set out in Schedule 5 to the Act, including County Kilkenny in the case of Kilkenny County Council, and Waterford City and County in the case of Waterford City and County Council.

Local Authority Boundaries

232. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government further to his statement of 3 April 2017, which suggested the need that new management solutions are in place to facilitate the cohesive expansion of Waterford city which will include areas of south Kilkenny, if this will mean a new joint Waterford/ Kilkenny management structure for the area in question and not an administrative boundary change. [21775/17]

239. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he will change the administrative boundary as per the commentary of Senator Paudie Coffey on a radio station (details supplied). [21782/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 232 and 239 together.

I refer to the reply to Question No 474 of 2 May 2017. As stated, I will address all relevant issues arising from the boundary report on Waterford, and from other recent and forthcoming reports on local government arrangements, as part of an overall report on local government matters which I will be submitting to Government and the Oireachtas pursuant to the Programme for Partnership Government.

County Development Plans

233. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government further to his stated ambition for Waterford city to double in size by 2040, if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there is a strategic plan in place, adopted by both Kilkenny and Waterford local authorities, to provide for Waterford city to double in size, with 42% of the planned growth provided for in Kilkenny. [21776/17]

234. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his views on whether Kilkenny County Council has not in any way impeded the growth of Waterford city, in view of the fact all of Kilkenny’s plans correspond with the adopted PLUTS. [21777/17]

235. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the fact that as the lead authority and the gateway city of the south-east region, Waterford has ignored Kilkenny’s many requests to set up the implementation group to progress implementation of the PLUTS. [21778/17]

236. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the fact that Waterford County Council, despite giving assurances to the south-east region authority as far back as 2012 that it would meet its obligations under the national retail planning guidelines published by his department to prepare a joint retail strategy, has not convened meetings with the adjoining authority to progress preparation of the strategy. [21779/17]
237. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he will use his powers under the Planning and Development Act 2000 and the Local Government Act 2001 as referenced by the boundary committee, and put the PLUTS and or its successor on a statutory footing or require a joint plan be prepared and adopted by both authorities. [21780/17]

238. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the five local authorities in the south east have endorsed a joint submission to the national planning framework for the south east Waterford city east and that all five local authorities in the region share the same objectives in relation to the growth of Waterford city and the priorities to deliver same. [21781/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): I propose to take Questions Nos. 233 to 238, inclusive, together.

As part of the preparation of the new National Planning Framework (NPF), entitled Ireland 2040: Our Plan, extensive pre-draft public consultation has been conducted on the Issues and Choices paper, published on 2 February, which attracted over 3,300 submissions, including a joint submission from the five local authorities in the south east region to which the Deputy refers. Their submission and others received highlight the enhanced role that the development of Waterford city should play in a wider national context.

My Department is currently reviewing all relevant submissions to inform the preparation of the draft NPF for further consideration by Government in the coming months before being formally circulated for formal consultation over the Summer, with the aim of finalising the Framework before the end of the year, as I have previously outlined.

In relation to the implementation issues raised by the Deputy with regard to the non-statutory Planning Land Use and Transport Strategy (PLUTS) for Waterford and the initiation of a regional retail strategy for Waterford and its environs, as recommended in the Planning Guidelines on Retail Planning, issued by the then Minister in April 2012, I understand that previous efforts to prepare a joint retail strategy between Waterford County Council, Waterford City Council and Kilkenny County Council did not progress due to a lack of agreement between the parties.

With regard to the issues raised by the Deputy in relation to the broader strategic positioning of Waterford and the roles of the relevant local authorities in activating the potential of the city through collaborative efforts, my Department is aware of the level of ambition in current statutory plans, which aim for a city population of 80,000 persons rather than the 100,000 people suggested by the Deputy and I can confirm that the importance of Waterford in regional and national terms has been well recognised by my Department and by Government. For example, the North Quays in Waterford have been designated as a Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) in 2016, only the second SDZ designated outside Dublin.

In addition, the Government’s Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021 has committed to providing investment for certain enabling works in key areas. The next stage of the SDZ process will be the publication of a draft planning scheme for public consultation which I am expecting later this year. Through this designation and the subsequent planning scheme, there is a unique opportunity to unlock the considerable potential of the North Quays to drive significant economic development within the heart of Waterford City.

The SDZ designation, coupled to the recent announcement of €4 million ERDF funding for urban regeneration projects within the City and previous National Development Plan fund-
ed investment in the M9 motorway, public transport upgrades and water services infrastructure, demonstrates the commitment by Government to activating the potential of Waterford and other regional cities and this will be further elaborated on in the forthcoming National Planning Framework. I believe that a shared funding commitment by both Waterford City and County Council and Kilkenny County Council to local infrastructure enhancements to projects such as the SDZ will be a key enabler.

Building on the broader national level investment context both in previous years and into the future as well as the National Planning Framework, I believe that we must now examine all potential mechanisms to bring the relevant stakeholders, including local authorities, together to put in place the strategic local planning and infrastructure delivery and funding mechanisms necessary to properly harness the under-utilised development potential in Waterford, now that key national enablers for its development such as access have been substantially improved. I have also indicated that I will be addressing relevant local government issues in the report to be submitted to Government and the Oireachtas under the Programme for Partnership Government in mid-2017.

Finally, in relation to my powers under the Planning Act to bring local authorities together in respect of their forward planning functions and the question raised by the Deputy in relation to putting the PLUTS on a statutory footing, there is no requirement for the Minister to do so. Indeed, the appropriate fora for the adoption of such PLUTS within a statutory context are the relevant local authorities, through the inclusion of such commitments as policy in their respective Development Plans. More widely, these are also matters more properly addressed in the context of the implementation aspects of the National Planning Framework, whose progression is a major priority for my Department and Government later this year.

Question No. 239 answered with Question No. 232.

Local Authority Boundaries

240. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the detail of the process involved and the legislation which covers the process for changing the administrative boundary of a county council. [21783/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I refer to the reply to Question 259 14 February 2017. The legislation governing local authority boundary alterations is set out in Part V of the Local Government Act 1991. As specified in section 31(1)(a) of the Act, alterations of the boundaries between local authorities may be made by Ministerial Order, but any such Order would require approval of both Houses of the Oireachtas.

Commencement of Legislation

241. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his plans to commence section 28(1) of the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016. [21792/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon**
Coveney): I am proposing to make certain amendments to section 28 of the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016 relating to the extension of duration of certain planning permissions within the Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2016, which is currently progressing through the Oireachtas. It is intended that this Bill will be enacted before the Oireachtas Summer recess, which will enable me to consider commencing section 28 of the 2016 Act, as amended.

Capital Assistance Scheme

242. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the mechanism for applying for the CAS scheme; the total amount available in 2017 under this scheme; and the available sum for County Kildare for 2017. [21815/17]

243. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if Kildare County Council has applied under the CAS scheme in 2017. [21816/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 242 and 243 together.

Applications to deliver new social housing under the Capital Assistance Scheme should be made by an Approved Housing Body (AHB) to the relevant local authority. As with all social housing projects, it is a matter for the local authority, as the housing authority for the area, to prioritise projects on the basis of how they meet the area’s housing need.

The 2017 funding provision for the Scheme nationally is €66 million. Financial allocations are not made to individual local authorities as funding delivery happens in line with project delivery. There are already over 1,000 new social homes approved for construction under the Capital Assistance Scheme and funding is drawn down by the local authorities and AHBs as these projects are advanced. As with all approved housing projects, I am keen to see them move forward and deliver the housing as quickly as possible.

So far this year, Kildare County Council has been given approval by my Department to acquire properties under the Capital Assistance Scheme for use for priority groups at various locations around the county. I anticipate other proposals will come forward from Kildare and other local authorities over the course of this year.

Housing Assistance Payments Data

244. Deputy Pat Deering asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the number of persons who availed of HAP by county; and the total amount paid to each county in 2016. [21818/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): There are currently over 21,000 households being supported by the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme in 31 local authority areas. The HAP scheme is funded through a combination of Exchequer monies and tenant differential rents collected in respect of HAP tenancies. The exchequer outturn for the HAP scheme in 2016 was in excess of €57 million. The majority of this funding supported the ongoing costs of tenancies established in 2015 that continued into 2016, and the costs of the 12,075 new households supported by the scheme in 2016. Budget 2017 has increased the Exchequer funding for the HAP scheme to €152.7 million, in
order to meet the continuing costs of existing HAP households, and the costs of the additional 15,000 households, targeted under Rebuilding Ireland, to be supported by HAP in 2017.

Limerick City and County Council provides a highly effective HAP transactional shared service on behalf of all local authorities. This HAP Shared Services Centre (SSC) manages all HAP related rental transactions for the tenant, local authority and landlord. Accordingly, my Department does not recoup individual local authorities in respect of HAP rental payments in their administrative areas but rather recoups all landlord cost via the HAP SSC. A breakdown of average HAP payments to landlords in each local authority area, and a breakdown of the number of households supported by HAP, including the number of Rent Supplement transfers, in each local authority area at 31 December 2016 is available on my Department’s website at the following link:


**VAT Rate Reductions**

245. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his views on reducing the VAT rate on professional fees to encourage greater use of professional services, such as architects, in the construction of extensions and one-off housing exempted under the building control regulations; his views on whether this would improve the quality of construction of residential dwellings; and if his Department has made submissions or had discussions with the Department of Finance in relation to this. [21900/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** It is important to note that one off housing is subject to building control regulations. However, the Building Control (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations provide the owners of such homes with an option to opt-out of statutory certification of compliance with building regulations if they wish to do so.

Building Control requirements are far from the most significant element of the overall costs of housing delivery. My Department carried out a review after the first twelve months of operation of the Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2014, which found that the new Assigned Certifier role could be achieved for approximately €3,800 per dwelling. The Society of Chartered Surveyors of Ireland published a report on ‘The Real Cost of New House Delivery’ (May 2016), which found professional fees accounted for approximately €5,500 or 2% of total costs, including Assigned Certifier and design work, which accords with my Department’s own calculations.

This represents good value for money and is a modest investment in overall quality in order to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Building Regulations. Taxation policy, including VAT policy, is a matter for my colleague the Minister for Finance.

**Architects Register**

246. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his views on whether there is an increasing shortage of architect practices located outside of large cities. [21901/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Gov-**
The Building Control Act 2007 provides for a statutory register of architects. This Act confers certain powers on the Minister in respect of the statutory system of registration for architects, such as the appointment of Chairpersons and certain ordinary members of the Admissions Board, the Appeals Board and the Technical Assessment Board. The Minister has no statutory role in relation to provision of architectural services beyond the powers in relation to registration conferred by this Act.

Architectural practices are private businesses and may establish their business wherever they see fit. Furthermore the location of an architectural practice does not preclude them from providing services in locations other than their place of establishment.

Construction Regulations

247. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his views on whether the use of latent defects insurance should be mandatory for all new residential constructions rather than voluntary as it is at present; and his plans to introduce legislative changes to mandate its use by developers and assigned certifiers. [21940/17]

248. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the level of use of latent defects insurance on new residential construction projects in each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017. [21941/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 247 and 248 together.

A number of companies operating in the Irish insurance market currently provide latent defects insurance cover in respect of new residential buildings. The Central Bank of Ireland is responsible for the prudential supervision of such undertakings authorised in Ireland. My Department has no function in relation to this aspect of the matter nor does it collect any statistics on the use of insurance. For consumers such products have the advantage of providing direct recourse from the insurer when problems arise rather than having to rely on the insurances of the builder/developer or other parties.

The recently transposed EU Solvency II Directive prohibits Member States from interfering in relation to the pricing or terms and conditions of insurance products. Therefore while it would technically be possible to introduce mandatory latent defects insurance, this could have a potentially inflationary impact on the cost of housing delivery. Furthermore mandatory insurance would not necessarily increase levels of compliance with Building Regulations, rather it would provide compensation and recourse where defects were identified after by homeowners after completion.

My Department has focussed on implementing reforms to ensure strong and effective regulation in the building control system and the construction industry. The building control reforms introduced provide insurance underwriters with sufficient confidence to cover risks at prices which are sustainable and which the market can bear.

Building Regulations Compliance

249. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the number of building construction projects inspected by local authorities in each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017. [21942/17]
Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): In relation to the Deputy’s request, the matters referred to are matters for local authorities, who are independent in the use of their statutory powers under the Building Control Acts 1990 - 2014. The Local Government Management Agency collected data on inspections carried out up to 2013 and published this information in the Service Indicators in Local Authorities reports from 2005 to 2013. These reports are available at http://www.lgma.ie/en/publication-category/service-indicator-reports-2004-2010.

Following the commencement of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the National Oversight & Audit Commission (NOAC) now collects and publishes this data. The Performance Indicators in Local Authorities reports for 2014 & 2015 are available at http://noac.ie/noac-reports/. The 2016 report will be published once it is finalised and the 2017 report will be made available in due course.

Departmental Bodies Establishment

250. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his plans to re-establish the building regulations advisory board; his views on whether it was a mistake by the previous Minister to disband this board; and his further views on whether it should be re-established. [21945/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): Section 14 of the Building Control Act 1990 provides for the establishment, at the Minister’s discretion, of a Building Regulations Advisory Body (BRAB) to advise the Minister on matters relating to building regulations.

The term of office of the last BRAB expired on 1 October 2012. The members of that BRAB were appointed for a term of office of five years from 14 June 2007 to 13 June 2012. A temporary extension to 1 October 2012 was granted to the existing members in light of the Building Control (Amendment) Regulations which were at an advanced stage of development at that time.

In accordance with Appendix IIb of the Government’s Public Service Reform Plan, published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in November 2011, the BRAB was listed as one of the forty six “Candidate Bodies for Critical Review by end June 2012”. The outcome of that review process was that the work of the Building Regulations Advisory Body was to be absorbed into my Department.

I have no plans to establish a new BRAB at this time.

Mortgage to Rent Scheme Data

251. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the number of properties which have been successfully purchased through the mortgage to rent scheme since it first launched in 2012, by county, in tabular form; if he will provide these data under both the approved housing body mortgage to rent scheme and the local authority mortgage to rent scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22018/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): 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 (LA-Mortgage-to-Rent). The other scheme provides for an
Approved Housing Body (AHB) to acquire ownership of a property with an unsustainable pri-
vate mortgage, which also enables the household to remain in their home as a social housing
tenant (AHB-Mortgage-to-Rent). Both schemes assist families with income difficulties whose
mortgages are unsustainable, and where there is little or no prospect of a significant change in
circumstances in the foreseeable future. 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 LA-Mortgage-to-Rent scheme transactions during its pilot phase
in Dublin City Council and Westmeath County Council in 2013 and annual transactions, broken
down by local authority, following national roll out of the scheme in 2014, is available on my
Department’s website at the following link:

local-authority-loan-activity.

Since the introduction of the Mortgage to Rent (MTR) Scheme for borrowers of private
commercial lending institutions in 2012, a total of 3,672 cases have been submitted under the
scheme to the end of March 2017. Of the 3,672 cases submitted, 2,816 were ineligible or ter-
minated during the process. Of the remaining cases submitted, 235 have been completed and
the remaining 621 are being actively progressed.

The Housing Agency publishes, on a quarterly basis, detailed statistical information on the
operation of the MTR scheme, including the number of cases that have been terminated and the
reasons for same and a breakdown of cases per County. This information is available on the
Agency’s website at the following link:

.aspx.

I published a Review of the Mortgage to Rent Scheme for borrowers of commercial pri-
vate lending institutions on 8 February 2017 which contains a number of actions to make the
MTR process quicker, more transparent, easier to navigate for borrowers and ultimately, more
accessible to more households in mortgage distress. The Review is available on the Rebuild-
ing Ireland website at the following link: http://rebuildingireland.ie/install/wp-content/up-

My Department and the Housing Agency have begun implementing each of the actions set
out in the Review and I am confident that these changes will make a significant impact to those
households who can benefit from access to the scheme.

**Building Regulations**

252. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Lo-
cal Government the formal powers, as defined in legislation or regulations, an assigned certifier
has to enter a site, inspect the works, inspect materials, take samples and do tests if they see fit.
[22041/17]

253. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Lo-
cal Government the statutory duties an assigned certifier has to enforce or report suspect prac-
tices to a local authority; and the statutory powers an assigned certifier has to stop construction
works, instigate enforcement proceedings and direct the builder or their agent to cease works.
254. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if it is legally permissible for a builder to enter into a contract with an assigned certifier which states that the certifier may not stop construction works for whatever reasons under the terms of their appointment. [22043/17]

255. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his views on whether under the current building control system there are incentives for an assigned certifier not to instigate enforcement proceedings or to direct a builder or their agents to cease works if they suspect breaches of building control regulations for fear of reputational damage or risks to future business on behalf of an assigned certifier. [22044/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 252 to 255, inclusive, together.

Under the Building Control Acts 1990 to 2014, primary responsibility for compliance with the requirements of the Building Regulations rests with the designers, builders and owners of buildings. Enforcement of the Building Regulations is a matter for the 31 local building control authorities who have extensive powers of inspection and enforcement in the event of breaches of the Building Control Regulations.

In response to the many building failures that have emerged in the past decade, my Department introduced the Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2014, which require greater accountability in relation to compliance with Building Regulations in the form of statutory certification of design and construction by registered construction professionals and builders, lodging of compliance documentation, mandatory inspections during construction and validation and registration of certificates.

Under the 2014 Regulations, owners are required to appoint an Assigned Certifier whose role, in conjunction with the builder and the project team, is to draw up and execute an appropriate inspection plan and to certify the building’s compliance with Building Regulations on completion. The Assigned Certifier undertakes to inspect, and to co-ordinate the inspection activities of others, during construction, and to certify the building or works on completion. The role of Assigned Certifier does not include responsibility for the supervision of any builder. Builders undertake to cooperate with the Assigned Certifier’s inspection plans and to jointly certify the building or works on completion. In effect, the statutory Certificate of Compliance on Completion certifies that a building is compliant with all relevant requirements of the Building Regulations.

Article 20G of the Building Control Regulations provides for a more detailed outline of the roles and responsibilities of the key personnel, including owners, designers, assigned certifiers and builders, through a code of practice known as the Code of Practice for Inspecting and Certifying Buildings and Works. That Code was produced in late 2014 and revised last year and is available on my Department’s website at: http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/2016-10-21_code_of_practice_for.inspecting_and.certifying.buildings_and.works_final_version.pdf.

The purpose of the Code of Practice is to provide guidance with respect to inspecting and certifying works or a building for compliance with the requirements of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations.

Where works or a building to which the Building Control Regulations apply are inspected
256. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the steps which have been taken to address the use of defective pipes by Irish Water; the scale of any such issues with defective pipes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22049/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Since 1 January 2014, Irish Water has statutory responsibility for all aspects of water services planning, delivery and operation at national, regional and local levels. Irish Water is responsible for water services infrastructure including water supply pipes or sewers extending from a waterworks or waste water works to the curtilage of a private property.

Irish Water has established a dedicated team to deal with representations and queries from public representatives. The team can be contacted via email at oireachtasmembers@water.ie or by telephone on a dedicated number, 1890 578 578.

257. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his plans to introduce an affordable housing scheme for persons within certain income bands who cannot afford to buy a home privately; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22052/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I have no plans at present to re-introduce an Affordable Housing Purchase Scheme because there are a range of measures being taken under the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness to increase housing supply overall, with the aim of creating a functioning and sustainable housing system which can meet housing demand at more affordable prices.

The plan is divided into five pillars, with each targeting a specific area of the housing system. Pillar 3, entitled Build More Homes, has a key objective of increasing the output of private housing to meet demand at affordable prices.

The opening up of state owned lands for the development of mixed-tenure housing, particularly in the major urban areas, where demand is greatest, is an important policy initiative. On 27 April 2017, I published details of some 2,000 hectares of land in public ownership, which has the potential to deliver up to 50,000 homes nationally. Full details of these sites can be accessed on the Rebuilding Ireland Housing Land Map at the following link: [http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/rebuilding-ireland-land-map/](http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/rebuilding-ireland-land-map/).

I have asked all local authorities to be innovative and proactive in developing these sites. The final model for each site will be the subject of careful consideration by the local authority concerned, the elected members included, who are best placed to know and provide for the housing need in their area. Indeed, the Dublin local authorities are well advanced in bringing large-scale sites forward for mixed tenure housing, with projects advertised that can deliver
circa 3,000 mixed-tenure homes in the Dublin City Council and South Dublin County Council areas alone.

Other measures being taken to increase the supply of housing include:

- €200 million Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund;
- National Treasury Management Agency financing of large-scale “on-site” infrastructure;
- Planning Reforms;
- Putting in place a National Planning Framework and land management actions;
- Efficient design and delivery methods to lower housing delivery costs;
- Measures to support construction innovation and skills;
- The enhanced supply of more affordable starter homes in key locations through a targeted rebate of development contributions in Dublin and Cork for housing supplied under certain price levels;
- New National Apartment Planning Guidelines, reducing the cost of apartment building;
- Changes to aspects of the operation of Strategic Development Zones to enable swifter adjustments to meet market requirements;
- A vacant sites levy.

Pillar 4 of the Rebuilding Ireland Plan, entitled ‘Improve the Rental Sector’, provided for the introduction of an 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. Lands held by local authorities in rent pressure zones are to be brought to market on a competitive tendering basis, with a view to leveraging the value of the land to deliver the optimum number of units for rent, targeting middle income households, in mixed tenure developments.

**Planning Issues**

258. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he will investigate the possibility of having the planning designation of a property, which was built with a planning designation of short-term holiday, changed to a full-time residence designation at the request of the owner and on the condition that the property fulfils all building regulations attached to a full-time residence designation with each property being decided on its own individual merits (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22060/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I have no proposals to change the existing position whereby a change in the use of a holiday home to permanent accommodation requires planning permission.

**Foreshore Licence Applications**

259. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community
and Local Government the procedures that are used in the screening of submissions received (details supplied); the parameters applied to make the selection; if the EIA and AA screening processes were not carried out prior to June 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[22078/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Formal Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening processes are undertaken by the Marine Licence Vetting Committee (MLVC) as part of the assessment of a foreshore licence/lease application, on foot of which a decision is made whether to seek an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening will focus on whether the project alone or in combination is likely to have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site in view of its conservation objectives.

The MLVC met to begin an assessment (including EIA and AA Screening processes) of the application concerned on 20 February 2017 and the process is on-going. There was no meeting of the MLVC for the purposes of assessing this application prior to June 2016. In this case, formal assessment of the application only began after the following:

1. The conclusion of all consultation periods (public and prescribed body);
2. Examination of each submission (550+) received throughout all public consultation periods and categorisation of the supporting statements or objections contained within each submission;
3. Provision of each submission (550+) and a summary of objections to the applicant;
4. Provision of a response by the applicant to each category of objection;
5. Examination of each submission received from a prescribed body, provision of those submissions to the applicant and receipt of the applicant’s response in each case.

The Marine Planning and Foreshore Unit in my Department does not screen submissions received under either the prescribed body or public consultation processes. All submissions received within the consultation period in relation to a particular application are taken into account in full in assessing the application.

All submissions received during the three public notice periods, including those from both the Public and the Prescribed Bodies and the responses by the applicant to the objections raised in the submissions, are being fully considered by the MLVC in assessing any potential environmental impact of the proposed development. A document categorising the objections received through the public consultation, the submissions received from both the prescribed bodies and through the public consultation, as well as the responses from the applicant can be viewed on my Department’s website at: http://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/foreshore/applications/marine-institute-spiddal.

**Property Tax Collection**

260. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the amount of local property tax collected by each local authority in 2016; the population of each local authority; the contribution each local authority made to the equalisation fund; the amount they received from the equalisation fund; the basis on which this is collected and distributed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22084/17]
Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): Local Property Tax (LPT) is collected and administered by the Revenue Commissioners and is remitted to the Central Fund. Since 2014, the Minister for Finance pays an equivalent to the amount collected in LPT into the Local Government Fund. The Revenue Commissioners publish LPT information including details of LPT collected in all local authority areas on their website at the following web link:


Following the recent publication of the results of Census 2016, details of the population of each local authority area in 2016 are available from the searchable database on the Central Statistics Office (CSO) website at the following web link: www.cso.ie/en/census.

Local retention of LPT began in 2015. Currently, 80% of the estimated LPT liability in each local authority area for a given year is retained in that area to fund public services, notwithstanding any local variation decisions. The remaining 20% of LPT is re-distributed to provide equalisation funding to those local authorities that have lower property tax bases, due to the variance in property values and density across the State. These amounts and subsequent distribution of equalisation funding in 2016 are published on my Department’s website at the following web link:


Equalisation is the process that ensures that every local authority’s LPT allocation is brought up to minimum funding level known as the LPT Baseline. The 2016 LPT baseline is linked to the General Purpose Grants allocated to local authorities from the Local Government Fund in 2014, immediately prior to the introduction of local retention. The shortfall between the 20% contribution from local authorities and the total amount required for equalisation is met by the Exchequer. In a challenging national fiscal situation, this is a significant investment by the State in local government. My Department keeps the LPT allocation mechanism under review to ensure equitable treatment for all local authorities. Matters relating to equalisation levels and allocation methods for future years will be reviewed as necessary and appropriate.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

261. Deputy Bobby Aylward asked the Minister for Social Protection the estimated amount it would cost the State to exclude maintenance payments from means assessment for social welfare payments; if he has previously investigated the feasibility of same; if he will consider this action as part of future budgets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21592/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Where a social welfare claimant is in receipt of maintenance payments from a spouse/partner, housing costs incurred by the social welfare claimant (e.g. rent or mortgage payments and/or home improvement loan) up to a maximum of €95.23 per week may be offset against the maintenance payment, with half the balance of the maintenance being assessed as means. These arrangements ensure that there is always an incentive to receive a maintenance payment. The cost of disregarding all maintenance received by a welfare claimant across all relevant schemes is not readily available.

Where a social welfare claimant is paying maintenance to another person, the means assessment of this maintenance paid varies by the type of social welfare scheme.

Social welfare legislation specifically provides that maintenance payments paid under a
separation order by recipients of certain social welfare schemes are to be deducted from any assessment of their income. This provision applies to the state pension non-contributory, widow/er’s and surviving civil partner’s non-contributory pension, carer’s allowance, one-parent family payment, and the blind pension.

In the case of claimants of other schemes, however, such as jobseeker’s allowance, disability allowance and supplementary welfare allowance, their means for social welfare purposes are their means before they meet any obligations they may have to pay maintenance i.e. no account is taken of such payments in assessing the means of the maintenance payer.

It is not possible to provide the cost of excluding maintenance payments made by social welfare claimants, as the relevant data are not available. Any change to the current arrangements would have to be considered in the overall policy and budgetary context.

**Disability Allowance Applications**

262. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason for the refusal of disability allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); the options available to the person following a refusal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21919/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** This gentleman submitted an application for disability allowance (DA) on 10 February 2017.

The application, based upon the evidence submitted, was refused as he was deemed to have means in excess of the statutory limit for his circumstances. He was notified in writing of this decision on 24 April 2017 and of his rights of review and appeal.

He requested a review of the decision by a deciding officer (DO) and submitted additional evidence for consideration. The review has now been concluded by a DO and the decision to refuse on means grounds has been confirmed. On 5 May 2017, he was notified of the outcome of this review. He was also advised of their right to appeal this decision to the independent social welfare appeals office.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Labour Activation Measures**

263. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Social Protection his short and long-term plans for the community employment and employment services and programmes, with particular reference to their benefits in rural areas; his plans for an increase or reduction in places on programmes in the short term; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21395/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** As the economic recovery takes hold and the overall level of unemployment continues to fall, the need to adapt employment programmes such as Community Employment (CE) to the changing circumstances, has become more apparent. With this in mind, my Department undertook an analysis of CE, which also looked at the other employment programmes. In this context, it is should also be borne in mind that the Government strongly supports the work being done through CE and the other employment programmes.

I have seen first-hand myself, over recent months, the vital role such schemes are playing in local communities, including supporting social services, across the entire country.
Recently the Government approved the implementation of a number of changes to the terms and conditions of participation on CE. The main purpose of these changes is to broaden the availability of CE to a greater number of people on the live register and to standardise other conditions around the length of time a person can participate on the programme.

The changes I am planning to introduce will see the general qualifying age for CE for those on the live register reduced from 25 to 21 years. It will also be easier for previous participants, who have exhausted their CE entitlement, to requalify as participation prior to the year 2007 will be disregarded. While participants between 21 and 55 years on CE will be entitled to one year on the programme, this can be extended by up to 2 more years if they are engaged in a recognised training or education award that is helping them progress towards employment. All CE participants age 55 and over will be able to avail of 3 consecutive years on a CE scheme up to the overall limit of 6 years from 2007 (7 years if on a disability payment).

I have also agreed to review the current participation limits for older people on CE within the next three months. As the Deputy will be aware, participation limits are necessary to allow for the utilisation of places amongst qualifying persons to ensure the benefits of CE are available to the widest possible number of jobseekers.

My Department keeps all aspects of its activation programmes under review to ensure the best outcomes for participants. As part of the implementation of the new measures, my Department is currently consulting with key stakeholders across the country.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Maternity Benefit Data

264. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons currently in receipt of State maternity benefit payments; the average waiting time for an initial decision to be made on an application; and the average waiting times experienced from the initial decision to payment commencing. [21421/17]

265. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons who have been deemed successful in their application for State maternity benefit who are still currently awaiting an initial payment; the length of time these persons have been waiting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21422/17]

266. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Social Protection his views on media reports of a backlog in payment and application for State maternity benefit payment; the extent of the backlog; his plans to address this matter; and when the backlog will be cleared. [21423/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 264 to 266, inclusive, together.

There are approximately 18,500 claimants in receipt of maternity benefit payment at present.

Currently there are over 2,850 claims for maternity benefit waiting to be processed. Just over 1,300 of these have a leave commencement date of 8th May 2017 or earlier. Maternity benefit claims are processed in leave commencement date order. The average time to process a paper claim is 6 weeks. Processing claims by leave commencement date order ensures that those whose maternity leave is impending or has already started receive priority. Once a decision is made and the claim has been awarded, and where the leave has already commenced,
payment issues on the following Monday and this payment will also include any arrears due to the customer at that point.

To alleviate delays, additional staff have been assigned and staff are working overtime. I want to assure customers that every effort is being made to ensure all claims are processed as quickly as possible.

The Department also facilitates online applications for maternity benefit and an automated decision is made where the customer submits all necessary information and where the detail provided can be validated. I would ask the Deputy to encourage women who are planning maternity leave to use this channel, if possible, as it provides the most effective method of applying for maternity benefit.

I hope this clarifies the position for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits Data

267. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons who have applied for each social welfare payment from January 2017 to date in 2017, in tabular form; the number of persons awaiting a decision in respect of each payment; the average waiting time for an initial decision to be made in respect of each payment; the actual waiting times experienced by persons in respect of each payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21424/17]

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

Number of claims registered by scheme 1 January to 31 March 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schemes</th>
<th>Registered</th>
<th>Pending 31/03/2017</th>
<th>Average time to award (weeks)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jobseeker’s Benefit</td>
<td>35,147</td>
<td>2,739</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobseeker’s Allowance</td>
<td>40,959</td>
<td>6,962</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-Parent Family Payment</td>
<td>3,005</td>
<td>1,066</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Pension Contributory (Dom)</td>
<td>10,109</td>
<td>3,346</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Pension Transition (Dom)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widow, Widower’s and Surviving Civil Partners Contributory Pension</td>
<td>2,260</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed Parent Grant</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Alone/Island Allowances</td>
<td>3,664</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Pension Non-Contributory</td>
<td>2,729</td>
<td>1,913</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schemes</td>
<td>Registered</td>
<td>Pending 31/03/2017</td>
<td>Average time to award (weeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Benefits</td>
<td>20,395</td>
<td>3,007</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Travel</td>
<td>17,521</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domiciliary Care Allowance</td>
<td>2,229</td>
<td>2,035</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary Welfare Allowance</td>
<td>46,856</td>
<td>3,617</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Benefit (Domestic &amp; FRA)</td>
<td>9,139</td>
<td>1,553</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Benefit (EU Regulation)</td>
<td>922</td>
<td>1,143</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Benefit (Over 16)</td>
<td>13,848</td>
<td>1,082</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Benefit (Additional Child)</td>
<td>8,804</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment Benefit</td>
<td>169,677</td>
<td>24,189</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternity Benefit</td>
<td>11,544</td>
<td>4,644</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternity Benefit</td>
<td>6,829</td>
<td>1,079</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Income Supplement (New)</td>
<td>7,312</td>
<td>2,630</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Income Supplement (Renew)</td>
<td>12,521</td>
<td>1,019</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carer’s Allowance</td>
<td>6,241</td>
<td>2,842</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carer’s Benefit</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Allowance</td>
<td>6,263</td>
<td>5,603</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invalidity Pension</td>
<td>2,716</td>
<td>1,870</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness Benefit</td>
<td>57,283</td>
<td>4,513</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Injury Benefit</td>
<td>3,545</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>502,696</td>
<td>78,227</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Carer’s Allowance Appeals**

268. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for carer’s allowance by a person (details supplied); and when a decision will be made. [21449/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who has decided to convene an oral hearing in this case.

Every effort will be made to hear the case as quickly as possible and the appellant will be informed when arrangements for the oral hearing have been made.

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 position for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Overpayments

269. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of weeks a person (details supplied) was alleged to have been overpaid; the exact level of their authorised weekly allowance during the period of alleged overpayment; the exact period during which overpayment is alleged to have occurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21570/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The person concerned was in receipt of supplementary welfare allowance from 5/8/2010 to 2/11/2011 pending the outcome of a jobseeker’s allowance application. Carer’s allowance was also paid to the person concerned during this time. This resulted in an overlap of payments for 65 weeks. The total amount of supplementary welfare allowance paid to the person concerned during this period was €16,411.

The weekly rates of carer’s allowance awarded for the period in question is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>RATE</th>
<th>FROM</th>
<th>TO</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>€212</td>
<td>5/8/10</td>
<td>5/1/11</td>
<td>€4,664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IQC</td>
<td>€89</td>
<td>5/8/10</td>
<td>5/1/11</td>
<td>€1,967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>€204</td>
<td>6/1/11</td>
<td>2/11/11</td>
<td>€8,772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IQC</td>
<td>€89</td>
<td>6/1/11</td>
<td>2/11/11</td>
<td>€3,844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCG 2011</td>
<td>€1700</td>
<td>2/6/11</td>
<td>8/6/11</td>
<td>€1,700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The authorised payment for the period concerned is carer’s allowance. Governing legislation provides that carer’s allowance cannot be paid in conjunction with jobseeker’s allowance and a resulting overpayment was incurred for the above mentioned period for the total amount of supplementary welfare allowance paid to the person concerned.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer’s Allowance Eligibility

270. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will review an application for carer’s allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21578/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I confirm that my Department received an application for Carer’s Allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 18 August 2016. It is a condition for receipt of a CA that the person being cared for must have a disability whose effect is that they require full-time care and attention.

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

The evidence submitted in support of this application was examined and the deciding officer decided that this evidence did not indicate that the requirement for full-time care was satisfied.
The person concerned was also refused carer’s allowance on the grounds that she was not providing full-time care and attention as required.

The person concerned was notified on 28 February 2017 of this decision, the reason for it, and of her right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Carer’s Support Grant**

271. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons who received the carer’s support grant in 2016; the expenditure on the grant in 2016; the number of persons who have received the grant to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21582/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Provisional expenditure for 2016 on the Carer’s Support Grant was €172.3m, which represents payment of just under 101,400 grants. The grant was paid at €1,700 in respect of each person being cared for.

It is anticipated that about 106,400 grants will be paid this year, resulting in expenditure of €180.9m. Expenditure to end-March 2017 was just under €3.7m. While payment of the grant is made throughout the year about 90% of all payments are made on the 1st Thursday in June to carers in receipt of Carer’s Allowance, Carer’s Benefit or Domiciliary Care Allowance.

**Social Welfare Benefits**

272. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of allowing lone parents in employment whose children are aged between seven and 14 years of age to receive both the jobseeker’s transition payment and family income supplement if they meet the qualifying criteria; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21583/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The jobseeker’s transitional payment (JST) is available to lone parents (both former one-parent family payment recipients and new lone parents), who have a youngest child aged 7 to 13 years inclusive. These customers are exempt from the jobseeker’s allowance conditions that require them to be available for, and genuinely seeking, full-time work.

While it is a condition of the JST scheme that recipients must continue to parent alone, this is not a qualifying condition of the family income supplement (FIS) and so this information is not maintained for FIS recipients. From the data currently available on household composition within the FIS scheme, it is not possible to determine which FIS recipients, who are also lone parents, would satisfy the eligibility criteria to qualify for a JST payment. It is therefore not possible to provide an accurate costing of extending the payment of FIS to JST recipients.

Budget 2017 contained several measures which benefited JST recipients. These included the 85% Christmas Bonus, which was paid to JST recipients in early December 2016 and the increase in the weekly earnings disregard for JST recipients from €90 to €110. This increase came into effect in early January 2017. JST recipients also benefited from the €5 weekly increase in social welfare payments which came into effect in March 2017.

**Household Benefits Scheme**
273. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the expenditure on the household benefits package in 2016; the projected expenditure in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21584/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The household benefits package (HHB) comprises the electricity or gas allowance, and the free television licence. The package is generally available to people living in the State, aged 66 years or over who are in receipt of a social welfare type payment or who satisfy a means test. The package is also available to carers and people with disabilities under the age of 66 who are in receipt of certain welfare type payments. Widows and widowers aged from 60 to 65 whose late spouses had been in receipt of the household benefits package retain that entitlement.

The expenditure on the household benefits package for 2016 was €218 million and my Department expects to spend approximately €232 million this year for over 426,000 customers.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

274. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of advocates employed in the national advocacy service for persons with disabilities; the ratio of advocates to persons with a disability nationally; the full year cost of running the service; the estimated full year cost of increasing the number of advocates by 5%, 10%, 15% and 20%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21585/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities (NAS) provides an independent, confidential and free issues-based representative advocacy service that works exclusively for the person using the service and adheres to the highest professional standards. NAS has a particular remit for people with disabilities who are isolated from their community and services, have communication differences, are inappropriately accommodated, live in residential services, attend day services or have limited informal or natural supports.

NAS operates with the following staffing complement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Manager</th>
<th>Senior Advocates</th>
<th>Advocates</th>
<th>Regional Managers</th>
<th>Administrators</th>
<th>Corporate Services Manager</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most recent reported figures (Census 2011) show that 13% (595,335) of people reported having a disability. Applying that finding to the most recent overall population figures available (Census 2016) suggests there could be 618,537 people reporting to have a disability. Therefore, the ratio of NAS advocates to the 2016 estimate of people with disabilities nationally is 1:17,672.

However, not all persons with a disability require the services of a NAS advocate. In 2016, 2,152 people engaged with NAS for advocacy services. Of these, 1,152 received once off information, advice and advocacy, with the remainder being casework. Therefore, the ratio of advocates to people who engaged with the service is 1:62. In addition, the NAS national helpline received 2,000 calls in 2016.
NAS is fully funded and supported by the Citizens Information Board (CIB), which has a mandate under the Citizens Information Act 2007 to provide advocacy for people with disabilities. The NAS operational grant from the Citizens Information Board for 2017 is €3.1 million. Based on 2017 costs, the following table shows the estimated cost if the number of advocates (including senior advocates) was increased by certain percentages, as requested by the Deputy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increase in number of advocates</th>
<th>5%</th>
<th>10%</th>
<th>15%</th>
<th>20%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full year cost</td>
<td>€3,209,817</td>
<td>€3,316,590</td>
<td>€3,423,362</td>
<td>€3,530,135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures include estimated overheads (rent, light, heating) based on current costs and salaries based on an average salary points of both advocate and senior advocate roles. Additional administrative or managerial costs that may result are not included.

It is noteworthy that advocacy services are also provided by the nationwide network of Citizens Information Services (CIS), also funded and supported by CIB. CIS provides free, impartial and confidential information to the public on a range of social and public services. CIS supports clients, including those who may have a disability, to act on their own behalf wherever possible (self-advocacy). CIS also advocates directly on behalf of clients.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Bereavement Grant**

275. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of reinstating the bereavement grant to 2013 levels; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21586/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** In recent Budgets my Department has protected primary social welfare rates. Abolishing the bereavement grant provided a significant annual saving and allowed my Department to protect other core social welfare payments such as the State pension.

The number of bereavement grant claims in 2013 was 23,716, and this represented an increase of approximately 4% on 2012. Based on a similar yearly increase each year since 2013, it is estimated that the number of bereavement grant claims that might arise in 2018, were the scheme to be reintroduced, would be in the region of 28,858, with that number likely to increase in future years. The estimated cost of reintroducing the grant at a rate of €850 for 28,858 recipients would be €24.53 million.

Any decision to reinstate the Bereavement Grant would have to be considered in the context of overall budgetary negotiations.

It’s worth noting that there are a range of supports available for people following bereavement which provide more significant support than the grant. These include weekly-paid widow’s, widower’s or surviving civil partner’s (contributory and non-contributory) pensions, which are based on contributions or a means test, and a once-off widowed or surviving civil partner grant of €6,000 where there is a dependent child. A number of social welfare payments, including State pension, continue in payment for six weeks following a death. In Budget 2016, the Government increased the payment after death period to 12 weeks for carer’s allowance. Guardian payments are available where someone cares for an orphaned child. A special funeral grant of €850 is paid where a person dies because of an accident at work or occupational dis-
Additionally, the supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) scheme provides assistance to eligible people in the State whose means are insufficient to meet their needs and those of their dependants. Under the SWA scheme, the Department of Social Protection 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 from their weekly income, which may include help with funeral and burial expenses. The Government has provided €31.5 million for exceptional and urgent needs payments in 2017.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Household Benefits Scheme**

276. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of restoring the telephone allowance to 2013 levels; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21587/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The savings arising from the initial reduction and subsequent discontinuance of the telephone allowance meant that my Department was able to retain the other valuable elements of the household benefits package such as the electricity and gas allowance and the television licence. My Department will spend approximately €232 million this year on these elements of the household benefits package for over 426,000 customers.

The cost of the telephone allowance scheme had risen significantly each year, as the number of eligible customers grew. At the end of September 2013 there were almost 396,000 receiving the telephone allowance compared to approximately 316,000 people in 2007. This was an increase of 25%, or an average increase of nearly 4% per annum.

In 2013 the value of the telephone allowance was €114.00 per annum. Therefore, the cost of restoring the allowance at 2013 levels in 2018 is estimated to be in the region of €50 million per annum.

The Government is keenly aware of the impact of Budget decisions on the Department’s clients, and strives to ensure that the money available is targeted in the most effective way. In Budget 2016, the first increase in the basic rate of the State pension in seven years was given. This increased the personal rate of the non-contributory pension to €222, and that of the contributory pension to €233.30. There was also a €2.50 increase in the rate of the Fuel Allowance, from €20 to €22.50 per week.

In Budget 2017, I announced a further increase in the rate of State pensions by €5, which has increased the maximum personal rate of the State pension (contributory) to €238.30.

Therefore, over the past two Budgets, the maximum weekly rate for State Pensions has increased by €8 per week. The value of these increases is well in excess of the value of the telephone allowance previously provided.

Any decision to restore the telephone allowance would have to be considered in the context of overall budgetary negotiations. In the previous two Budgets, the Government has concentrated resources on increasing the rate of the pension, rather than on the Household Benefits package.
I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Insurance

277. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection his plans to further extend social insurance benefits to the self-employed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21588/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The Programme for Government is committed to improving the position of people who are self-employed generally, including the commitment to extend PRSI coverage for self-employed people. As part of Budget 2017, I introduced a number of important measures which will benefit self-employed people, namely the extension of cover in 2017 for treatment benefits and invalidity pension.

I have already indicated my intention to examine the further extension of benefits to self-employed people. In doing this I will take account of the recently published results of a survey of self-employed workers and of the forthcoming actuarial review of the social insurance fund.

The results of the survey of self-employed workers, which I published last week, indicate that the main benefits to which self-employed people would like access are long-term illness, short-term illness and unemployment benefits. It also indicated that self-employed people are open to paying a higher rate of social insurance in return for additional benefits.

Work is currently underway on the actuarial review of the social insurance fund by independent actuaries. Their work will include an examination of the cost of extending individual benefits self-employed people.

Together these two reports will inform the development of benefits for self-employed people and I hope to be in a position to announce further changes later this year.

Social Welfare Code Reform

278. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of the new working family payment being developed by his Department; the way he envisages that this payment will differ from family income supplement (FIS); if this payment will be complementary to FIS or will replace it; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21589/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The Programme for Government contains a number of commitments to improve the take-home pay of families on low incomes. One such commitment is the proposed “working family payment” targeted at low-income families.

My Department’s approach to developing the working family payment will be guided by two principles. First, that it should ensure that work pays and that no family is better off on welfare than at work, and, second, though equally important, that it have a positive effect on child poverty.

An open call for submissions on the Working Family Payment was issued on the Department’s website. An Interdepartmental Working Group is in place to assist the work of my officials in developing proposals. This work is being informed by the consultation process.

Considerable work and analysis needs to be completed along with the consultation. My of-
ficials are working on an options paper on different proposals. When this process is complete I intend to share the paper with the Oireachtas Joint Committee. These proposals do not include plans to abolish, reduce or remove the Family Income Supplement from any working family.

Community Employment Schemes Administration

279. Deputy Brendan Griffin asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will consider reinstating the community employment scheme material grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21671/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Each Community Employment (CE) scheme has an individually set weekly materials rate per participant based on a detailed appraisal of their actual annual expenditure levels in previous years. All consumable services and materials necessary for the effective operation of the project will normally be considered. For materials to be allowable, they must be for the use of the participants and specifically relate to the tasks approved for the project. All expenditure must be accounted and vouched for by way of receipts. It is the responsibility of the CE scheme sponsor to ensure that they have obtained the best price and that they have achieved value for money. It should be noted that the materials grant for CE was never revoked.

If a CE scheme is experiencing particular difficulties with materials funding, they should contact their local DSP Intreo office with any concerns they have in that regard.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Labour Activation Measures

280. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Social Protection if his attention has been drawn to the fact that Turas Nua is requesting the details of some persons’ new employers when it had no input into securing the position. [21719/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): JobPath is an approach to employment activation that will support people who are long-term unemployed and those most at risk of becoming long-term unemployed to secure and sustain paid employment.

While customers are participating with JobPath they receive intensive individual support to help them address barriers to employment and to assist them in finding jobs. Each person is assigned to a personal adviser who will assess a person’s skills, experience, challenges and work goals. A “personal progression plan” will be drawn up that will include a schedule of activities, actions and job focused targets. Participants are also provided with a range of training and development supports including online modules, career advice, CV preparation and interview skills. They may also be referred for further education and training opportunities.

The JobPath Providers are also contracted to provide in-work support to the customers for at least three months and up to twelve months while they remain in employment. The customer is not under any obligation to provide employment details to the JobPath provider but if they wish to do so and avail of the in-employment support offered, all information will be treated confidentially.

In regard to the particular circumstances that the Deputy sets out, if the Deputy would supply the details of the persons concerned, I will undertake to have the matter examined further.
281. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Social Protection the pay agreement under which supervisors on community employment schemes currently operate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21546/17]

283. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Social Protection the percentage pay rise since 2008 for supervisors in community employment schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21548/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 281 and 283 together.

My Department provides grant aid to Community Employment (CE) schemes for the employment of supervisors. CE supervisors are not employed by my Department – rather they are employees of private companies in the community and voluntary sector.

The Deputy should note that, in the past, CE supervisors have benefited from pay increases linked to all phases of Benchmarking, Sustaining Progress (Parts 1 and 2) and Towards 2016 (all 4 phases). It is also worth noting that CE supervisors have experienced no reduction in pay over recent years as a result of other public sector pay adjustments.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Departmental Correspondence**

282. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will review the issues raised in correspondence from members of Monaghan County Council (details supplied); if he will respond to the county councillors; his plans to place a Government building in Ballybay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21547/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I discussed this matter at a meeting with the local Oireachtas Members and Councillors from the Ballybay-Clones Municipal District on Wednesday 5th October 2016. It is not proposed to open an Intreo Centre or Government building in Ballybay, or to relocate one of the Department’s agencies there. However, I will continue to be fully supportive of any initiatives that will boost employment opportunities – be they from public or private sector – for the people in the Ballybay area in the future.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

*Question No. 283 answered with Question No. 281.*

**Community Employment Schemes Supervisors**

284. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Social Protection the pension entitlements for supervisors in community employment schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21551/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Community Employment (CE) participants and supervisors are not employed by my Department – rather they are employees of private companies in the community and voluntary sector. Given that situation, the State is not responsible for funding pension arrangements for such employees even where the companies in
question are reliant on State funding. It is open to individuals to make provision for a pension by way of PRSA which all employers are obliged to facilitate.

Nevertheless, the issue of CE supervisors’ pension provision is currently being examined by a Community Sector High Level Forum under the auspices and chairmanship of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. My Department is represented on this group, as are IMPACT, SIPTU, the Department of Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government and Pobal. The Forum last met on 7 April, 2017 and I understand that their work is ongoing.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Community Employment Schemes Administration**

285. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Social Protection the way in which sponsors for community employment schemes are chosen; the person or body that supervises and ensures best practice for the choosing of sponsors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21553/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The aim of Community Employment (CE) is to enhance the employability and mobility of disadvantaged and unemployed persons by providing work experience and training opportunities for them within their community.

CE schemes are typically sponsored by groups/organisations wishing to benefit their local community. It has been a long standing requirement in the CE procedures, that the CE sponsor must form a company limited by guarantee with no share capital. All sponsors of CE schemes must adhere to clear procedures and processes, set out by my Department. The DSP Officer must satisfy themselves that a sponsor is in full compliance with all Departmental procedures and regulations.

My Department undertakes periodic Programme & Training Monitoring visits of all CE schemes (at least one per year), in accordance with standard operating procedures. There is also a separate comprehensive monitor carried out on the financial aspects of each CE project every year. It is incumbent on every sponsor to be compliant in all aspects of the operation of CE. Schemes that are found to be non-compliant as a result of a monitoring visit are given an opportunity to rectify any issues arising. My Department reserves the right to terminate the agreement should the sponsor fail to operate and administer the scheme in accordance with the conditions of the Agreement.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Family Income Supplement Applications**

286. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for family income supplement by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21555/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** A Family Income Supplement (FIS) claim was registered for the person concerned on the 5th April 2017.

No payslips were received at the time of application from the person concerned. These were requested on the 27th April 2017. When the payslips are received, the FIS claim will be processed.
I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Administration

287. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the implications of the new system introduced by his Department for sponsors and voluntary boards with regard to the Companies Act and the responsibilities of directors for community employment and job initiative schemes; if his attention has been drawn to the concern being expressed in respect of the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21557/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** My Department is committed to modernising its service delivery and developing systems to support its functions. Responsibility for Community Employment (CE) transferred from FÁS to my Department in January 2012 and continued to be delivered on a SOLAS IT platform. The CE programme is now being integrated onto my Department’s IT infrastructure. This will have a positive impact for CE sponsors as it will ease the administrative burden and improve operational processing. It will have no implications for sponsors in the context of the Companies Act.

This new service is already being used by sponsors in the Dublin South area and my Department have not been advised of any issues to date. Customer service is at the centre of my Department’s strategies and business and we will continue to develop and extend the range of online services in line with the service delivery modernisation programme.

I hope that clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Jobseeker’s Allowance Applications

288. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the progress to date in the determination of an application for jobseeker’s allowance (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21605/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** An application for jobseeker’s allowance in the case of the person concerned is currently being processed. The person concerned submitted an application for supplementary welfare allowance in the interim and was awarded payment with effect from 3/5/17. She will be informed of the outcome of her jobseeker’s allowance application as soon as it has been processed.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Appeals

289. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the progress to date in the determination of an appeal in the case of a person (details supplied) in respect of a disability allowance; the reason a basic supplementary welfare payment has been refused in the interim, in view of the fact that they are only in receipt of a subsistence payment for a SOLAS course; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21625/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** This lady submitted an application for disability allowance on 13 October 2016.
The application, based upon the evidence submitted, was refused on medical grounds and the person in question was notified in writing of this decision on 12 January 2017 and of her rights of review and appeal. No request for a review or an appeal of this decision was received.

This lady applied for supplementary welfare payment on 11 October 2016. The application, based upon the information available, was refused as the person in question is a full time student and is not taking part in an approved education scheme. The Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act 2015 Section 190(1) refers.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pensions

290. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Social Protection when the review on conditions and criteria for State pension entitlement and eligibility will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21722/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The National Pensions Framework (2010) proposed that a “Total Contributions Approach” (TCA) should replace the yearly average approach, for new pensioners from 2020. The aim of this approach is to make the rate of contributory pension more closely match contributions made by a person. Officials of my Department are currently working on the detailed development of the TCA with a view to making proposals for consideration later in the year. This is a very significant reform with considerable legal, administrative, and technical elements in its implementation.

Following completion of the Actuarial Review of the Social Insurance Fund later this year, a refined proposal will be developed. My Department will conduct a period of consultation with relevant stakeholders including interest groups, representative bodies and the Oireachtas. Following the consultation period, I will submit a proposal to Government seeking approval of the new approach.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pensions

291. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Social Protection the steps he will take to remove the discriminatory eligibility for the State pension which mainly affects women that had a break in employment service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21723/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Since 1961, when contributory pensions were introduced, the average contributions test has been used in calculating the rate of pension entitlement. Entitlement is banded, with the maximum rate payable to those with a yearly average of 48-52 contributions, and the minimum rate payable to those with a yearly average in the range of 10-14 contributions per year. Even if someone has only 10 years (520 weeks) of paid reckonable contributions between their 16th and 66th birthdays, they would generally qualify for a State pension (contributory), although the rate payable would vary depending on their circumstances, and it will not always be their most advantageous payment to claim, particularly if they qualify for a full-rate State pension (non-contributory).

The homemaker’s scheme was introduced in 1994 to make qualification for State pension contributory (SPC) easier for those who take time out of the workforce for caring duties. The
scheme allows up to 20 years spent caring for children under 12 years of age, or incapacitated people, to be disregarded when a person’s social insurance record is being calculated for pension purposes. The effect of this is to reduce the number of years by which the person’s contributions are divided, thereby increasing their yearly average, making it easier for them to qualify for a maximum rate SPC. It does not involve the award of credits.

From September 2012, new rate bands for State Pension contributory were introduced. These additional payment rate bands more accurately reflect the social insurance history of a person and ensure that those who contributed to the Social Insurance Fund more frequently during their working life will, generally, benefit more in retirement than those who made less frequent contributions. People who qualify for a lower contributory pension as a result, but who have an income need, may still claim the means-tested State pension (non-contributory), the maximum rate of which is 95% that of the State pension contributory.

The National Pensions Framework (2010) proposed that a “Total Contributions Approach” (TCA) should replace the yearly average approach for new pensioners from 2020. The aim of this approach is to make the rate of contributory pension more closely match contributions made by a person. Officials of my Department are currently working on the detailed development of the TCA with a view to making proposals for consideration later in the year. This is a very significant reform with considerable legal, administrative, and technical elements in its implementation. An important element in the final design of the scheme will be the position of people who have gaps in their contribution records for various reasons, and this factor is being considered very carefully in developing this reform.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Staff

292. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Social Protection his plans to recruit additional staff to deal with appeals for disability allowance in view of the fact the current period for same is approximately 12 weeks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21770/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** My Department, like all Government Departments and agencies, is required to operate within a staff ceiling figure and a commensurate administrative staffing budget, which for this Department has involved reductions in staff.

The staffing needs for all areas within the Department are continuously reviewed, taking account of workloads, management priorities and the ongoing need to respond to new increasing demands in a wide range of services. This is 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.

Appeal processing times are kept under constant scrutiny by the Chief Appeals Officer. The Deputy will be aware that significant effort and resources have been devoted in recent years to reducing the length of time taken to finalise an appeal and that as a consequence processing times have improved quite considerably.

The quasi-judicial nature of the appeals system means that there are inevitable time-lags involved. However the system is designed to be flexible and fair and allows for review and submission of further information at all stages. The time taken is proportionate to the complexity of many of the issues under appeal which require a high level of judgement, and the need to
ensure due process and natural justice.

The Chief Appeals Officer has advised me that appeal processing times will continue to be a priority for her office.

**Departmental Expenditure**

293. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total spend by his Department on legal or other fees in a case (details supplied) arising from an investigation of complaints under Directive 2008/94/EC on the protection of employees in the event of the insolvency of their employer and the resultant contractual obligations that derive under the transposition of that directive by the Government, in tabular form; the full breakdown of costs from initiation up to and including the European Court of Justice; the persons or bodies to which they were payable; if another organ of the State was involved or shared in legal or other costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21809/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The total spent by my Department on legal and other fees in the specified legal case amounted to €167,784.40. Details of this expenditure are set out in the following table. This expenditure does not include subsequent mediation costs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ernst &amp; Young</td>
<td>€36,324.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aon Hewitt</td>
<td>€5,912.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Square Mile Consultants</td>
<td>€119,656.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aon Hewitt /Philip Shier</td>
<td>€5,890.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>€167,784.40</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Office of the Chief State Solicitor is involved in the payment of legal costs in respect of this case.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Rent Supplement Scheme Data**

294. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons that avail of rent allowance and RAS payments, by county; and the total payments by county in 2016. [21817/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Rent supplement plays a vital role in housing families and individuals, with the scheme supporting some 43,600 recipients for which the Government has provided €253 million for in 2017.

A county analysis of recipient numbers by county as at December 2016 is provided in the following tabular statement. Expenditure under the scheme for 2016 was some €275 million, a breakdown of this figure on a county basis is not available.

The Deputy will be aware that the strategic policy direction of the Department is to return rent supplement to its original purpose of being a short-term income support with the introduction of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme, which from 1 March 2017, is available nationwide. In addition to the ongoing transfer of long-term rent supplement recipients to HAP,
the majority of new applicants seeking State support towards their rent are being supported by the Local Authorities under HAP rather than rent supplement.

The Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) is also administered by the Local Authorities and reporting on this scheme is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Rent Supplement Recipients by County as at end December, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Recipients as at December 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CARLOW</td>
<td>593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAVAN</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLARE</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORK</td>
<td>4,958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DONEGAL</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUBLIN</td>
<td>20,561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GALWAY</td>
<td>2,506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KERRY</td>
<td>1,554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILDARE</td>
<td>2,579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILKENNY</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAOIS</td>
<td>871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEITRIM</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIMERICK</td>
<td>954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LONGFORD</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOUTH</td>
<td>859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAYO</td>
<td>1,074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEATH</td>
<td>1,001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONAGHAN</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFFALY</td>
<td>563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROSCOMMON</td>
<td>566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLIGO</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIPPERARY</td>
<td>901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WATERFORD</td>
<td>590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WESTMEATH</td>
<td>1,299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEXFORD</td>
<td>1,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WICKLOW</td>
<td>1,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>48,041</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Community Employment Schemes Places

295. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection if an additional community employment scheme placement will be allocated to a community centre (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21912/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The activation supports and services available to those who are long term unemployed include work experience and training schemes such as Community Employment (CE), TÚS, Gateway and Rural Social Scheme
In this case, the primary sponsor, Udaras na Gaeltachta, Gaoth Barra has 25 CE participant places and one supervisor position. The Halla Naomh Bride project, which is attached to this project, currently has one CE placement assigned to a caretaker position.

A second CE position as an office worker was previously allocated to Halla Naomh Bride, however, as this position could not be filled at that time Udaras na Gaeltachta reallocated this additional position within their overall project allocation. This position was not revoked by the Department.

If the sponsor now wishes to allocate this position to Halla Naomh Bride they should contact their local Development Officer to make the necessary arrangements.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications

296. Deputy Marc MacSharry asked the Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Sligo will have a decision in relation to an application for a domiciliary care allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21913/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): An application for domiciliary care allowance (DCA) was received from this gentleman on the 10th November 2016. The application was not allowed as it was considered that the child did not meet the eligibility criteria for the allowance. A letter issued to him on 24th February 2017 outlining the decision.

A request for a review of this decision was received on 7th March 2017, along with additional information on the child’s condition/care needs. The application will be re-examined by a deciding officer and a revised decision will be made if warranted. The person concerned will be notified of the outcome of this review as soon as it is completed. Currently, such reviews can take up to 15 weeks to complete.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer’s Benefit Applications

297. Deputy Marc MacSharry asked the Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Sligo will have a decision in relation to an application for carer’s benefit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21914/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I confirm that my Department received an application for carer’s benefit from the person concerned on 18 April 2017. The application is currently being processed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

298. Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will be made on a person’s (details supplied) disability claim; and if he will make a state-
Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Following a successful appeal, the person concerned has been awarded disability allowance with effect from 18 May 2016. The first payment will be made by her chosen payment method on 24 May 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.

Family Income Supplement Data

299. Deputy Pat Buckley asked the Minister for Social Protection the numbers of Defence Forces personnel that received family income supplement in each of the years 2013 to 2016 and to date in 2017. [21988/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Family Income Supplement (FIS) is an in-work support, which provides an income top-up for employees on low earnings with children. FIS is designed to prevent in-work poverty for low paid workers with child dependants and to offer a financial incentive to take-up employment. There are currently over 57,000 families with almost 127,000 children in receipt of FIS. The estimated spend on FIS this year is approximately €422 million.

To qualify for FIS, a person must be engaged in full-time insurable employment, which is expected to last for at least 3 months and be working for a minimum of 38 hours per fortnight or 19 hours per week. A couple may combine their hours of employment to meet the qualification criteria. The applicant must also have at least one qualified child who normally resides with them or is supported by them. Furthermore, the average family income must be below a specified amount, which varies according to the number of qualified children in the family.

According to FIS data as of week ending Fri 6 May 2017 there are currently 117 customers in receipt of FIS recorded under the occupational code covering members of the defence forces.

The figures for families in receipt of FIS for previous years as requested by the Deputy are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No of Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the purposes of consistency it is important to note that the figures above are based on the amount of families in receipt of FIS at week 52 of the relevant year, as such the figures may go up or down depending on the week in the year.
300. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of Defence Force personnel in receipt of family income supplement or any other social protection payment, indicating which payments, in each of the years 2013 to 2016 and to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22002/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The Family Income Supplement (FIS) is an in-work support, which provides an income top-up for employees on low earnings with children. FIS is designed to prevent in-work poverty for low paid workers with child dependants and to offer a financial incentive to take-up employment. There are currently over 57,000 families with almost 127,000 children in receipt of FIS. The estimated spend on FIS this year is approximately €422 million.

To qualify for FIS, a person must be engaged in full-time insurable employment which is expected to last for at least 3 months and be working for a minimum of 38 hours per fortnight or 19 hours per week. A couple may combine their hours of employment to meet the qualification criteria. The applicant must also have at least one qualified child who normally resides with them or is supported by them. Furthermore, the average family income must be below a specified amount, which varies according to the number of qualified children in the family.

According to FIS data as of week ending Fri 6 May 2017 there are currently 117 customers in receipt of FIS recorded under the occupational code covering members of the Defence Forces.

The figures for families in receipt of FIS for previous years as requested by the Deputy are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. Of Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the purposes of consistency it is important to note that the figures above are based on the amount of families in receipt of FIS at week 52 of the relevant year, as such the figures may go up or down depending on the week in the year.

Figures of the number of Defence Force personnel in receipt of other social welfare payments are currently not available.

**Departmental Expenditure**

301. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the amount his Department estimates it will pay to companies engaged under the JobPath programme for the duration of the relevant contracts; the amount which has been expended to date; the number of persons these companies have activated into full-time employment by county, in tabular form; his plans to review these contracts as the State continues to move towards full employment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22003/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** As the Deputy will be aware,
the State’s Public Employment Service is managed by my Department and delivered directly by its own Intreo service as well as by contracted private companies, such as JobPath, Local Employment Service (LES) and Job Club providers. These services have been designed by the Department to augment and complement one another, to ensure the best outcomes possible for jobseekers.

The JobPath element of the service is being delivered through a payment by results model which means that the companies will not be able to fully recover their cost unless they are successful in supporting sufficient numbers of jobseekers into full time paid sustainable employment. The contract in place for the delivery of the service is split into two phases: during the first phase jobseekers may be referred to the service while phase two allows for a run off period during which referrals cease, but jobseekers who were successfully placed into employment will continue to receive support and advice.

The cost of the JobPath service, over the term of the contract, will therefore be determined by a combination of factors such as a) the number of jobseekers on the live register b) the profile of jobseekers on the live register (higher fees may apply the longer a jobseeker is on the live register), the number of people who are referred to the service by the department and critically the number of Jobseekers who are successfully placed into sustainable full time paid employment.

Payments are made to the companies in respect of an initial registration fee, paid on completion of a personal progression plan, and thereafter fees are only paid for sustained employment (job sustainment fees) outcomes of 13, 26, 39 and 52 weeks duration.

The amount paid in fees, is as follows:

- up to the end of 2016 € 28.5m.
- up to the end of March 2017 €13.5 m.

The outline estimate for the service in 2017 is € 65m - it is not anticipated that this sum will be exceeded in 2018 or 2019. However, it is important to note that these estimates in themselves are gross figures i.e. the associated savings in social welfare payments have not been deducted: job sustainment fee payments are only made were a jobseeker has obtained and sustained paid employment of 13, 26, 39 and 52 weeks duration and were s/he is not in receipt of a jobseekers related payment during that period.

In relation to your inquiry on the number of people activated in to full time employment, it is important to note that jobseekers may be supported through the service for up to 30 months - under the service jobseekers have access to a personal adviser (PA) who works with them over two phases. During the first phase, of 12 months duration, the PA provides practical assistance in searching, preparing for, securing and sustaining employment. The second phase starts if the jobseeker is successful in finding work. During this phase the PA continues to work with the jobseeker for a further period of at least three months, and up to 12 months. In addition to the two phases jobseekers may also undertake training while with the service and this may extend the period the jobseeker is supported through the service for up to a further 6 months

It will therefore take time to accumulate a sufficient number of clients (who have completed their engagement period with the service) for complete and robust outcome data to be available. With this in mind, it is intended that an econometric evaluation of the service will commence at the end of 2017.

The Department has however commenced publishing reports on the performance of the service on a quarterly basis, with the first such report having been published on the Department’s

I can confirm that the next performance report will be available on the Department website in the next week or so.

In managing the State’s public employment service the Department seeks to provide the greatest level of support possible for jobseekers, with the combination of the introduction of JobPath and the welcome significant reduction in the live register in recent years. The Department for example was able to refocus the LES element of the service to provide an enhanced level of service for jobseekers in 2016 and in 2017. I can assure the Deputy that my Department keeps under continual review the level of service provided to its customers both in term of social welfare provision and activation measures.

I trust this information addresses the matters raised by the Deputy.

Social Welfare Fraud Data

302. Deputy Thomas Pringle asked the Minister for Social Protection the anti-fraud savings made by his Department through control measures for 2016; the number of reports made by the public to his Department of suspected false welfare claims in 2016; the number of those claims which were valid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22036/17]

303. Deputy Thomas Pringle asked the Minister for Social Protection the budget allocated for the current publicity campaign being carried out by his Department calling on the public to report suspected false welfare claims; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22037/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 302 and 303 together.

Nearly 950,000 entitlement reviews and investigations were conducted across the Department’s schemes in 2016. These reviews yielded €506 million in control savings for the year. Reviews and investigations of entitlements are conducted by social welfare staff, social welfare inspectors and inspectors assigned to the Special Investigations Unit and a combination of desk-based assessment of entitlements, direct enquiries with recipients of social welfare payments, site and employer visits and face-to-face interviews are used.

The value of savings recorded by staff for the year 2016 was €506m. Savings are calculated when a social welfare claim is reduced in value or terminated following a review or investigation initiated by the Department. Control savings do not include any element where the customer voluntarily told the Department of changes in their means or circumstances which resulted in a reduction in the rate of payment or termination of the claim. Departmental error cases are also excluded from the savings figure.

The basis of the savings calculated is scheme specific. The nature of the scheme is taken into account - in particular whether it is short-term (e.g. jobseeker’s benefit or supplementary welfare allowance) or more long-term (e.g. State Pension Contributory/Non-Contributory). Also taken into account is the length of time a person who has a claim reduced or terminated is expected to remain off a particular scheme or at the reduced rate of payment.

Over 18,700 reports of suspected social welfare fraud were made by members of the public last year. All reports are received on an anonymous and confidential basis. While the Department does not track the outcome of the individual allegations of wrongdoing received, internal
assurance checking indicates that around 1 in 3 reports received results in the value of the pay-
ment made being reduced or terminated.

The cost of the advertising campaign is €165,988 excluding VAT. It includes all design and
advertising costs associated with the campaign (print advertising, national and regional radio
advertising, outdoor and online/digital advertising). No additional costs arise in staff resources,
website development or the provision of the telephone reporting facility.

I hope this clarifies the matters for the Deputy.

Jobseeker’s Allowance Applications

304. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a jobseeker’s
application will be processed for a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will
make a statement on the matter. [22039/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The Letterkenny Intreo Centre
has advised that the person concerned was issued a cheque payment on 2nd May 2017 for the
total amount of jobseekers benefit due to her for the Easter holiday period.

Rural Social Scheme

305. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Social Protection his plans to treat
the rural social scheme solely as a labour activation mechanism as opposed to its original role
when introduced in 2004 as a support for part-time farmers and fishermen (details supplied); his views on whether this will spell the end of social supports for members of the farming and fishing industry who wish to remain in that industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22075/17]

306. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Social Protection his plans to ad-
dress a situation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22076/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos.
305 and 306 together.

The Rural Social Scheme (RSS) is an income support initiative which provides part-time
employment opportunities in community and voluntary organisations for farmers or fishermen
who are in receipt of certain social welfare payments and underemployed in their primary oc-
cupation. The RSS is a supplementary income support scheme and is not designed as an em-
ployment activation scheme.

I have seen at first-hand myself from visits to various schemes throughout the country in
recent months how programmes like the RSS deliver both for participants and for their com-
munities.

The Government’s commitment to these programmes is clearly demonstrated by the an-
nouncement of the additional 500 RSS places in Budget 2017, the first increase in places since
2006. These additional places were rolled out with effect from 1st February 2017 increasing
the overall number of places to 3,100. This measure, allied with my reversal of the previous
cuts to Farm Assist, is evident of this Government’s commitment to rural Ireland.

Since 1st February 2017, all new participants commencing on the RSS have to be over 25
years of age and a 6 year overall participation limit also applies. It should be noted that prior to the introduction of the six year participation limit, almost 50% of the participants were on RSS for over 10 years. The new measure will, therefore, ensure that places become available to provide opportunities for other farmers and fishermen to take part in the scheme. Income support will still be available to eligible farmers and fishermen who are not on the RSS in the form of Farm or Fish Assist.

RSS participants who commenced on the scheme prior to 1st February 2017 will remain on the scheme as long as they continue to satisfy the eligibility conditions of the scheme.

The RSS is managed by 35 Local Development Companies (LDCs) and by Údarás Na Gaeltachta who are the employers of the supervisors and participants. The setting of terms and conditions of supervisors employed to support RSS participants are matters for each LDC whose representative body is the Irish Local Development Network (ILDN). Each supervisor has a contract of employment with the partnership company, in line with statutory requirements.

The Department has, over the past number of months, been aware of the concerns of RSS supervisors about their terms and conditions of employment and, in particular, their pay rate. While any issues regarding the terms and conditions of RSS supervisors are a matter for ILDN and the LDCs, the Department is conscious of the role it plays in terms of the funding that it provides to the companies for the programme. The Department has, therefore, informed ILDN that it is willing to provide funding to implement a pay scale for supervisors in return for some productivity-related benefits. This issue is now with ILDN and the LDCs to progress as the employers of the RSS supervisors.

I trust this clarifies the position for the Deputy

Social Welfare Fraud Data

307. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 599 of 3 May 2017, if he will provide a breakdown of fraudulent claims for each of the years from 2014 to 2016. [22112/17]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I understand the Deputy is referring to my reply to question number 599 of 2 May 2017.

As part of the roll-out of the Public Services Card (PSC), my Department introduced facial recognition software in March 2013 to support its efforts to combat identity fraud and impersonation. This software is used to ensure that multiple or fraudulent identities can be detected at the point where a person registers for a personal public services number (PPSN) or a PSC. Where there is suspicion that a person has attempted to gain a PSC where a Card has already been issued to a person matching the same facial profile, the matter is referred to the Department’s Special Investigations Unit (SIU) to make further enquiries and to refer the matter to An Garda Síochána for investigation and prosecution under the Criminal Justice (Theft and Fraud Offences) Act 2001, as appropriate.

As of 25 April 2017, 155 suspected cases of identify fraud have been referred to the SIU and/or An Garda Síochána. These cases are at various stages of investigation. Successful prosecutions have been finalised in court in 21 cases, with 18 people receiving custodial sentences. The Department does not compile data on the number of persons reported and charged with making fraudulent claims for social protection payments by disguising their identity given that this does not impact on the facial recognition process.
I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Consular Services Remit

308. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will instruct the permanent mission to the UN in New York to become a member of a group (details supplied) and to continue to attend the OEWG sessions at the UN and make constructive comments regarding the content of a new convention on ageing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21489/17]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The promotion and protection of human rights is a key foreign policy priority for Ireland, and one which is largely expressed through our strong support for the international human rights framework. Binding obligations to protect the rights of older persons without discrimination are implicit in the core international human rights treaties, including the Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as in European human rights law. The international community has sought to address the situation of older people in particular through the adoption of the United Nations Principles for Older Persons in 1991 and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in 2002. More recently, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development clearly identifies human rights, including those of older people, as integral to development and social policy. Ireland recognises that there are some shortcomings in the implementation of existing instruments and believes that efforts to improve the situation of older people should focus in the first instance on the better implementation of the existing human rights framework. In this regard, I believe it is more effective to engage in the established mechanism of the Open Ended Working Group on Ageing rather than diverting limited resources to the Group of Friends which was established following the fourth session of the Working Group in 2013 and which currently comprises Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Qatar, Slovenia, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, and Uruguay.

Non-membership of this Group of Friends should not be misconstrued as an indication of a lack of commitment to advancing the situation of older people. In September 2016, Ireland was a co-sponsor of a resolution on the rights of older persons, adopted by the Human Rights Council, which aims to contribute to the substantive understanding of how human rights standards apply to older persons and provides for the consideration of the possible elaboration of a multilateral legal instrument on the rights of older people.

The elaboration of such an instrument was discussed at the most recent seventh session of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Ageing in December 2016, which Ireland attended. It was agreed that certain areas, including non-discrimination, ageism and social inclusion, need to be addressed in order to allow older people to fully enjoy their rights. Ireland will continue to engage in these discussions, and will participate in the next OEWG meeting in July 2017.

Humanitarian Aid Provision

309. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has considered funding treatment support for the Yazidi women in Iraq that have been subject to rape, torture and sexual slavery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21667/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Joe**
McHugh): In our humanitarian assistance, Ireland places a strong emphasis on the needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls in emergencies and conflict settings. A clear focus on gender equality, protection and gender based violence must be an essential part of every humanitarian operation. Since 2012, Ireland has provided just over €7.75 million in humanitarian assistance to Iraq. In 2016, over €3 million was allocated to UN and NGO partners in order to meet the urgent needs of the most vulnerable people inside Iraq, particularly in hard-to-reach areas and those who have been displaced internally. So far in 2017, we have provided €2 million to address the humanitarian crisis.

The majority of Ireland’s support has been provided to the UN Iraq Humanitarian Pooled Fund. The Fund provides support for protection services and, in particular, relief items for survivors of sexual and gender based violence.

The political turmoil which has overwhelmed many countries in the Middle East in recent years has led to increased concerns about the safety of women and children, religious minorities and other vulnerable minority groups. The only means of securing the protection of religious and other minorities across the Middle East is through the promotion of sustainable political solutions to the conflicts which have for so long destabilised the region and promoted radical and extremist ideologies. Ireland has consistently called for inclusive, democratic solutions to the unrest in the Middle East and North Africa region. In the Iraqi context, we have emphasised that the security effort must be accompanied by the implementation of the programme for national reconciliation set out by Prime Minister Abadi in late 2014 to avoid further sectarian divisions. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade continues to monitor actively the situation, advocating for the respect of international humanitarian and human rights law, and for equal access to humanitarian assistance by all vulnerable groups.

Foreign Conflicts

310. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the amount Ireland has donated to the UN’s International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism on international crimes committed in Syria; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there is a significant shortfall of $4.6 million in order to cover its budget for 2017, its first year in operation; and if his Department is working with others to ensure this shortfall is met. [21615/17]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Ireland, along with a group of like-minded countries, successfully pressed for the adoption of a resolution by the UN General Assembly in December 2016 to establish the International Impartial and Independent Mechanism to assist in the investigation and prosecution of persons responsible for the most serious crimes under international law committed in Syria. In addition, Ireland has agreed to contribute €100,000 to the operating costs of the Mechanism. Ireland continues to work with its UN partners to support the establishment of the Mechanism and to ensure its full operational capacity as soon as possible.

Ireland currently supports a broad range of efforts to ensure full legal accountability for all war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Syria as part of a sustainable peaceful resolution to the conflict, including the Independent International Commission of Inquiry established in August 2011 by the Human Rights Council to investigate all alleged violations of international human rights law since March 2011 in Syria. We have also consistently called for accountability and the referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

Ireland is also a strong and consistent supporter of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) whose Fact Finding Mission (FFM) was set up in 2014 to “estab-
lish facts surrounding allegations of the use of toxic chemicals, reportedly chlorine, for hostile purposes in the Syrian Arab Republic”. We support their work financially with annual contributions amounting to nearly €1 million since 2014. In addition, Ireland has contributed €200,000 specifically to the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mission an independent mechanism established to determine the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Ireland reiterated its strong support for the FFM and the OPCW-UN JIM at a recent meeting of the Executive Council of the OPCW, convened to discuss the alleged chemical weapons attack in the Syrian province of Idlib on 4 April 2017.

Passport Applications Data

311. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of passports issued in 2016 and to date in 2017; the amount of revenue generated through passports being issued; the amount of revenue generated through issuing the passport cards in November and December 2016 and per month to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21771/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The number of passports issued in 2016 was 733,197 and this generated total receipts of €46.9m. Between 1 January 2017 and 5 May this year 279,544 passports issued. This generated receipts of €13.6m. The monthly revenue generated by the issuance of passports cards since November 2016 is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 2016</td>
<td>€53,755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>€37,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2017</td>
<td>€72,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>€69,030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>€72,345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>€146,755</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 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.

I launched a new online passport application service (www.dfa.ie/passportonline/) at the end of March. Adults can now submit their passport renewal applications online wherever they are in the world. The passport card application is an integral part of this new, online service.

Passport Application Refusals

312. Deputy Michael Ring asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the reasons
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, all passport applications are subject to the terms of the Passports Act, 2008 (the Act). The Act provides the legal basis for the policies and practices that are applied by the Passport Service. Section 10 of the Act broadly provides that a passport will issue in the name of a citizen as it appears on his/her birth certificate. Issuing a passport in a different name is permitted under the Act in situations such as marriage, adoption or gender reassignment, where civil or legal documents are available to verify the change. In all other cases where an individual wishes to apply for a passport in a different name, the Act specifically requires evidence of usage over a two-year period.

Given that a name change effectively replaces an existing identity with a new one, the Passport Service must ensure that stringent checks are in place to mitigate any associated risks. The documentary requirements in support of a name change are detailed on my Department’s website as follows:

The Passport Service’s practice is in line with the relevant legislation and is intended to safeguard the high international reputation of the Irish passport and, in turn, protect the wellbeing and security of our citizens travelling abroad.

I am informed by officials in the Passport Service that the person in question wishes to have a passport issued in a name other than that on his birth certificate but that he has not supplied acceptable supporting documentation. The Passport Service has advised the applicant of the requirements. Until such a time as the applicant can provide the relevant documents, the Passport Service, in line with the Act, will be unable to issue a passport in the alternative name.

Passport Applications

313. Deputy Fergus O’Dowd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if a required passport can be expedited for a person (details supplied) in order for them to complete their requirements before the deadline. [21853/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by officials in the Passport Service that the passport in question was already in production prior to receipt of this Parliamentary Question and has been dispatched. As the Deputy will be aware, the Passport Service is currently processing over 80,000 applications. Every effort is made to issue passports as swiftly as possible within the constraints of resources and in a way that is fair and equitable to all citizens.

Overseas Development Aid Oversight

314. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the way the level of overseas aid is decided each year; and the criteria which determines the eligible projects. [21943/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Government is strongly committed to Ireland’s overseas aid programme, and to its place at the heart of our foreign policy. In the Programme for Government we have set out our ambition to make progress towards the UN target of providing 0.7% of GNP to Official
Development Assistance (ODA) as resources permit.

Over the past two years we have managed to increase funding allocations for ODA, providing an increase of €40 million in 2016 and a further €10 million for 2017. The total 2017 allocation for ODA is €651 million.

Annual Budget allocations for ODA, as with all public expenditure, are a matter for Government, and are set in the context of available resources, our commitments and competing budgetary demands. For 2018, when the Estimates process begins, I and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade will be making the strongest possible case for a continued increase in the allocation to ODA.

Our priorities for the aid Programme are very clearly laid out in our policy - ‘One World One Future’. In line with our commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, our aid programme is sharply focused on delivering our goals of reducing poverty and hunger, promoting inclusive and sustainable growth and building more equitable and better systems of governance, particularly in our key partner countries.

Detailed financial allocations are made annually across the aid programme in response to existing needs, humanitarian crises and overall programme priorities. Clear criteria are in place to inform the budget allocation process. Sub-Saharan Africa remains our priority region, where we direct assistance to the poorest communities, particularly in our key partner countries. Our aid programme focuses on delivering real and sustainable improvements to the lives of some of the world poorest and most vulnerable people in the areas of basic health, education, agriculture, and food production.

Grants to partners are made to support development and humanitarian programmes. Eligible partners include civil society organisations and missionary organisations, multilateral organisations and national and local governments in partner countries. All partners are assessed to ensure that they have the appropriate governance systems in place, that they can ensure proper accountability of funds and that they have the capacity to deliver effectively.

**Human Rights Cases**

315. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to the concerning developments in the urgent case of a person (details supplied); and if he will protest the person’s arbitrary, punitive and unlawful detention with the Bahraini authorities. [21974/17]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am familiar with the case of the person in question, with his work as a human rights defender, and with his treatment by the Bahraini authorities since June 2016, and indeed before this. My Department has recently been made aware of his health issues, which have reportedly deteriorated seriously during his most recent incarceration. Last week, officials from my Department also had correspondence with the Bahraini Embassy in London on this specific case.

Ireland attaches a high priority to safeguarding human rights defenders, and has continually advocated for freedom for civil society actors to operate in a safe and enabling environment, without repression. In August 2014, officials from my Department met with the individual who is the subject of this Question, and discussed the situation of human rights in Bahrain with him. In October 2015, the Bahrain National Institution for Human Rights (BNIHR) came to Ireland on a training visit, which included meetings with Irish human rights and civil society organisations. Officials from my Department also met with this group, and set out Ireland’s support for
human rights promotion across the Middle East region. We also engage with a number of Irish and international NGOs on human rights issues in Bahrain.

Ireland’s concerns about human rights issues in Bahrain, in particular around civil liberties, are also regularly conveyed to the Bahraini authorities. In March, officials from my Department met with an official from the Bahraini Embassy in London to discuss the human rights situation in Bahrain, and this specific case was discussed. My officials also raised ongoing human rights issues with Bahrain in the context of Bahrain’s Universal Periodic Review, which took place in Geneva last week. In advance of this review, in early February the Irish Mission to the UN in Geneva supported an event by the Bahrain Center for Human Rights.

Further, Ireland’s (non-resident) Ambassador to Bahrain met with the Bahraini Deputy Minister for International Affairs, Abdullah Bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, at the beginning of this year and they discussed human rights. As such, my Department utilises all possible opportunities to express Ireland’s concerns about the human rights situation in Bahrain to the Bahraini authorities, and the case of this individual in particular has been raised where appropriate.

The Deputy puts this question to me at a time where we have witnessed some deterioration in the human rights situation in Bahrain, in particular in the targeting those who express dissent or criticism of the Bahraini Government. My Department will continue to monitor the situation in Bahrain, including this particular case, and will also continue to call on the Bahraini Government to make good on their stated commitment to make progress in the area of human rights.

United Nations

316. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the way in which Ireland voted during a recent vote at the United Nations in relation Saudi Arabia’s seat on the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women; the reason for the position taken at the vote; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22110/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): At the UN voting on resolutions takes place in public and there is transparency about the policy positions adopted by countries.

Since 1947 the rules of procedure governing General Assembly elections provide that UN elections take place by secret ballot. The well-established convention among the 193 Member States of the UN is that votes are not publicly disclosed as to do so could seriously damage bilateral relations between States. It would also likely seriously disadvantage smaller States. Accordingly, I do not propose to abandon a practice that has been in place for over six decades and observed by all previous governments. To do so would be harmful to Ireland’s capacity to engage at the UN and harmful to our capacity to conduct sensitive international relations.

It should be noted that in the election to the Commission on the Status of Women, the Asia-Pacific Group put forward five countries for five seats on the 45-member Commission which produces non-binding conclusions on an annual basis.

Ireland has a very strong record on promoting the rights of women and girls at the United Nations. We are a leading voice in this field and we currently chair the Commission for the Status of Women.
317. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if long term observers sent by his Department are paid remuneration; if so, the levels at which; if selection for such assignments is subject to confirmation that the observer is currently tax compliant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22149/17]

318. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the amount spent on sending election observers abroad in each of the past three years and to date in 2017; the categories of election observers and others that are entitled to the payment of the unvouched observer grant of €600; if the payment of this grant is subject to confirmation that the beneficiary is currently tax compliant; if there are circumstances in which this grant is repayable; if so, the details of same; the items the grant covers; when and the way in which the amount was determined at the current level; his plans to expand payment of this grant to professional election observers not connected with the 2013 roster that volunteer their expertise abroad; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22150/17]

319. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to concerns that approximately a third of the 2013 election roster members have not responded to calls to observe elections; if his Department has conducted research into the reasons for such non participation; if so, the reasons identified; if there is a process to replace such persons with new election observers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22151/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 317 to 319, inclusive, together.

International election monitoring missions play an important role in the promotion of democracy and human rights. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade maintains a roster of individuals who are available to participate in election observation missions organised in the main by the OSCE and the EU.

Members of the roster who are nominated as long or short term election observers by the Department do not receive remuneration. They are paid a daily allowance, determined by the EU and the OSCE, based on local cost of living, to cover the cost of food, accommodation and expenses. The Department does not seek tax clearance certification from observers prior to participation in a mission.

The table below sets out the costs of deploying election observers, together with the numbers and categories of observers and elections observed, for the years 2014, 2015, 2016 and to date 2017.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Long Term Observer</th>
<th>Short Term Observer</th>
<th>No. of Countries to which Observers were deployed</th>
<th>Total costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>€156,255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>€137,271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>€253,677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>€27,185</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The grant of €600 is paid once in a 12-month period, to cover pre-departure expenses in-
cluding vaccinations and transport costs ahead of travel to the country in question. The election observation roster is the only means through which the Department provides a structure to support Irish election observers. A number of independent NGOs also send monitors to observe elections throughout the world and the Department is aware of a number of Irish nationals who have deployed on such missions. These individuals can, of course, avail of consular advice and assistance, but are not eligible for the pre-departure grant, which is only paid to observers who have succeeded in being selected for the election roster.

In relation to the level of response from roster members to calls to observe elections, the situation is that 133 members of the current roster have taken part in missions since 2013. 61 members have not yet done so. A significant factor in this is that the number of applicants for election missions is always higher than the number of available places. I understand that some 29 members of the current roster have yet to apply to participate in a mission, which represents under 15% of the membership. As has been the practice to date, all roster members will be invited to apply to participate in any mission to which Ireland proposes to deploy observers, with a view to ensuring the widest possible participation in election missions by roster members. It is envisaged that the current roster will operate until May 2018.

Office of Public Works Projects

320. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the security measures that will be put in place once Seanad Éireann temporarily relocates to the National Museum of Ireland; the fire safety measures to be implemented; if these will require additional structural amendments to the building; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21623/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Seán Canney):** The works relating to the temporary relocation of Seanad Éireann to areas of the National Museum of Ireland require consideration under the provisions of Part 9 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). The design and specification of the works necessary as a result of this relocation take full account of the security and fire safety considerations arising with this temporary move and also any structural amendments to the building arising from these works.

As the written submissions and observations received under that process are still under consideration, it would not be appropriate to comment further on this matter.

Public Procurement Contracts Data

321. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of tender competitions for building construction over €250,000 issued to construction companies over each of the past six years; the initial cost of each tender at contract award stage; the agreed final account or total amount paid in each case; the reasons for and details of overruns; the specific procurement method in each tender or contract award case; if former employees were engaged at any stage on construction projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21517/17]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform allocates capital funding between departments/sectors, on a multi-annual basis, based on the Government’s capital plan. Responsibility for selecting the individual projects to be funded within the various departmental/sectoral allocations is then
a matter for the relevant individual Minister to decide, based on their priorities for the sector (and subject to agreement by Government, where necessary).

Capital expenditure is sanctioned through the line departments or bodies given a delegated sanctioning role by those departments. These ‘sanctioning authorities’ are responsible for monitoring the projects and dealing with cost overruns that arise within their capital sanctions. The Public Spending Code published by my Department sets out the principles which apply in relation to project appraisal, value for money etc., and which continue to apply throughout the implementation phase.

A project must complete the review stages set out in the Public Spending Code before sanction is given to go out to tender. At each review stage the project is evaluated to ensure it continues to meet its objectives, the budget is reviewed and adjustments undertaken as necessary. Once tenders are received the sanctioning authority must review the tender report and give permission for a contract to be awarded with an established construction budget.

It is a matter for the contracting authority who has awarded the contract to manage its performance thereafter and report on budgetary matters to the capital sanctioning authority concerned. The extent of cost increases on individual capital projects is a matter for each sanctioning authority, the details are not held centrally and therefore cannot be provided by my Department.

All public works projects that are delivered under the Exchequer-funded element of the Government’s capital plan must be procured in accordance with the provisions laid down in the Capital Works Management Framework (CWMF). The CWMF is mandated by circular and was developed to provide an integrated set of contractual provisions, guidance material, technical templates and procedures which cover all aspects of the delivery process of a public works project from inception to final project delivery and review. The structure of this strategic framework complements the Public Spending Code.

A central pillar to the successful outcome of a construction project is a clearly defined set of contract conditions. The standard public works contract which must be used without amendment (unless otherwise sanctioned) is a lump sum, fixed-price contract and includes, amongst other important elements, a set of tightly defined circumstances where the contract sum and the project’s completion date may be adjusted. It is a general principle that public works projects are put out to tender on the basis of a comprehensively defined set of project requirements so that tenderers can provide a lump sum price for the completion of the project.

Notwithstanding that, the conditions of construction contracts must make provision for change after the contract is awarded whether that is due to unforeseen circumstances or brought about by a change in the contracting authority’s requirements. Careful management pre-procurement is required to ensure that neither scenario arises since changes are disruptive and costly in the construction phase. Public procurement law also recognises both eventualities and Article 72 of the EU 2014 Procurement Directives sets limits for both types of changes. Where these limits are exceeded a new procurement process is required.

With regard to the engagement of former employees of the public service on construction projects it is incumbent on contracting authorities to ensure that a conflict of interest does not arise in the procurement of public contracts generally. Article 24 of 2014/24/EU makes specific provision in this regard.

A key element of the Public Service Reform agenda is to reduce costs and achieve better value for money through reform of public procurement. In 2012 the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) was established as an office under my Department to lead on the Public
Procurement Reform Programme by:

- Integrating procurement policy, strategy and operations in one office;

- Strengthening spend analytics and data management; and

- Securing sustainable savings

Much of the information sought by the Deputy up to and including the award of the contract is provided by contracting authorities as part of their obligations under procurement rules. Under EU Directives on public procurement public works, supplies and service contracts above certain thresholds must be advertised on the Official Journal of the EU (OJEU) and awarded on the basis of objective and non-restrictive criteria. For works contracts the current threshold is €5.225 million.

In relation to contracts valued below the EU thresholds, the general requirement is that works contracts above €50,000, be advertised on the national eProcurement portal www.etenders.gov.ie. It should be noted that not all contract notices give rise to a contract award.

The EU Directives require contract award notices for contracts above EU thresholds to be published in the OJEU not later than 30 days of the award of the contract. Guidelines in Circular 10/14 issued by my Department also require public bodies from 1 August 2014 to publish all contract award notices over €25,000 on eTenders. The publication of contract award notices is facilitated by the OGP through eTenders. It is important to note that the OGP does not validate the contract award data entered by contracting authorities on eTenders and this information does not constitute a contract repository.

The information sought by the Deputy relating to the tender and award of contracts has been forwarded in an excel spreadsheet from the data input by contracting authorities on eTenders. It is structured in columns setting out Tender ID; Contract Type; Contracting Authority; Tender Name; Procurement Procedure Type; Contract Award Value (for contracts above EU threshold, and below EU threshold contracts from 1 August 2014); Date of Publication of Contract Notice.

The OGP migrated to a new eProcurement platform in 2012 and, even though contracts were required to be published on the eTenders platform since well before this date, it is not possible to distinguish notice types prior to that date. The information provided from the current eTenders platform is all works contract notices (for projects with a value in excess of €50,000) published on the eTenders system from November 2012 (when the current version of eTenders became operational) to December 2016.

For the purposes of the response the Deputy should note that all contracts for commercial semi-state bodies have not been included on the basis that they are typically funded from their own revenue streams. It is acknowledged that some of these contracts may have been funded by the taxpayer but the source of funding cannot be determined from the contract notice. It should also be noted that the list of contract notices include framework agreements which are not, in and of themselves, contracts. Once a framework is concluded, contracts may be awarded in accordance with the call off rules for the framework. The list also includes Prior Information Notices (PIN) which are early indicators to the market of an intention to publish a tender within 12 months of the publication of the PIN, they do not necessarily result in the publication of a contract notice which initiates a tender.
322. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the Civil Service pension entitlements of a person (details supplied) who worked as a clerical officer. [21520/17]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** My Department is currently making efforts to establish the entitlements of the person whose details have been supplied.

**Cosaint Fostaíochta**

323. D’fhiafraigh **Deputy Catherine Connolly** den Aire Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe i gcás ina ndéantar tromaochta ar Stáitseirbhíseach nó ina gcaitear go héagórach leis nó léi ar shli eile, an bhfuil an ceart sa thógáil chun an Choimisiún um Chaidreamh san Áit Oibre san cheart a chosaint leis an Chomhairle um Chaidreamh san Áit Oibre nó a chosaint leis an chéad clár, agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [21525/17]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Tá rochtain ag Státseirbhísigh ar an gCoimisiún um Chaidreamh san Áit Oibre le haghaidh bunaithe ar chearta (M.sh saoire mháithreachais, saoire thuiscintheoireachta srl.). Tá rochtain ag Státseirbhísigh ar séasúr tríú páirtí éagsúla le haghaidh gheall ar leas an duine (M.sh caidreamh tionsclaíoch, casaoídí srl) mar shampla an Bord um Achomhairc Smachta le haghaidh imeachta ar raonachta agus an t-oifigeach idirghabhála do chasaoid aonair.

Civil servants have access to third party appeals in the WRC for rights based claims (e.g. maternity leave, parental leave, etc.). For interest based claims (e.g. industrial relations, grievances etc), civil servants have access to a range of third party mechanisms such as the Disciplinary Appeals Board for disciplinary issues and the Mediation Officer for individual grievances.

**Tuarastail Rannach**

324. D’fhiafraigh **Deputy Catherine Connolly** den Aire Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe i dtáca leis an líntas ar a dtugtar PCW 1% go coitianta: 1. i gnáth-theanga agus i dtéarmaí praiticiúla, céard is cuspoir don líntas sin; 2. cé acu aicmí a thagann an líntas agus cé c’fhios an chead chomhlauchtái stáit a iocann; 3. cé fhor mhaoiripreachta a dhéanann a Roinn ar chearta; 4. i gcás ró-íocaíochta, cé n-aonair a thugann a Roinn i dtaca leis an airgead a fháil ar ais; 5. i gcás ró-íocaíochta le duine atá imithe ar scar, cé n-aonair a thugann a Roinn i dtaca leis an airgead a fháil ar ais; 6. i gcás ró-íocaíochta le duine atá imithe ar scar, an bhfuil le duine i dtaca leis an airgead a fháil ar ais; 7. i gcás ró-íocaíochta le duine atá imithe ar scar, an bhfuil le duine i dtaca leis an airgead a fháil ar ais; 8. i gcás ró-íocaíochta le duine atá imithe ar scar, an bhfuil le duine i dtaca leis an airgead a fháil ar ais; 9. i gcás ró-íocaíochta le duine atá imithe ar scar, an bhfuil le duine i dtaca leis an airgead a fháil ar ais; 10. i gcás ró-íocaíochta le duine atá imithe ar scar, an bhfuil le duine i dtaca leis an airgead a fháil ar ais.

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Tugadh an íocaíocht, a thagraíonn an Teachta di, isteach faoi na forálacha do chomhaontuithe nó n-íocaíocht san Ranna/Oifigiúil. Ina thaonta sin, thug sé solúbthacht don bhainistíocht a thógáil ar ais as an mbuiséad do bhlianta tar éis don duine dul ar scar; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [21526/17]

**Íocaíocht 1% Clár um Iomaíochas agus Obair 1994 – 1996.**

Íocaíocht 1% Clár um Iomaíochas agus Obair bunaithe ar na hathruithe ar an gclár dhá a baintear le coigiltis agus feabhsúcháin sna Ranna/Oifigí ábhartha. Ina thaonta sin, thug sé solúbthacht don bhainistíocht a thógáil ar ais as an mbuiséad.
Bhain na harduithe le Seirbhísigh Pobhlách agus le Státseirbhísigh uile. Cuireadh an 1% Clár um Iomaíochas agus Obair i bhfeidhm trí scáilí pá feabhsaithe, m.sh Scáilí níos aire nó liúntas a ioc le hofigigh aonair ar bhonn buan nó ar bhonn sealadach.

Cé go raibh an chreatlach leis an 1% Clár um Iomaíochas agus Obair a úsáid forbartha ag an Roinn seo i gcomhpháirtíocht leis na ceardchumainn agus leis na comhlachtaí ionadaíochta ábhartha, is ceist é a bhaílnéann leis na Ranna/Oifigí ábhartha an dóigh a ndéanann siad an chreat don beartas a bhainistiú.

Tá beartais éagsúla forbartha agus curtha i bhfeidhm ag an Roinn seo a bhaineann le ró-íocaíochtaí tuarastail. Leagadh amach na socruithe riaracháin do na haisíochtaí seo, aíshabháil ó na teidlíochtaí pinsean san áireamh, i gciorclán 10/2017 Ró-íocaíochtaí tuarastail, liúntais agus costais do bhaill foirne/iar-bhaill foirne/phinsinéirí a aíshlaimh”.

The payment to which the Deputy refers was introduced under the provisions of the local bargaining arrangements of the Programme for Competitiveness and Work 1994 to 1996 (PCW).

The PCW 1% was paid on the basis of the implementation of changes involving savings and improvements in relevant Departments and Offices. Furthermore it provided management with flexibility in addressing and enhancing efficiency and effectiveness.

The PCW increases applied to all public and civil servants. The PCW 1% was implemented in the Civil service either by way of enhanced pay scales i.e. Higher Scales or alternatively by way of the payment of an allowance to individual officers on a permanent or temporary basis.

While the framework for utilising the PCW 1% was developed by this Department, in consultation with the relevant unions and representative bodies, the management of the framework policy is a matter for individual Departments and Offices.

In respect of overpayments of salary, this Department has developed and implemented a number of policies which address the issue. Most recently Circular 10/2017 Recovery of Salary, Allowances, and Expenses Overpayments made to Staff Members/Former Staff Members/ Pensioners set out the administrative arrangements for the repayment of such overpayments, including recovery from pension entitlements.

Pension Provisions

325. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he has received a letter from this Deputy dated 3 April 2017 concerning the issue of pension entitlement for community employment scheme supervisors and assistant supervisors; when a response will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21590/17]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** It is expected that a reply will issue to the Deputy shortly.

Public Sector Pensions Data

326. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide the distribution of public sector pensions in €5,000 bands (details supplied) for each of the years 2015 and 2016 in tabular form;; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21593/17]
Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Based on the data available to my Department, the table sets out the estimated pension distribution position at end-2015. As a data set for 2016 is not available to this Department, it is not possible to provide this information in respect of the end-2016 position.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>Estimated Number of Pensions in Payment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less Than</td>
<td>€10,000</td>
<td>51,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€10,000</td>
<td>€15,000</td>
<td>14,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€15,000</td>
<td>€20,000</td>
<td>17,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€20,000</td>
<td>€25,000</td>
<td>12,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€25,000</td>
<td>€30,000</td>
<td>13,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€30,000</td>
<td>€35,000</td>
<td>18,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€35,000</td>
<td>€40,000</td>
<td>13,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€40,000</td>
<td>€45,000</td>
<td>5,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€45,000</td>
<td>€50,000</td>
<td>3,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€50,000</td>
<td>€55,000</td>
<td>1,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€55,000</td>
<td>€60,000</td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€60,000</td>
<td>€65,000</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€65,000</td>
<td>€70,000</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€70,000</td>
<td>€75,000</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€75,000</td>
<td>€80,000</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€80,000</td>
<td>€85,000</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€85,000</td>
<td>€90,000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€90,000</td>
<td>€95,000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€95,000</td>
<td>€100,000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Flood Prevention Measures

327. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the scores recorded for each area across the State in which a cost benefit analysis of planned flood defence schemes has been conducted by the OPW and the relevant authorities, in tabular form; the minimum cost benefit score required to be achieved by an area in order for scheme works to be deemed viable; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21673/17]

328. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the steps which will be taken to provide flood protection and defences in areas in which schemes have been deemed to be financially unviable; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21674/17]

329. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the parameters used and methodology employed in order to assess each flood defence scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21675/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Seán Canney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 327 to 329, inclusive, together.

The core strategy for addressing areas at potentially significant risk from flooding is the OPW’s Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme. The Programme is focussing on 300 Areas for Further Assessment (AFAs) including 90 coastal areas,
mainly in urban locations nationwide, identified as being at potentially significant risk of flooding. It is the principal vehicle for implementing the EU Floods Directive and national flood policy.

The Programme, which is being undertaken by engineering consultants on behalf of the Office of Public Works (OPW) working in partnership with the local authorities, involves the production of predictive flood mapping for each location, the development of preliminary flood risk management options and the production of Flood Risk Management Plans.

The OPW is finalising the Flood Risk Management Plans that will be submitted to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform for his approval.

In arriving at a preferred measure, the OPW having assessed the flood risk for each area considered a wide range of flood risk management options. These ranged from non-structural methods that comprise actions typically aimed at reducing the impacts of flooding to structural works that reduce flood flows or levels in the area at risk or that protect the area against flooding.

The OPW consulted on the possible feasible options for each AFA with the public and communities in the AFAs during the end of 2015 and the first half of 2016.

Deciding which option best addresses the flood risk for each area was decided against agreed Flood Risk Management Objectives. The Objectives are aimed at considering potential benefits and impacts across a broad range of factors including:

- Economic - costs relative to economic benefits
- Environmental and Cultural - impacts for the environment and assets and collections of cultural importance
- Social - impacts for people, the community and society
- Technical - effectiveness in managing or reducing flood risk

While each of these factors is treated equally, there are a range of objectives within each that are prioritised by their importance. These Flood Risk Management Objectives and their relative scores were developed by the OPW through separate and extensive public consultation.

Each of the possible options for each AFA (except those assessed to have a low risk) was tested and scored against these objectives to determine how well each option contributes towards meeting the defined goals.

The option that best meets the objectives was identified in the draft Flood Risk Management Plan as the preferred measure for an area and a further local and statutory consultation was completed by the OPW on these draft Plans during the second half of 2016.

While the information in relation to the costs for each measure are not available at this time, major defence schemes are only considered to protect against a 100 year flood risk and where the benefits at least equal the costs. In cases where a scheme is technically viable and has a benefit to cost ratio greater than 0.5 but less than 1, a more detailed assessment of the costs can be progressed to determine if an economically viable measure may in fact exist that could justify the progression to full project-level assessment.

The OPW operates a Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme to provide funding to local authorities to undertake minor flood mitigation works and coastal protection measures within their area. The scheme is available for projects that are estimated to cost
up to €500,000 in each instance. Applications are considered in the context of specific technical, economic, social and environmental criteria. Proposals must meet a minimum benefit to cost ratio of 1.5:1 in order to qualify. Further details on the scheme are available on the OPW website, www.opw.ie.

The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform in September 2015 announced details of a €430 million six-year programme of capital investment on flood defence measures as part of the Government’s overall Capital Investment Plan 2016 – 2021. During this time, the annual allocation for flood defence schemes will more than double to €100 million.

The flood protection capital programme 2016 – 2021 will build on the very significant investment that has already been undertaken in flood relief works throughout the country over the last 20 years. It will provide the means to provide feasible protection to homes and businesses in major urban areas together with investment in many minor works projects to address more localised flooding problems.

**State Properties**

330. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will make a building (details supplied) in County Kerry available to the community; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21709/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Seán Canney):** As part of the Programme for a Partnership Government, the Policing Authority is currently overseeing a review of closed Garda stations. An Garda Síochána are currently carrying out this review.

The outcome of this review may influence any decision that the Commissioners of Public Works reach with regard to the future use of this property and the Commissioners advise me that they will assess the options for the property at Moyvane following the conclusion of the review.

**Lease Agreements**

331. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will extend a lease on lands (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21606/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Seán Canney):** Negotiations with the current licensee to extend the grazing license will be initiated shortly.

**Tender Process**

332. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to revise and update existing tendering practices and procurement procedures employed across the public sector with a view to ensuring that all private companies contracted to provide goods and or services and which are in receipt of public moneys are compliant with their legal obligations and responsibilities as employers; if he will guarantee that the rights of their employees are both recognised and respected, including employee entitlements such as pay,
leave and working conditions, in accordance with the law; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21773/17]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The position is that when carrying out procurement procedures contracting authorities require suppliers to comply with a wide variety of legislation in areas that would include taxation, social policy, the environment and employment law. Compliance with the legislation covering these areas is rightly a matter for the relevant Department or agency. Therefore employment law, health and safety and their enforcement, are matters for my colleague Ms. Mary Mitchell O’Connor TD Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

Recently revised public procurement procedures require applicants to meet certain standards when applying for public contracts. The criteria upon which contracting authorities may exclude applicants from the award procedure of public contracts are set out in Regulation 57 of S.I. No. 284 of 2016 – European Union (Award of Public Authority Contracts) Regulations 2016 and Article 57 (4a) and Recitals (100) and (101) of Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on public procurement. Before an applicant, in relation to certain breaches is excluded, the applicant may make a case and provide supporting evidence as to why it should not be excluded. The contracting authority must consider this evidence before deciding whether to exclude or include an applicant. In addition, the qualifying tenderer must submit signed declarations stating that none of the circumstances outlined in Regulation 57 of S.I. No. 284 or Article 57 of 2014/24/EU apply.

The Workplace Relations Commission (WPC) (comprising the former National Employment Rights Authority) is responsible for enforcing minimum statutory employment rights and entitlements in the State and, in undertaking that role, carries out a range of functions including the provision of employment rights information and the inspection of employment related records. The WPC operates a system of risk based inspections in sectors where there are identifiable risks. Inspections are also carried out in response to complaints received and routine inspections are undertaken as a control measure.

**Flood Risk Management**

333. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will approve the final flood risk management plans, in view of the fact this will enable the measures set out in the plans to progress through detailed design, the relevant planning and approval processes on towards construction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21909/17]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I understand that the Office of Public Works intends to submit the Flood Risk Management Plans to my Department for approval over the coming months. On receipt, my Department will undertake the necessary reviews to ensure timely approval of the plans.

**Public Sector Staff Recruitment**

334. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the reason the Public Appointments Commission will not recognise a diploma in management and employee relations awarded in 2002 through a college (details supplied) as a HETAC level six or seven in view of the fact another college (details supplied) has been affiliated with HETAC since 2001 and the course was advertised as a major award; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21948/17]
Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware, the Public Appointments Service (PAS) is an independent, statutory body which provides professional recruitment and selection services to the civil service.

All candidates qualifications are examined to ensure that they meet the minimum eligibility requirements for the post. Further details about the post and qualifications would be required in order to comment further on this matter.

Public Sector Pay

335. Deputy Jan O’Sullivan asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the planned timeframe for achieving equality of pay for those that entered the public service following the measures taken under the FEMPI legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21990/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I refer the Deputy to my answer to Parliamentary Question No. 7 on the 2nd March 2017.

Flood Relief Schemes

336. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the OPW has concluded that the cost of planned flood relief works in Carrigaline, County Cork, exceeds the likely benefits of such works; the position in relation to the OPW’s plans for flood relief works in the town; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22056/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Seán Canney): In the study for the Lee Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM), the Cost Benefit Analysis for Carrigaline had shown the identified flood relief measures for Carrigaline to have a Cost Benefit Ratio (CBR) of just less than 1. A ratio less than 1 indicates the costs to provide a flood relief scheme to a design level of protection (100yr fluvial and 200 year tidal) is greater that the benefits, thus the scheme would not be financially viable.

A review of the measures for Carrigaline set out in the Lee CFRAM study is being undertaken currently by the OPW. This involves a more detailed assessment of the costs of such measures with a view to determining if an economically viable measure may in fact exist that could justify the progression of the measures to full project-level assessment.

This review is expected to be completed in the second half of 2017.

Creative Ireland Programme

337. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the amount of funding which has been allocated and spent on promoting the Creative Ireland brand to date. [22072/17]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): In Budget 2017, I secured €5m to commence the implementation of the Creative Ireland programme which includes an ambitious plan to deliver 10 major initiatives by the end of this year. Further details of these initiatives are available on http://creative.ireland.ie. To date, €220,000 has been spent on promotion and public engagement under the Creative Ireland
Programme. This includes the hosting of Culture Ireland workshops in every county in Ireland; the development of 2 websites to inform the public and home and abroad: Creative.Ireland.ie and Ireland.ie, and the content of those sites; and the launch of the Programme in Ireland, New York, London and Washington.

**CLÁR Programme**

338. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs her views on a matter (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21452/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Michael Ring):** The 2017 CLÁR programme was launched on 31 March 2017 and will provide funding for small scale infrastructural projects in disadvantaged rural areas that have experienced significant levels of de-population. The allocation for CLÁR for 2017 is €5 million and funding is available under the following measures:

- **Measure 1:** Support for Schools/Community Safety Measures
- **Measure 2:** Play Areas
- **Measure 3:** Targeted Community Infrastructure Needs
- **Measure 4:** First Response Support Measure

Applications under Measures 1, 2 and 3 were to be submitted through the Local Authorities and each Local Authority based in a CLÁR area received notification of the scheme on 31 March. Measure 4 is targeted at voluntary organisations involved in emergency rescue or first response efforts.

The CLÁR scheme requires all projects under Measures 1, 2 and 3 to be based on applications made by community groups or schools; however, it was a matter for each Local Authority to determine how it wished to publicise the scheme. Any applications that are submitted to my Department for assessment that are not supported by an application from a relevant community group/school will not be approved for funding.

The closing date for applications under the 2017 CLÁR programme was Friday, 5 May 2017. I expect to be in a position to announce the successful applicants under the programme by the end of May and details of the successful applicants will be available on my Department’s website.

I see no reason why all applications made to the Local Authorities under Clár should not appear on the Local Authority websites also.

**National Museum**

339. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if her Department has a written oversight arrangement with the National Museum of Ireland as per the code of practice for the governance of State bodies published in 2016; and if so, if she will make a copy of this available. [21508/17]

340. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and
Gaeltacht Affairs the way in which roles and responsibilities are delineated between the National Museum of Ireland and her Department in order that effective accountability is possible only with clearly defined roles and responsibilities between her Department and State bodies; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21509/17]

341. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the way in which the National Museum of Ireland operates as an autonomous body as set out in the National Cultural Institutions Act 1997; the detail of this autonomy in view of the fact the museum is being funded primarily by State funds and its board is comprised of ministerial appointees; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21510/17]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 339 to 341, inclusive, together.

As the Deputy will be aware, the National Museum of Ireland was established under the National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997 (the 1997 Act). Section 11 (1) of the 1997 Act sets out the principal functions of the Board of the Museum. Section 11(2) deals with the powers of the Board of the Museum. The Act also specifies certain points where the involvement of the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs is required eg section 34 where the consent of the Minister and the Minister for Finance is required to borrowing by the Board.

It should also be noted that the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, 2016, sets out the key functions which all State Boards should fulfil including: reviewing and guiding strategic direction and major plans of action, risk management policies and procedures, annual budgets and business plans, setting performance objectives, monitoring implementation and State body performance, and overseeing major capital expenditure and investment decisions.

In recent years, my Department has entered into a Service Level Agreement with the National Museum. This set out the framework for the relationship between the Department and the institution and was a performance contract in which an agreed level of service was formalised between my Department and the institution. This was to ensure that resources are used in an effective and cost effective manner to deliver quality services to the public. The Agreement set out the NMI’s targets for the year and defined the output and outcome indicators on which performance should be measured. It also contains the commitments of the Department.

The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies was revised in 2016. In line with the updated Code, my Department has prepared a draft Oversight Agreement and draft Performance Delivery Agreement (previously Service Level Agreement). My Department has recently written to the Board of the National Museum with regard to consideration of a draft Oversight Agreement between the Department and the Board of the National Museum.

**Cycling Facilities Provision**

342. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 760 of 2 May 2017, the timeline for the conclusion of the discussions to allow the council to submit its EIS statement to An Bord Pleanála (details supplied). [22016/17]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** As it is unclear to my Department as to what exactly has been referred to, I have asked my officials to contact the Deputy directly on this matter.
343. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if she will expedite an application for CLÁR funding for a group (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [22022/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Michael Ring):** The 2017 CLÁR programme was launched on 31 March 2017 and will provide funding for small scale infrastructural projects in disadvantaged rural areas that have experienced significant levels of de-population. The allocation for CLÁR for 2017 is €5 million and funding is available under four different Measures.

Measure 1 will provide support for safety initiatives such as warning signs, road markings and footpaths in the environs of schools and community facilities.

Measure 2 will support the enhancement and development of play areas in schools and communities.

Measure 3 will support innovative community-based projects that do not qualify for assistance under other public schemes.

Measure 4 will provide support to voluntary organisations that provide First Response services in rural areas, for the replacement or upgrading of equipment or vehicles used for emergency response.

The closing date for all applications under the 2017 CLÁR programme was Friday 5 May 2017. My officials do not appear to have received an application from the particular group referred to by the Deputy.

I expect to be in a position to announce the successful applicants under the CLÁR programme by the end of May.

**Western Development Commission**

344. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the position regarding the appointment of new members and a chair to the Western Development Commission; his plans to give extra funding and responsibilities to the commission in view of the recent statement by the outgoing chair of the commission in which he criticised the Department’s and the Government’s attitude to it; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [22083/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Michael Ring):** Expressions of interest for appointment to the Board of the Western Development Commission (WDC) were recently advertised on the website www.stateboards.ie, with a closing date of 26th April 2017. The expressions of interest which were received will now be assessed through a process organised by the Public Appointments Service (PAS) in accordance with the Guidelines for Appointments to State Boards.

PAS will provide me, for consideration, with a list of candidates who have been assessed as meeting the criteria for the role of Board member. I will appoint a new Board and Chair as soon as possible once these processes have been completed.

I do not agree with recent comments made by the former Chair of the WDC questioning
the Government’s commitment to regional and rural development and to the WDC. Regional and rural development is a key priority for the Government and this is reflected in the many commitments in the Programme for a Partnership Government to support regional and rural progress. Significant developments in this regard include the publication of the Action Plan for Rural Development, the establishment of a Taskforce to progress the concept of an Atlantic Economic Corridor, and the development of a National Planning Framework which is being coordinated on behalf of the Government by Minister Coveney.

The Programme for a Partnership Government also includes a specific commitment to reinforce the role of the WDC so that it continues to play an important part in the Government’s efforts to achieve more effective regional development.

In this context, the WDC has been involved in an increasing number of initiatives, some of which go beyond the role the body has played to date, and which can develop its potential further. For example:

- The WDC is represented on the Monitoring Committee for the Action Plan for Rural Development which is chaired by Minister Humphreys. The WDC is assisting my Department, as part of a sub-group of the Monitoring Committee, in developing indicators to measure the impact of the Action Plan on rural communities.

- The WDC is also represented on the Implementing Committees which oversee the delivery of the Action Plans for Jobs for the West and North-West regions.

- The Commission is represented on the Taskforce which I established in March to progress the concept of an Atlantic Economic Corridor along the western seaboard. The WDC is involved in a sub-group of the Taskforce which is mapping out the options for EU funding which could support the development of the Western region.

- The WDC has also assisted my Department in participating in, and reporting on, a public Dialogue on the implications of Brexit for areas such as rural communities, regional SMEs, culture, the Irish language, and heritage and outdoor recreation.

Strengthening the Commission’s role in this way is not contingent on providing them with extra funding, but shows how their expertise and potential can be drawn upon to support the Government’s objective of supporting economic and social development across the regions.

**Departmental Expenditure**

345. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the reason the gross capital expenditure of her Department is 34.6% below profile for the first four months of the year; the steps she will take to ensure a full spend of capital allocated to her Department in 2017 in view of the slow progress in spending the carry forward of capital to her Department and local authorities in 2017 in carrying out works for which they received money from her Department in 2016; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [22085/17]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** There is a capital underspend of approximately €7 million or 34% against profile within my Department’s Vote for the year to 30th April 2017. The underspend has primarily occurred because of timing issues in relation to the quarterly drawdown of funding by bodies and institutions under the aegis of my Department and also some delays in the drawdown of funding in relation to a number of schemes and projects across my Department’s programme.
areas. In terms of capital carryover, provision is made in the Revised Estimates Volume for the carryover of unspent capital funding from the previous year for expenditure on priority capital programmes, subject to a Ministerial Order being made by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform before 31st March in the year of carryover. The amount of capital funding carried over into 2017 for my Department was €13.548 million. Since the making of the relevant Order by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform on the 6th March 2017, expenditure totalling just over €2.1 million has been incurred from the carryover. No expenditure could be incurred against capital carryover prior to the 6th March 2017.

My Department continues to engage closely with Local Authorities to ensure that all allocated funding is spent promptly and in accordance with project proposals and the provisions of the Public Spending Code. My officials are continuing to impress on all Local Authorities the need to have their projects completed as soon as possible. In this context, satisfactory progress in relation to projects under the 2016 schemes will be an important consideration in any 2017 funding decisions.

Expenditure across all programme areas within my Department’s Vote will continue to be carefully monitored throughout the year to ensure the best use of available financial resources.

Foras na Gaeilge

346. D’fhiafraigh Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív den Aire Ealaion, Oidhreachta, Gnóthaí Réigiúnachta, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta ar thug an Chomhairle Aireachta Thuaidh-Theas cead d’Foras na Gaeilge léas a shíniú maidir le seilbh a ghlacadh ar cheannáras i mBaile Átha Cliath; céard é fad an léasa; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [22086/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Seán Kyne): Dírím aird an Teachta ar m’fhreagra ar cheist Dála 77 den 2 Bealtaine 2017 inar mhínigh mé gur ceisteanna oibríochtúla d’Foras na Gaeilge na ceisteanna maidir le léasa.

Mar is eol don Teachta, leagtar amach na nósanna imeachta airgeadais agus na socrúcháin cuntasaíochta don bhForas Teanga i Meamram Airgeadais ata céadaithe ag na Ranna Airgeadais sa dá dhlinsé. I gcomhréir le h-alt 5 den Mheamram sin, leagtar amach socrúcháin tarmligthe in Aguisín 2, ina measc g fheidir leis na gniomhaireachtaí dul isteach i gcomhaontaithe léasa le haghaidh cóiriocht. Má shaíonn luach bliantúil aon léasa teorainn de €37,500, áfach, bionn gá le cead roimh ré ó na Ranna Urraíochta. Sa chomhthéacs sin, chuir Foras na Gaeilge cás gnó cuimsitheach faoi bhráid na Ranna Urraíochta agus tá cead foirmiúil tugtha i eithn an chás gnó sin.

Tuigtear dom gur léas 30 bliain atá i gceist, le clásal scoir tar éis 15 bliana, ach ní shíneofar an léas foirmiúil go dtí go mbeidh an obair aithchóirithe atá á déanamh ar an bhfoirgneamh curtha i gcrích go sásúil i dtreo dheireadh na bliana.

National Raised Bog Management Plan

347. Deputy Eamon Ryan asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs her plans for the rewetting of midland bogs. [21886/17]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Ireland’s 53 raised bog special areas of conservation are primarily located in the
midlands. The National Raised Bog SAC Management Plan 2017-2022, due to be published in the coming period subject to Government approval, will set out how these raised bog special areas of conservation are to be managed, conserved and restored.

In November 2015 the European Commission approved funding for a €5.4m project under the EU LIFE 2014-2020 programme for the restoration of active raised bog in 12 special area of conservation sites in Ireland. This project, which will operate for 5 years, commenced in January 2016 and is being implemented by a project team who will work closely with local communities and stakeholders in advance of the restoration works commencing. My Department will oversee the project and contribute to its funding.

Outside of the 12 project sites, a restoration programme for the other raised bog special areas of conservation and natural heritage areas will be implemented on a phased basis taking into account a number of factors such as contribution to the national conservation targets for protected raised bog habitats, ownership matters and restoration requirements.

**National Children’s Hospital Location**

348. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health his plans to address the traffic congestion concerns of persons regarding the chosen site for the new national children’s hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21473/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The planning application to build the new children’s hospital on the St. James’s Campus included a traffic management and traffic mobility plan for the construction and operational phase which was endorsed by the National Transport Authority and Dublin City Council. A 10-day oral hearing took place in December 2015 in which traffic evidence was presented in detail and which allowed for cross questioning by those who had concerns. On 28 April 2016, An Bord Pleanála granted planning permission for the new children’s hospital on the campus shared with St. James’s Hospital and for satellite urgent care centres on the campuses of Tallaght and Connolly Hospital without change to the proposed traffic and mobility plan.

An Bord Pleanála’s inspector’s report, which includes assessment and recommendations in relation to traffic impact at construction and operational stages, can be found at [http://www.pleanala.ie/documents/reports/PA0/RPA0043.pdf](http://www.pleanala.ie/documents/reports/PA0/RPA0043.pdf).

**Medical Card Eligibility**

349. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 608 of 29 November 2016, the position regarding his Department’s considerations with regard to the issue raised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22012/17]

482. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 608 of 29 November 2016, if he will raise the income thresholds for medical cards to ensure that persons are not unfairly disadvantaged as a result of pension increases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22013/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 349 and 482 together.

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 came into effect in March 2017. It would be the Government’s intention that people would not be adversely affected by this increase. I have asked the HSE to monitor the situation and to advise me if it considers that changes in the rates of Department of Social Protection benefit may affect people’s ability to qualify for a medical card.

Health Reports

350. Deputy Billy Kelleher asked the Minister for Health his views on each individual recommendation, including the measures or actions that will be undertaken to implement same in respect of the recommendations detailed in a report by an organisation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21394/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The publication from the Multiple Sclerosis Society regarding disease modifying therapies was received recently copies of the publication have been forwarded to the Department’s Chief Medical Officer and the HSE for their consideration.

Dental Services Provision

351. Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice asked the Minister for Health when his Department will replace the school dentist in the Monksland area of Athlone, County Roscommon; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21434/17]

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

352. Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice asked the Minister for Health when persons (details supplied) will receive their dental appointments under the schools scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21435/17]
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

353. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21436/17]

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 Appointments Status

354. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21437/17]

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 Appointments Status

355. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied). [21438/17]

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.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.
356. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21439/17]

**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.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

357. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21440/17]

**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.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

358. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21441/17]

**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.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

359. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21442/17]

**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.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Hospital Appointments Status

360. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21443/17]

**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.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Hospital Appointments Status

361. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21444/17]

**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 Appointments Status

362. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an assessment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21445/17]

**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.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.
363. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21446/17]

**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.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### Disabilities Assessments

364. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 240 of 6 April 2017, if he will provide a breakdown of these figures into regional areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21450/17]

**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 particular issue raised by the Deputy is a service matter for the HSE. Accordingly I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### Medical Card Applications

365. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health when a decision will be made on a medical card application on discretionary grounds for a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21458/17]

**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 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.
Health Services

366. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health if provision has been made for improvements to a health centre (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21463/17]

**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.

Hospital Staff

367. **Deputy Hildegarde Naughton** asked the Minister for Health if the maternity unit at Mayo General Hospital is the only one in the Saolta University Healthcare Group without the allocated services of a lactation consultant; his views on whether the services of such consultants are important; and, if so, the reason new mothers in this specific area are being deprived of those services. [21464/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Breastfeeding figures at first Public Health Nurse (PHN) visit and at three months are reported quarterly in the HSE Performance reports. Figures for 2016, listed in the HSE March 2017 Management Data Report, show that 56.8% of babies were reported as breastfeeding at first PHN visit (shortly after discharge from hospital), with 38.8% still breastfeeding at 3 months.

The Breastfeeding in a Healthy Ireland Health Service Breastfeeding Action Plan 2016 – 2021 (HSE, 2016) sets out the priority areas to be addressed over the next 5 years to support more mothers in Ireland to breastfeed and to contribute to increases in breastfeeding rates. Included in its action points is the appointment of Clinical Midwife Specialist Lactation Consultants in all maternity hospitals/units.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Hospitals Data

368. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of private inpatient and outpatient appointments and procedures carried out in public hospitals in each of the years 2014 to 2016, by hospital, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21468/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In response to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Hospitals Data

369. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of consultants carrying out private practices, appointments and procedures in public hospitals in each of the years 2014 to 2016, by hospital, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.
Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In response to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Mental Health Services Provision

370. Deputy David Cullinane asked the Minister for Health the recommendations from the Mental Health Commission regarding psychiatric services at UHW which have been implemented; the detail of each; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21470/17]

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.

National Maternity Hospital

371. Deputy David Cullinane asked the Minister for Health if dedicated space for private practices will be made available at the new national maternity hospital; if this will result in a cost for the taxpayer; if so, the estimated cost; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21471/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): There is no differentiation between public and private in-patient rooms in the designs for the new hospital. Indeed, all in-patient rooms are of a similar design. In order to support the current commitment in the consultants’ contracts, some private outpatient consulting space will be provided. The charge to consultants for the use of those rooms is an operational matter and will be determined in due course.

Currently, persons who opt to be treated privately on admission to a public hospital are liable for the consultants fees and hospital charges arising for that episode of care, whether paid for by the patient or by a health insurer on their behalf.

Hospital Consultant Remuneration

372. Deputy David Cullinane asked the Minister for Health the cost to the taxpayer of consultants carrying out private practices in public hospitals in each of the years 2014 to 2016, by group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21472/17]

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

373. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Health the locations persons attending the new national children’s hospital will park to attend outpatient appointments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21474/17]

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, providing urgent care as well as outpatient services including rapid access
general paediatric clinics. The aim is to improve geographic access to urgent care for children in the Greater Dublin Area and support primary and community care paediatrics, as well as reducing Emergency Department and outpatient attendance at the main site. Each centre is expected to cater for a minimum of 15,000 outpatient attendances per annum.

Parking is available at both sites for outpatient appointments. A multi-storey carpark is provided at Tallaght Hospital close to the main door and Emergency Department. At Connolly Hospital, the main public car parks are located at the front of the hospital building and a small number of parking spaces are available at the rear of the hospital building.

At the main hospital at St James’s, an underground carpark is being built which comprises 675 spaces dedicated for family use, including outpatient appointments.

Health Services Staff Recruitment

374. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if the advertisement for the midwifery lead on the national women and infants health programme was restricted to candidates working exclusively within the HSE that filed an expression of interest; if so, the reason therefore. [21475/17]

375. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the reason a post (details supplied) was not subject to the established practice of being advertised nationally and internationally on an equitable basis in order to attract candidates of the best possible calibre. [21476/17]

376. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if there was a previous internal advertisement for the post of midwifery lead on the national women and infants health programme; and if so, if this previous advertisement contained a job description and remuneration equivalent to the HSE national obstetric lead. [21477/17]

377. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the person or body that was responsible for the decision to exclude eligible national and international candidates outside the HSE from applying for the job of midwifery lead on the national women and infants health programme. [21478/17]

378. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if the decision was made to circulate the notice of the job of midwifery lead on the national women and infants health programme internally; and the criteria which was set for internal candidates. [21479/17]

379. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the progress to date on recruitment of the midwifery lead on the national women and infants health programme. [21480/17]

379. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the progress to date on recruitment of the midwifery lead on the national women and infants health programme. [21480/17]

380. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if his department and the HSE will undertake immediately to reopen and advertise the role of midwifery lead on the national women and infants health programme nationally and internationally and at a level equitable to the obstetric lead. [21481/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 374 to 380, inclusive, together.

The National Women and Infants Health Programme has been established in the HSE to lead the management, organisation and delivery of maternity, gynaecology and neonatal ser-
vices, strengthening such services by bringing together work that is currently undertaken across primary, community and acute care.

In relation to recruitment for the Programme, I understand that a first recruitment process commenced late in 2015 and was unsuccessful at that time. I have been advised that, pending the running of a further recruitment process, and in light of the importance of having a full leadership team in place, an interim appointment has been made for the Director of Midwifery post. I have asked the HSE to reply to the Deputy directly to provide a more detailed reply to these queries.

Health Services Provision

381. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide additional resources for the HSE Fairview community unit in order that it can open for an additional day (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21482/17]

**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.

Service Level Agreements

382. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health his policy position regarding the return of funding lost during the recession to section 39 organisations to enable them to restore pay to their employees in line with the pay restoration measures proposed by the Lansdowne Road Agreement for public sector workers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21483/17]

383. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health if his Department directed the HSE not to make funding available in 2017 to section 39 organisations to meet pay restoration requirements under the Lansdowne Road Agreement thereby creating a substantial inequality between the pay of section 39 employees and their HSE and section 38 counterparts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21484/17]

384. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health if provision has been made by his Department for section 39 organisations providing vital social care services to restore their funding in order to meet the various pay restoration requirements now due under the Lansdowne Road Agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21485/17]

385. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health his views on the HSE’s instruction that section 39 organisations should use the industrial mechanisms of the State to resolve an issue relating to the restoration of funding lost during the recession; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21486/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 382 to 385, inclusive, together.

Under section 39 of the Health Act 2004, the HSE has in place Service Level Agreements with voluntary providers which set out the level of service to be provided for the grant to the individual organisation. Any individuals employed by these section 39 organisations are not HSE employees and therefore, the HSE has no role in determining the salaries or other terms and conditions applying to these staff. It should also be made clear that as the staff of these Section 39 organisations are not public servants, they were not subject to the provisions of the Public
Questions - Written Answers

Service Agreements or the FEMPI legislation which imposed the associated pay reductions. Accordingly, any arrangements offered by each service provider in relation to its employee terms and conditions, including rates of pay, may vary.

HSE Data

386. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons over 65 years of age that have been referred for an ultrasound at Doughiska primary care centre, Galway city, by month, for the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21487/17]

387. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons over 65 years of age that have been referred by general practitioners to the counselling services at Doughiska primary care centre, Galway city, by month for the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21488/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 386 and 387 together.

As these questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for the questions to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

National Children’s Hospital

388. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health the provisions being made for rheumatology services in the new children’s hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21490/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In relation to the query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

National Children’s Hospital

389. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health if the new children’s hospital will have a rheumatology unit with an infusion suite; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21491/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In relation to the query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Disability Services Provision

390. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide funding to repair or replace the hydrotherapy pool in a location (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21492/17]

**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 a service matter, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Gambling Sector

391. Deputy Eoin Ó Broin asked the Minister for Health when he will conduct a national gambling prevalence and impact study as recommended by the Institute of Public Health in 2010. [21501/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): At the request of the Department of Justice and Equality, the National Advisory Committee on Drugs and Alcohol (NACDA) Drug Prevalence Survey 2014/15 for the Republic of Ireland included data on gambling for the first time. In the general population survey, results indicated that 64.5% of respondents aged 15 or older reported gambling in the 12 months prior to the survey and 41.4% of respondents reported gambling in the 30 days prior to the survey. A further detailed analysis of gambling will be available in Bulletin 7, which will be published later this year.

I am informed by the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality that it remains her intention to proceed with gambling legislation at the earliest opportunity. The preparation of a Gambling Control Bill continues on that basis. However, it should be acknowledged that it will require some significant updating to take account of developments since 2013. The preparation of legislation will be a major and complex undertaking.

Audiology Services Provision

392. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Health his plans to introduce regulation to the sale and supply of hearing instruments and hearing assessments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21503/17]

393. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Health his plans to increase the level of regulation in the private sector for the provision of audiological services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21504/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 392 and 393 together.

The HSE advises that hearing aids supplied in the public audiology service conform to the highest international standards and are procured using an international procurement process. The HSE Integrated Audiology Programme set up a working group of key stakeholders in 2015, with the aim of assessing the standards that were applied to the fitting of medical devices (i.e. hearing aids) within Ireland. The group has drawn on various good practices that are applied across Audiology and Hearing Aid Audiology and are currently in the final stages of producing a best practice guide to ensure a code of practice for the profession (both public and private) for use within Ireland.

The sale of medical devices, including hearing aids, within the European Union is regulated by EU legislation. All medical devices placed on the market undergo a conformity assessment to confirm that they meet specified safety and performance requirements. Once a medical de-
vice is CE marked and is not subject to prescription control it may be sold on the EU market without restriction. There are new distributor requirements that will come into effect with the application of the new EU medical devices regulations which will broaden the scope of the current regulatory framework to address obligations of all economic operators.

The profession of audiologist is not included in the 14 professions currently designated under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005. The Act provides that the Minister for Health may, following a consultation process and with the approval of the Houses of the Oireachtas, make regulations designating a health or social care profession not already designated if the Minister considers it in the public interest to do so and if certain specified criteria have been met.

My Department is proposing, towards the end of this year or early next year, when all registration boards have been established, to ask CORU - the Health and Social Care Professionals Council to undertake a risk assessment, in terms of public protection, of the principal health and social care professions seeking designation under the Act and to make recommendations concerning options for their possible future regulation. The question of designating the professions of audiologist will be considered as part of that process.

**Medical Card Reviews**

394. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health when a reassessment of a medical card application by a person (details supplied) will be finalised; the reason the medical card section is requesting further financial information from the person despite the application being finalised and the request for review clearly seeking for the application to be reviewed on health grounds with a view to awarding a medical card on discretionary grounds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21507/17]

**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 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.

**Cancer Screening Programmes**

395. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if funding will be made available and an awareness campaign developed to improve the uptake of bowel cancer screening services to the optimum level to reduce mortality rates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21512/17]

449. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health his plans to consider expand-
BowelScreen, the National Bowel Screening Programme, is run by the HSE’s National Screening Service. It offers free bowel screening to men and women aged 60-69. The BowelScreen Round One Programme Report, 2012-2015, launched last month, shows that 521 cancers were detected through bowel screening, 3 out of 4 of which were detected at an early stage of cancer development.

The BowelScreen programme is adequately funded and strenuous efforts are being made to improve the uptake rate of this free service, particularly among men who have lower rates of participation but significantly higher rates of cancer detection compared to women. These efforts include digital and social media initiatives, as well as targeted radio and press advertisements. The BowelScreen website (www.bowelscreen.ie) also provides much information and allows people to check that they are on the register. Also, a range of information leaflets, posters and flyers are available to healthcare professionals.

BowelScreen moved from the initial three year round, to a two year round of screening in 2016. The extension of BowelScreen to the 55-74 age range will be considered in the future in the light of the experience of the current programme and available resources.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Review

396. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if the fair deal financial review for a person (details supplied) can be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21523/17]

**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.

Ambulance Service Provision

397. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health if a dedicated ambulance service...
can be provided in the north west Connemara area as a matter of urgency (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21563/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

---

### Medical Card Applications

398. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when a medical card will issue in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21574/17]

**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 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.

---

### Health Services Provision

399. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when an urgent appraisal or assessment and, as required, specific treatment might be arranged in the case of a person (details supplied); if appropriate steps can be take to address the issue as a matter of urgency having particular reference to their family history; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21575/17]

**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.

---

### Home Help Service Provision

400. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if home help can be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21577/17]

**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.

---

### HSE Investigations
401. Deputy Fergus O’Dowd asked the Minister for Health the details of trust in care investigations carried out in the past three years; the outcomes and actions taken; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21644/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Trust in Care Policy is a policy for Health Service employers on upholding the dignity and welfare of patients/clients and procedures for managing allegations of abuse against staff members. This was developed by the HSE in partnership with the Health Sector unions and was launched in May 2005. The objectives of the Policy are twofold. Firstly, to promote a safe and caring environment in all health care settings, where the dignity of patients and clients is paramount and they are afforded the highest possible standards of care. Secondly, it aims to safeguard staff by providing effective supervision, support and training and a safe system of work.

The Policy has both a preventative and a procedural dimension. It places particular emphasis on the role of best human resource practice in promoting high standards of care and preventing potential abuse. The Policy also emphasises employees’ duty to be vigilant and to report concerns regarding the welfare of patients and clients. It sets out the reporting procedures to be followed in the event of abuse being suspected or alleged. Finally, it contains a robust procedure for managing allegations of abuse against staff.

As investigations carried out under this policy and actions taken are a matter for the HSE, I have referred this question to the HSE for direct reply.

Psychological Services

402. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Health if a psychologist has been appointed to Kildare Network for children requiring such services; if his attention has been drawn to the large demand for such services in an area with a disproportionately large young population; if his attention has been further drawn to the fact that County Kildare is now the fourth most populated county; if his attention has been further drawn to the fact that no psychological services have been available for at least 18 months and many urgent cases are being neglected; the number of such posts which are vacant and the locations of each; the waiting list for such services by area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21652/17]

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 Beds Data

403. Deputy David Cullinane asked the Minister for Health his views on reports that Dungarvan community hospital is closing the Sacred Heart unit which includes the rehabilitation beds for stroke; the future of this unit and the future of the beds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21655/17]

404. Deputy David Cullinane asked the Minister for Health if beds are being closed in the Sacred Heart ward at St. Joseph’s hospital in Dungarvan, County Waterford; if so, the reason therefor; when they will be reopened and the contingency plans in place to support persons and their families; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21663/17]

405. Deputy David Cullinane asked the Minister for Health the number of whole-time equivalent nursing positions at St Joseph’s Hospital, Dungarvan, County Waterford in each
of the years 2009 to 2016 and to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21664/17]

406. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients in St Joseph’s Hospital, Waterford in 2016 and to date in 2017, by month and ward; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21665/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 403 to 406, inclusive, together.

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

**Hospital Appointments Status**

407. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21668/17]

**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 the Deputy directly.

**Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

408. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if a specialised wheelchair will be supplied to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21669/17]

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

**Services for People with Disabilities**

409. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health the estimated waiting time for an assessment of need in County Kildare; if he will provide additional resources to the assessment officers in the HSE in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21680/17]

**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 Beds Data

410. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the proposed reduction in ward capacity at St Patrick’s Hospital, Cashel, and the Sacred Heart community hospital, Dungarvan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21682/17]

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.

Nursing Home Accommodation Provision

411. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Health the level of funding his Department has provided for capital investment in public nursing homes since 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21683/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): As the HSE is responsible for the delivery of health care infrastructure projects, the Executive has been requested to reply directly to the Deputy in relation to the capital investment in public nursing homes since 2011.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

412. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Health if he will address an issue (details supplied) with regard to FreeStyle Libre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21689/17]

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.

Medical Card Eligibility

413. Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh asked the Minister for Health if persons (details supplied) can be taken on as medical card patients in a medical centre (details supplied). [21690/17]

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 for direct reply.

Hospital Waiting Lists

414. Deputy James Lawless asked the Minister for Health the current waiting time for
transfer to the National Rehabilitation Hospital, Dún Laoghaire; if he will examine the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21706/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** 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.

**Hospital Appointments Status**

415. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21718/17]

**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.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

**Hospital Appointments Status**

416. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21530/17]

**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.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

**Hospital Charges**

417. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the reason a charge of €150 is outstanding in the case of a person (details supplied) in respect of a recent visit to a hospital for the person’s child on foot of a general practitioner referral; if such a charge is applicable pursuant to the free general practitioner care for children under six scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21531/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Out-Patient Charges) Regulations 2013, S.I. No. 45/2013, the €100 charge made for out-patient services provided at an emergency department or similar location shall not be payable by a person who has a letter of referral from a registered medical practitioner. However, a person who has been referred to a hospital for an in-patient service, including that provided on a day case basis, will have to pay the statutory daily charge of €80 (from January 2017, previously €75) as provided for by the
Health (In-Patient Charges) (Amendment) Regulations 2008.

With the GP Visit Card for under 6’s a child will get free GP visits, assessments at age 2 and 5 and care for children with asthma.

The GP Visit Card for children under 6 does not cover the cost of medications prescribed by a GP or hospital charges.

Hospital Appointments Status

418. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21532/17]

**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.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Appointments Status

419. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21534/17]

**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 the Deputy directly.

Hospital Appointments Status

420. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21535/17]

**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 the Deputy directly.

**Hospital Waiting Lists**

421. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Health if he will secure treatment for two children (details supplied) who have been chronically neglected as a result of case mismanagement and inordinate delays; and if he will use the National Treatment Purchase Fund to facilitate urgent treatment for the children involved privately. [21536/17]

**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 Aids and Appliances Provision**

422. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 516 of 11 April 2017, the status of a review of the supply of medical equipment to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21545/17]

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

**Departmental Correspondence**

423. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Minister for Health if he will address the concerns raised in correspondence (details supplied); if he will respond directly to the person’s letter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21550/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Following a search by my Department, I can confirm that there is no record of that correspondence having been received. Should the query be received by my Private Office, a reply will issue in due course.

**Departmental Meetings**

424. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the meetings his Department has facilitated since 27 May 2013 with regard to the relocation of the National Maternity Hospital to St. Vincent’s Hospital campus, in tabular form. [21552/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My Department has facilitated a number of meetings with various parties during the period in question with regard to the relocation of the National Maternity Hospital to the St. Vincent’s University Hospital campus and these engagements are ongoing.
Home Help Service Provision

425. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Health if the provision of home help can be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21556/17]

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 Appointments Administration

426. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Health if an appointment with the neurology department in Tallaght hospital can be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21596/17]

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.

HSE Staff

427. Deputy James Lawless asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) was not selected for an educational course within the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21598/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Home Care Packages

428. Deputy Eugene Murphy asked the Minister for Health if he will provide additional home care hours for a person (details supplied). [21599/17]

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.
429. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the delay in processing a medical card application by a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; when a decision in respect of this application will be made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21600/17]

**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 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.

**Hospital Services**

430. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the reason the Sacred Heart unit in Dungarvan community hospital is closing with immediate effect with a loss of 19 beds for physiotherapy, respite and rehab services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21631/17]

431. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the step-down facilities that will be available to persons in Dungarvan and west Waterford following the closure of 19 beds in the Sacred Heart unit in Dungarvan community hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21632/17]

432. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the importance of the Sacred Heart unit in Dungarvan community hospital; if his attention has been further drawn to the vital services it provides for rehab, physiotherapy and respite; if he will reverse the decision to close this unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21633/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 430 to 432, inclusive, together.

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

**Hospital Appointments Status**

433. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Health if he will review the case of a person (details supplied). [21724/17]

**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. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Mental Health Services

434. **Deputy Jonathan O’Brien** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons within the prison system that are receiving treatment for serious mental health conditions; the nature of the information held on these persons by the national forensic mental health service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21730/17]

**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.

General Medical Services Scheme Administration

435. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 443 of 4 April 2017, the procedures in place to prevent the HSE from paying general practitioners for persons that are already deceased (details supplied). [21732/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As outlined to the Deputy in the HSE reply of 25 April, a number of channels exist through which the Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) receives notice of the death of a medical card or GP visit card holder. These include:

- Notification through the Death Event Publication Service (DEPS) via a monthly file;
- Notification through the local Community Health Offices;
- Notification through the National Medical Card Unit contact centre, where clients’ families provide information;
- Notification via letters/returned cards from clients families;
- Notification from Nursing Homes;
- Notification from GPs.

Payments to GPs in respect of services provided to persons under the GMS scheme are terminated once the notification of a person’s death is recorded. In circumstances where amounts have been paid to GPs for periods after the last day of the month in which a person has died, the PCRS makes appropriate adjustments to the monthly capitation payment made to GPs to balance any such overpayments.

Should the Deputy be aware of a specific instance where an overpayment has occurred in relation to a deceased patient, she would be welcome to submit such information to my Department or directly to the PCRS.
436. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if he will schedule an urgent appointment at St Vincent’s University Hospital for a person (details supplied). [21740/17]

**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.

### Departmental Legal Cases

437. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health the total number of claims made by persons or others against his Department and the HSE that were settled or not settled, respectively, before a court hearing, in each of the past six years; the cost to the State of the settlements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21744/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The management of claims against the Health Service Executive and my Department is delegated under the National Treasury Management Agency Act to the State Claims Agency (SCA), which has a statutory mandate to investigate and manage these cases to completion. The Annual Report of the National Treasury Management Agency notes that the SCA resolves the majority of claims by negotiating a settlement, either directly with the plaintiff’s legal advisors or through a process of mediation. In 2015 97% of clinical negligence cases which were handled by the SCA were settled without the necessity for a contested court hearing.

The SCA has supplied a report on the information requested by the Deputy. The data is extracted from the National Incident Management System (NIMS), a system which it hosts for the Health Service Executive, other healthcare enterprises and Delegated State Authorities.

The tables supplied show details on claims finalised for the Health Service Executive and the Department of Health from 1 January 2011 to 4 May 2017 under the following case outcomes: Settlement Agreed, Case Discontinued/Claim Statute Barred, Indemnity Received and Outside the SCA remit. A claim in this context refers to a notification of intention to seek compensation for personal injury and/or property damage where it is alleged that the State was negligent. The application may be in the form of a letter of claim, an InjuriesBoard.ie application or a written or oral request. A finalised claim refers to when a claim and all other matters associated with it have been agreed, e.g. costs. There may still be some associated payments and reimbursements outstanding on finalised claims.

**Table 1**

Number of Claims by Claims Finalised Year (2011 - 2017)

**Number of Claims**
Table 2

Paid Total by Claims Finalised Year (2011 - 2017)

Paid Total (€'000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017 Year to Date</th>
<th>Total Paid Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Settlement agreed</td>
<td>56,370</td>
<td>56,769</td>
<td>61,433</td>
<td>77,282</td>
<td>77,380</td>
<td>91,317</td>
<td>46,691</td>
<td>467,242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Discontinued/Claim Statue Barred</td>
<td>753</td>
<td>903</td>
<td>878</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>676</td>
<td>2,121</td>
<td>8,235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indemnity Received</td>
<td>606</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>2,957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside SCA Remit</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>57,729</td>
<td>58,173</td>
<td>62,622</td>
<td>78,448</td>
<td>80,073</td>
<td>92,158</td>
<td>49,248</td>
<td>478,452</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Definitions for the terms used in the tables:

(i) ‘ Settlement Agreed’, - i.e. a negotiated settlement has been agreed with the Plaintiff for damages or an Injuries Board award accepted. This category includes some claims that go to court and are either settled on the steps of the court or are settled during the court case but before the case concludes.

(ii) ‘Case Discontinued/Claim Statue Barred’, i.e. The claim against the State Authority was discontinued and/or withdrawn by the Plaintiff, or the Statute of Limitations rendered the claim Statue Barred and prevented the claim from proceeding.

(iii) ‘Indemnity Received’ i.e. The SCA obtained a full indemnity, in respect of the claim, on behalf of the relevant State Authority from the Insurers of a negligent Third Party motorist.
(iv) ‘Outside State Claims Agency Remit’ i.e. These claims were not managed by the SCA.

It should also be noted that the figures in respect of paid totals relate to the amount of money paid on a claim over its lifetime. This may include payments made in previous years. It includes damages, legal costs and other expert costs. The data includes all Health Service Executive locations (including voluntary) and excludes Tusla.

Freedom of Information Requests

438. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health the reason an FOI request submitted on 14 February 2017 in the name of a person (details supplied) has not as yet been responded to. [21746/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** There is no record in the Department of a Freedom of Information (FOI) request from the person mentioned by the Deputy. I understand that this request is being processed by the Child and Family Services, Tusla. This is a prescribed body, in its own right, for the purposes of FOI. Each prescribed body is separately and solely responsible for fulfilling its obligations under the FOI Act. The Act also provides for an appeals process, should any prescribed body fail to meet its obligations.

Hospital Admissions

439. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of admissions to a centre (details supplied) at Beaumont Hospital, Dublin 9, each year since its establishment; the average length of time of admission; the number of persons refused admission to the centre each year; the reasons for refusing admission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21753/17]

**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 Admissions

440. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of admissions to a unit (details supplied) at Beaumont Hospital, Dublin 9, each year since 2014; the average length of time of admission; the number of persons refused admission to the centre each year; the reasons for refusing admission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21754/17]

**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.

Suicide Prevention

441. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons that accessed suicide prevention supports in the HSE Dublin north east and north Dublin area each year since 2012; the outcome of such access if available; the number of referrals to further mental health services each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21755/17]

**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.

Suicide Prevention

442. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Health the quality assurance measures in place to review the suicide prevention supports in the HSE Dublin north east and north Dublin area; if regular reviews take place; the location at which information is made available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21756/17]

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

443. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Health when a person is refused admission to a psychiatric unit, the follow up that takes place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21757/17]

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 Staff Data

444. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Health the number of vacant posts at the department of cardiology at Beaumont Hospital, Dublin 9, by post and grade; the length of time the posts are vacant; when each of those posts will be filled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21769/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In response to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Services for People with Disabilities

445. Deputy Catherine Martin asked the Minister for Health his plans to increase the availability of trained interveners for persons that are deafblind; and his further plans to increase availability of and accessibility to early intervention from a deafblind specialist for persons with congenital or acquired deafblindness. [21788/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): 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.

Medical Card Eligibility

446. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Health the progress to date in assessing eligibility for a medical card in the case of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21796/17]
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 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.

Cancer Screening Programmes

447. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Health the number of persons that have been invited to take part in BowelScreen since the programme began in 2012, in tabular form; the number of persons that have taken part; the number of incidences of bowel cancer detected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21799/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): BowelScreen, the National Bowel Screening Programme offers free bowel screening to men and women aged 60-69. The number of clients within this target cohort that have been invited to take part in BowelScreen since it began in 2012, the number of clients who consented to participate in the programme, the number of clients who carried out screening with a home test, and the number of cancers detected are outlined in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. persons invited to</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>New Invitees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take part in BowelScreen</td>
<td>59,684</td>
<td>205,899</td>
<td>223,045</td>
<td>33,197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. persons that have</td>
<td>27,164</td>
<td>87,595</td>
<td>92,494</td>
<td>28,452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consented to participate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>115,212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in BowelScreen Programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. persons that have</td>
<td>25,775</td>
<td>83,228</td>
<td>87,437</td>
<td>27,971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carried out screening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>109,358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>home test and returned to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BowelScreen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of clients with bowel</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cancer detected</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cancer Screening Programmes

448. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Health the number of persons within the target cohort, that is women and men aged 60 to 69 years of age, that have been invited to take part in BowelScreen since the programme began in 2012, in tabular form. [21800/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): BowelScreen, the National Bowel Screening Programme offers free bowel screening to men and women aged 60-69. The number of clients within this target cohort that have been invited to take part in BowelScreen since it began in 2012 is outlined in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invitees</th>
<th>2012/12</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of eligible men and women aged 60-69 invited to BowelScreen</td>
<td>59,658</td>
<td>170,294</td>
<td>220,500</td>
<td>279,466 (Initial 246,588) (Subsequent 32,878)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Provisional figures for 2016.

** 32,878 clients who had previously participated were re-invited for a subsequent screening in 2016.

Questions Nos. 449 and 450 answered with Question No. 395.

National Maternity Hospital

451. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Health if the €45,000 paid to the master of the National Maternity Hospital in addition to their salary as a medical consultant derives from a hospital fund set up to pay medical staff based on capitation fees paid by the State in respect of obstetric beds plus other income; if so, the source of that income; if that fund, howsoever constituted, pays a percentage to the master, the assistant masters and the medical consultants; if so, the percentage which is payable to each of the aforementioned categories; and if none of the foregoing applies to the €45,000 paid to the master, the source or sources from which that payment derives. [21813/17]

452. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Health if the master of the National Maternity Hospital is allocated 20% of the hospital’s private gynaecological patients and caesarean section patients; if not, the current percentage; and his plans to support the mastership system as agreed for the new National Maternity Hospital. [21814/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 451 and 452 together.

The National Maternity Strategy notes that the Mastership system is unique to the three Dublin maternity hospitals and has served the country well. While the system may evolve over time with the changing governance structures for maternity services, there are no plans to change the Mastership system at present. In relation to the other queries raised, as these are operational matters, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.
453. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health when the narcolepsy centre in St James’s Hospital will open; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21854/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Department of Health, the HSE and the Department of Education and Skills continue to work together to provide a wide range of services and supports for those affected. St James Hospital has put together a proposal for a national service for patients with all forms of narcolepsy in adults and in children transitioning from the pediatric services. The development of this service is being prioritized by my Department in the 2018 Estimates process.

**Hospital Waiting Lists**

454. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the ophthalmology waiting list in County Louth; the average waiting time for an outpatient appointment; the average waiting time for a procedure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21855/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I acknowledge that Ophthalmology waiting times are often unacceptably long and I am conscious of the impact of this on people’s lives.

Reducing waiting times for the longest waiting patients is one of this Government’s key priorities. Consequently, Budget 2017 allocated €20 million to the NTPF, rising to €55 million in 2018.

In December 2016, I granted approval to the NTPF to dedicate €5m to a daycase waiting list initiative with the aim of ensuring that no patient will be waiting more than 18 months for a daycase procedure by 30 June 2017. In excess of 2,000 daycases will be managed through this process and patients are already receiving appointments.

In order to reduce the numbers of long-waiting patients, I asked the HSE to develop Waiting List Action Plans for 2017 in the areas of Inpatient/Daycase, Scoliosis and Outpatient Services. These plans have now been finalised and will be communicated shortly.

The HSE is currently finalising the Report of the Primary Care Eye Services Review, which aims to reorganise primary eye-care services with an increased emphasis on maximising delivery of a comprehensive service in primary care, thereby creating capacity in hospitals to provide more complex ophthalmology services.

In response to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to provide the specific details to you directly.

**Hospital Waiting Lists**

455. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons currently awaiting ophthalmology services in each hospital, in tabular form; the number of persons on the waiting list over 6 months, 12 months, 24 months and in excess of these times for both outpatient appointments and for actual procedures respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21856/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I acknowledge that Ophthalmology waiting times are often unacceptably long and I am conscious of the impact of this on people’s lives.
Reducing waiting times for the longest waiting patients is one of this Government’s key priorities. Consequently, Budget 2017 allocated €20 million to the NTPF, rising to €55 million in 2018.

In December 2016, I granted approval to the NTPF to dedicate €5m to a daycase waiting list initiative with the aim of ensuring that no patient will be waiting more than 18 months for a daycase procedure by 30 June 2017. In excess of 2,000 daycases will be managed through this process and patients are already receiving appointments.

In order to reduce the numbers of long-waiting patients, I asked the HSE to develop Waiting List Action Plans for 2017 in the areas of Inpatient/Daycase, Scoliosis and Outpatient Services. These plans have now been finalised and will be communicated shortly.

The HSE is currently finalising the Report of the Primary Care Eye Services Review, which aims to reorganise primary eye-care services with an increased emphasis on maximising delivery of a comprehensive service in primary care, thereby creating capacity in hospitals to provide more complex ophthalmology services.

In response to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to provide the specific details to you directly.

Health Services Reports

456. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Health the reason the review of primary eye care services has yet to be published; when the report will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21857/17]

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

457. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to concerns expressed by ophthalmic consultants in recent media reports regarding treatment times for persons diagnosed with the wet form of macular degeneration; and his plans to address the concerns with regard to waiting times for a simple injection as a form of treatment. [21858/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I acknowledge that waiting times for Ophthalmology, including treatments for wet form macular degeneration, are often unacceptably long and I am conscious of the impact of this on people’s lives.

Reducing waiting times for the longest waiting patients is one of this Government’s key priorities. Consequently, Budget 2017 allocated €20 million to the NTPF, rising to €55 million in 2018.

In December 2016, I granted approval to the NTPF to dedicate €5m to a daycase waiting list initiative with the aim of ensuring that no patient will be waiting more than 18 months for a daycase procedure by 30 June 2017. In excess of 2,000 daycases will be managed through this process and patients are already receiving appointments.

In order to reduce the numbers of long-waiting patients, I asked the HSE to develop Waiting
List Action Plans for 2017 in the areas of Inpatient/Daycase, Scoliosis and Outpatient Services. These plans have now been finalised and will be communicated shortly.

The HSE is currently finalising the Report of the Primary Care Eye Services Review, which aims to reorganise primary eye-care services with an increased emphasis on maximising delivery of a comprehensive service in primary care, thereby creating capacity in hospitals to provide more complex ophthalmology services.

Hospital Waiting Lists

458. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons diagnosed with the wet form of macular degeneration in 2017; the number of these persons currently awaiting treatment; the average waiting time for same; the number of these persons currently awaiting a follow up outpatient appointment; the average waiting time for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21859/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I acknowledge that waiting times for Ophthalmology, including treatments for wet form macular degeneration, are often unacceptably long and I am conscious of the impact of this on people’s lives.

Reducing waiting times for the longest waiting patients is one of this Government’s key priorities. Consequently, Budget 2017 allocated €20 million to the NTPF, rising to €55 million in 2018.

In December 2016, I granted approval to the NTPF to dedicate €5m to a daycase waiting list initiative with the aim of ensuring that no patient will be waiting more than 18 months for a daycase procedure by 30 June 2017. In excess of 2,000 daycases will be managed through this process and patients are already receiving appointments.

In order to reduce the numbers of long-waiting patients, I asked the HSE to develop Waiting List Action Plans for 2017 in the areas of Inpatient/Daycase, Scoliosis and Outpatient Services. These plans have now been finalised and will be communicated shortly.

The HSE is currently finalising the Report of the Primary Care Eye Services Review, which aims to reorganise primary eye-care services with an increased emphasis on maximising delivery of a comprehensive service in primary care, thereby creating capacity in hospitals to provide more complex ophthalmology services.

In response to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to provide the specific details to you directly.

Hospital Appointments Status

459. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21902/17]

**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 Appointments Status**

460. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if appointments for gastro bypass surgery in St Colmcille’s Hospital, Dublin, have been postponed due to a lack of funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21904/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In relation to the query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

*Question No. 461 answered with Question No. 395.*

**Hospital Accommodation Provision**

462. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the details of HSE plans to set up specially designed prefabs in an effort to address the trolley crisis, in view of recent media reports; the hospitals which have been selected; the resources and funding which have been allocated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21916/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE has put in place a National Framework for temporary alternative accommodation at Hospital Sites as just one part of a broad range of measures undertaken under the Winter Initiative Plan 2016-2017 aimed at alleviating pressure on our EDs. As of yet there have not been any decisions made in relation to the opening of temporary alternative accommodation in specific locations but any such decisions will be based on the procurement process as set out in this National Framework and submissions made by hospitals and hospital groups to the HSE as part of their budgetary processes.

As the Deputy may be aware, the Winter Initiative provided €40 million of additional funding for winter preparedness. This Initiative was developed to manage the expected winter surge in demand for hospital care in an integrated way across Primary, Acute and Social Care. This Initiative concluded in March.

A range of practical measures to address ED overcrowding were implemented, including 90 additional beds, aids and appliances for over 4,450 patients, around 1,000 extra homecare packages and 615 additional transitional care bed approvals.

During this Initiative, delayed discharges reduced from 638 in September 2016 to a low of 434 at the end of December and were maintained below 500 from mid-December through to end February. This had a positive impact on ED overcrowding and trolley numbers, in freeing up beds for use by patients awaiting admission to hospital.

Since the start of 2017 there have been approximately 5% less patients waiting on trolleys nationally compared to the same period last year. I can assure the Deputy that there continues to be a very strong focus on reducing ED overcrowding and my Department and the HSE are currently engaged in a process to commence winter planning for next year and to achieve an improvement trajectory in ED performance.
Hospital Staff Recruitment

463. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons interviewed for nursing posts at St Joseph’s Hospital in each of the years 2012 to 2016 and to date in 2017; the number which were successfully hired; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21917/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Hospital Beds Data

464. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the consultation which took place between the HSE, the management and staff at St Joseph’s Hospital, patients and other groups regarding recent bed closures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21918/17]

**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.

Occupational Therapy

465. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health when additional funding will be made available to occupational therapy services in counties Westmeath and Longford, in order to reduce the current eight month waiting list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21925/17]

**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.

Dental Services Provision

466. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health when dental services will be restored to Monksland County Roscommon under the HSE, whereby school age children can be seen; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21932/17]

**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

467. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health when persons (details supplied) will be seen in the dental clinic in Monksland, County Roscommon; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21933/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.
9 May 2017

General Practitioner Services

468. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE plans to reduce Strokestown, County Roscommon to a one doctor town; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21934/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this question relates to a service matter, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

General Practitioner Services Provision

469. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE plans to reduce Ballaghadereen, County Roscommon to a one-doctor town; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21935/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this question relates to a service matter, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Discharges

470. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons discharged from each hospital into emergency accommodation in each of the years 2011 to 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form. [21937/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Discharges

471. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the details of the HSE pilot for hospital discharge protocol in cases of homelessness; when the pilot commenced; the hospitals within the pilot; the additional resources which have been allocated to the pilot; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21938/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Waiting Lists

472. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Health the average waiting times for the National Rehabilitation Hospital’s spinal cord system of care programme in each of the years 2013 to 2016; and the average waiting time to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21947/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** 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.
473. **Deputy Seán Barrett** asked the Minister for Health his views on the fact that if he is concerned that some girls who received the HPV gardasil vaccine appear to have had serious side effects, and if he will have this matter examined. [21978/17]

**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 that cause 73% of all cervical cancers.

There is scientific evidence of the beneficial impact of HPV vaccine for women’s health in countries that have had high vaccine uptake rates. Cases of high grade pre-cancerous changes of the cervix have reduced by 75% in Australia and by more than 50% in Denmark and Scotland.

The Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) is responsible for monitoring the safety and quality of all medicines that are licensed in Ireland. While no medicine is entirely without risk, the safety of vaccines, as with all medicines, is carefully monitored and any new evidence concerning side-effects is taken into account. The HPRA and the European Medicines Agency continually monitor adverse events to vaccination.

Unfounded, false claims have been made of an association between HPV vaccination and a number of conditions experienced by a group of young women. It appears that they first suffered symptoms around the time they received the HPV vaccine and a false connection is being made between the HPV vaccine and the onset of these symptoms. There is no scientific evidence that the HPV vaccine causes any long term illness. However, these claims led to a significant drop in uptake rates of the HPV vaccine from 87% in 2014/15 to 72% in 2015/16. This means that a large cohort of girls is now at risk of developing cervical cancer later in their lives.

Misinformation is causing real harm to those unvaccinated children and adults who develop vaccine preventable diseases, and to people who seek inappropriate treatments for real conditions that are not caused by vaccines. Any parent who has doubts or questions about vaccination should talk to their family doctor, or alternatively to visit the National Immunisation office website. These sources of information are clear and accurate and will answer any queries you may have about the benefits or risks of vaccination. Vaccination is the best way for parents to make sure their children are healthy and protected from preventable diseases.

**Services for People with Disabilities**

474. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive notice of the outcome of a meeting with an assessment of needs officer. [21982/17]

**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 an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be
referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Cancer Screening Programmes

475. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the annual cost of the BowelScreen programme; his plans to decrease or increase funding for the BowelScreen programme in 2018; the number of persons in County Mayo who have availed of the BowelScreen service to date; and the average wait time for results from the BowelScreen programme. [21983/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** BowelScreen, the National Bowel Screening Programme, is run by the HSE’s National Screening Service. It offers free bowel screening to men and women aged 60-69. The BowelScreen Round One Programme Report (2012-2015) shows that 521 cancers were detected through bowel screening, 3 out of 4 of which were detected at an early stage of cancer development.

The current funding allocation for the BowelScreen programme is €8.7m. The funding requirements for BowelScreen in 2018 will be considered as part of the Estimates process.

A total of 9,811 people in County Mayo took part in the BowelScreen programme.

People who receive an invitation from BowelScreen, and who consent to take part in the programme, are normally issued a home FIT (Faecal Immunochemical Test) test. For those who completed and returned the test during Round One (2012-2015), the average wait time for results was ten calendar days.

Hospital Appointments Status

476. **Deputy Kate O’Connell** asked the Minister for Health the position of a person (details supplied) on a waiting list. [21992/17]

**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 Appointments Status

477. **Deputy Kate O’Connell** asked the Minister for Health the position of a person (details supplied) on a waiting list. [21993/17]

**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 Appointments Status**

478. *Deputy Brendan Smith* asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite a surgical intervention for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22004/17]

**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.

**Mobility Allowance Review**

479. *Deputy Charlie McConalogue* asked the Minister for Health the reason a replacement scheme for the mobility allowance has yet to be announced; if the new scheme will be announced before the summer recess of Dáil Éireann; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22005/17]

**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.

However, monthly payments of up to €208.50 have continued to be made by the Health Service Executive to 4,700 people who were in receipt of the Mobility Allowance.

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 and 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 for the new Scheme is at an advanced stage. 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.

The next step is to seek Government approval to the drafting of a Bill for the new scheme.

**Health Services Access**

480. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Health the criteria used by the HSE to determine if a person (details supplied) is ordinarily resident in view of the apparent conflicting decisions being made by the HSE in this matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22008/17]

**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 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. 481 withdrawn.*

*Question No. 482 answered with Question No. 349.*

**Infectious Disease Screening Service**

483. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that testing for Lyme disease here uses the inaccurate standardised test called ELISA, which is at best 35% accurate thereby resulting in missed diagnosis; if his attention has been further drawn to the fact that German and other EU laboratories are using a more accurate test which cost the European Union €1.1 million to develop and which is a highly sensitive and specific low-cost lab on a chip system for Lyme diagnosis (details supplied); if he will arrange for the implementation of this system here to save persons the expense of travelling to Germany for diagnoses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22015/17]

502. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to encourage awareness, prevention and treatment of Lyme disease here; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there are specific high-risk areas here and that the risk of Lyme disease here may increase as a result of climate change; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22120/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 483 and 502 together.
Lyme disease (also known as Lyme borreliosis) is an infection caused by a spiral-shaped bacterium called Borrelia burgdorferi. It is transmitted to humans by bites from ticks infected with the bacteria. The Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) of the HSE has extensive information concerning Lyme disease on its website http://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/vectorborne/lyme-disease/. I have appended a copy of the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) from the website for your information.

Lyme borreliosis was made statutorily notifiable in Ireland by the Infectious Diseases (Amendment Regulations) Regulations 2011 (S.I. no 452 of 2011). The notifiable entity is Lyme neuroborreliosis, the more severe neurological form of Lyme boreliosis and the average number of annual neuroborreliosis notifications has been 14 over the last few years. However, the diverse and unspecific nature of the symptoms means that a number of the less serious cases may not be diagnosed, leading to under reporting of cases. It is likely that there are between 150 and 250 cases of Lyme disease in Ireland per year, making Ireland a low to medium incidence country (the highest incidence of Lyme disease in Europe is seen in Alpine and Scandinavian countries). It is estimated in most Western European countries that between 5% and 20% of the population have positive Lyme blood tests, indicating that they have been bitten by an infected tick and either did not develop symptoms of Lyme disease or developed such mild symptoms that these were not recollected.

Lyme disease is diagnosed by medical history and physical examination. The infection is confirmed by blood tests which look for antibodies produced by an infected person’s body in response to the infection. These normally take several weeks to develop and may not be present in the early stages of the disease.

The standard approach to Lyme diagnostics is a two-stage approach and involves using a sensitive enzyme immunoassay (EIA) as an initial, screening step. Screening EIAs can be insufficiently specific, giving false-positive reactions in the presence of other similar bacteria, and certain other viral infections, including glandular fever. In addition, blood samples from patients with autoimmune disorders and other inflammatory conditions can also lead to false-positive results.

Samples giving positive or equivocal results in screening tests are further investigated in a second-stage immunoblot (Western blot) tests. Use of immunoblot testing greatly increases specificity. Using this two stage approach will give a great degree of certainty around the diagnosis of Lyme.

All clinical (and other) laboratories in Ireland must undergo continuous quality assurance to ensure that the quality of the diagnostics they provide is maintained at the highest international level for human diagnostics.

The Scientific Advisory Committee of the HPSC, the Infectious Diseases Society of Ireland, the Irish Society of Clinical Microbiologists, the Irish Institute of Clinical Neuroscience and the Irish College of General Practitioners agreed a Consensus Statement on the Clinical Management of Lyme Borreliosis, which endorsed the previously referenced, internationally recognised set of guidelines (those of the Infectious Diseases Society of America) to Medical Practitioners to ensure a standardised approach to the diagnosis and management of Lyme disease in Ireland.


The Scientific Advisory Committee of the HPSC has established a Lyme Borreliosis Sub-Committee, the aim of which is to develop strategies to undertake primary prevention in order to minimise the harm caused by Lyme Borreliosis in Ireland. In addition to staff from the
HPSC, the membership of the Sub-Committee includes specialists in Public Health Medicine, Consultants in Infectious Diseases, Clinical Microbiology, Occupational Health an Entomologist from the Parks and Wildlife Service, a representative from the Local Government Management Agency, an Environmental Health Officer and, very importantly, a representative from Tick Talk Ireland, the primary Support Group for Lyme disease in Ireland.

The initial work of the Lyme Borreliosis Sub-committee involved a survey of laboratory methods for the diagnosis of Lyme borreliosis in Ireland, the development of Lyme borreliosis guidance for general practitioners, the publication of medical media articles to highlight diagnostics and laboratory methods relating to Lyme borreliosis available in Ireland. Material has been produced which is aimed both at the general public and General Practitioners.

There is extensive information for the public and health professionals on the HPSC website. This information for the public includes:

- Lyme Disease Frequently Asked Questions;
- Laboratory testing for Lyme Disease: FAQs for general public;
- Lyme Disease Illustrations; and
- CDC’s instructions on how to remove a tick.

The website also contains factsheets, information, clinical guidance and an Erythema Migrans Diagnostic Support Tool for health professionals.

As a result of climate change there is likely to be an increase in the incidence of Lyme disease in Ireland. The predicted warmer temperatures and altered rainfall are likely to result in a longer tick season and increased numbers of the small rodents that the ticks feed upon. This is the likely picture in Ireland and would be replicated in the UK, the US and Canada. Campers, walkers and certain occupational groups such as forestry workers, conservation workers, deer cullers and farmers are at particular risk of exposure. The risk of infection is greatest in late spring and early summer, so Springtime is the time to ensure that parents, children and doctors are aware of the risks posed by ticks. Since 2013, the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) has held an annual ‘Lyme Awareness Week’ at the beginning of the tick biting season, the purpose of which is to draw attention - particularly in the media - to Lyme disease and the ticks that can spread this disease. This year Lyme Disease Awareness Week will take place on 15-22 May.

**Hospital Appointments Status**

484. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied). [22020/17]

**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

485. **Deputy Frank O’Rourke** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons awaiting spinal surgery at Tallaght Hospital; the number of persons by waiting list (details supplied); the average waiting time on each list; the number of persons awaiting spinal surgery at Tallaght Hospital who have been referred from Naas Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22021/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In relation to the queries raised by the Deputy, as these are service issues, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Services for People with Disabilities

486. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the residential care which will be provided for a person (details supplied) who has severe intellectual and behavioural issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22024/17]

487. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if he will make the necessary funding available in order to allow a person (details supplied) to return to a foundation’s residential care; when this funding will be available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22025/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 486 and 487 together.

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 questions relate to an individual case, I have arranged for the questions to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health and Social Care Professionals Regulation

488. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the annual cost of administering the Health and Social Care Professionals Council; and the way in which these costs are covered (details supplied). [22026/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Health and Social Care Professionals Council, Ireland’s only multi-profession health and social care regulator, is being established
on a phased basis. While funded in the main by the exchequer at present, it is intended that the Council will, in time, when all its registers are established, be fully self-funding through annual fee income payable by registrants. The current fee payable is €100 per annum.

The allocation for 2016 was €2.6m supplemented by €1.2m in registration fees. The allocation for 2017 is €3.1m to be supplemented by anticipated fee income of €1.4m.

Hospital Appointments Status

489. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) has been waiting over three years for surgery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22031/17]

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

490. Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe asked the Minister for Health if he will make a placement available to a young person (details supplied) who is in great difficulty. [22033/17]

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 Waiting Lists

491. Deputy Seán Crowe asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) is on a waiting list for surgery; the reason for the delay; the average waiting time for this procedure; and the person’s approximate waiting time for surgery [22034/17]

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.
492. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the reason a fictional character (details supplied) is being made title sponsor for the new national children’s hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22035/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Ronald McDonald House Charity (RMHC) is a charitable organisation that provides accommodation for families whose children are seriously ill in hospital. RMHC currently provides accommodation on the campus at Crumlin Hospital in the main house and in an adjacent house. The development of a new 53-bed family accommodation, to be built adjacent to the new children’s hospital, was included in the new children’s hospital planning permission granted in April 2016. The HSE and National Paediatric Hospital Development Board are liaising with the RMHC in relation to this development.

493. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of referrals to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, CAMHS, by general practitioners that are returned to general practitioners and not followed up on. [22046/17]

**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.

494. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Health if an assessment for disability home support can be expedited for a person (details supplied). [22050/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** 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.

495. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22053/17]

**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.

496. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his policy in relation to the use of electronic cigarettes in enclosed public spaces; the research that is being done in relation to electronic cigarettes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22054/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy):** The use of e-cigarettes also known as vaping is a relatively new occurrence. While the market
share for electronic cigarettes and refill containers is growing, the long-term effects of vaping on public health are not yet known. Electronic cigarettes are regulated by the European Union (Manufacture, Presentation and Sale of Tobacco and Related Products) Regulations 2016. These Regulations transposed the European Tobacco Products Directive and came into effect on 20 May 2016.

The introduction of the workplace smoking ban was based on clear and unequivocal evidence that second hand smoke is harmful to non-smokers. That evidence base does not exist for the aerosol generated from e-cigarettes. However individual organisations/companies are free to introduce an e-cigarette free policy if they so choose to prevent people vaping where they would not be free to smoke.

My Department will continue to monitor the emerging research on these products, so as to inform decisions around any future additional regulation in this area.

Treatment Abroad Scheme

497. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Health the status of an application for the treatment abroad scheme by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22055/17]

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 HSE operates the Treatment Abroad Scheme for persons entitled to treatment in another EU/EEA Member State or Switzerland under EU Regulation (EC) No. 883/2004, as per the procedures set out in EU Regulations (EC) No. 987/2009, and in accordance with Department of Health Guidelines.

The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Health Products Regulatory Authority

498. Deputy Declan Breathnach asked the Minister for Health the number of schools and sports clubs that have registered with the Health Products Regulatory Authority to administer salbutamol in emergency situations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22058/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): On Thursday 15 October 2015, my predecessor Minister Leo Varadkar T.D., signed regulations which allow certain prescription-only medicines, including salbutamol, to be administered by trained members of the public in emergency situations.

In order for an organisation to avail of an emergency medicine without the need for a prescription, they must first register with the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) and undergo a training course accredited by the Pre Hospital Emergency Care Council.

This register is publically available through the Emergency Medicines Portal on the HPRA website and can be found at www.hpra.ie/homepage/medicines/emergency-medicines/emergen-
There are seven organisations registered, none of which appear to be schools or sports clubs.

A decision to undergo training on the use and administration of an emergency medicine rests with individual schools and sports organisations.

**Disability Services Provision**

499. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 1016 of 2 May 2017, the steps he will take to ensure passenger safety and protection against abuse by unsupervised persons operating transport services; and the measures in place to ensure that disabled persons are being protected against such criminal behaviour. [22081/17]

**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 a service issue, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

**Homeless Accommodation Provision**

500. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health if approval has been given to agencies operating under the aegis of his Department or receiving money directly or indirectly from his Department for the purchase of accommodation for the temporary housing of homeless persons with a disability; the number and details of such properties purchased in the Clontarf area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22082/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** As the provision of accommodation for homeless people is an operational matter for local authorities under the remit of the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, I do not have a role in this matter.

*Question No. 501 answered with Question No. 395*

*Question No. 502 answered with Question No. 483*

**HSE Expenditure**

503. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the total spend on high-tech medicines in the years 2014 to 2016, inclusive, and to date in 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22167/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and
direct reply to the Deputy.

Medicinal Products Supply

504. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the total savings achieved each month to date under the framework agreement on the supply of medicines to the health services 2016 to 2020, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22168/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the HSE has responsibility for this matter, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this issue.

Hospitals Expenditure

505. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the total amounts spent on medicines by each public hospital in in the years 2014 to 2016, inclusive, and to date in 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22169/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In response to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Primary Care Reimbursement Service Payments

506. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the total amounts spent on medicines under the primary care reimbursement service in each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22170/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the HSE has responsibility for this matter, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this issue.

Teagasc Staff

507. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if advertising and recruitment of green certificate educators has begun in the Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal regions in view of the fact that some contracts are due to expire in September 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21419/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The scheduling of recruitment competitions in Teagasc is an operational matter for Teagasc management and I have no function in the matter.

My Department has worked closely with Teagasc to address staffing issues in relation to the adult Green Cert (part-time and distance education). In conjunction with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, Teagasc was approved to appoint 70 temporary teachers to meet the demand for courses. It enabled Teagasc to dramatically increase enrolments to 4,500 in the period 2014 to 2016.

As Teagasc continued to experience strong demand for the adult Green Cert their request for 15 new temporary teachers was granted earlier this year. I understand from Teagasc that the recruitment process is underway and it is planned to assign the new teachers in the next few
I am advised that a number of these posts will be assigned to the Northwest region to run new courses scheduled to commence in October.

**Dairy Sector**

508. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if there are supports or payment schemes available for a person (details supplied) who has over-supplied milk; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21420/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** There have been a number of measures implemented to support dairy sector producers through market transition in the post milk quota period. Central to these supports was the Super Levy Instalment Scheme, introduced in 2015, which allowed participants to spread their superlevy bill over three years interest free. Ireland was one of the few EU member states to introduce this scheme for its dairy farmers in order to ease the burden of the superlevy bill for those who wished to avail of it. I understand that the referenced individual is a participant in this scheme and has availed of the opportunity to spread his repayments over three years.

It should be noted that there are no provisions under the regulation for the Super Levy Instalment Scheme for alterations to the terms of the agreement entered in to by participants. Additional exceptional aid measures for the sector included a one off co-funded support payment of €1,395 to dairy producers in 2015. In 2016 a Voluntary Supply Management Scheme formed part of the exceptional aid package from the EU Commission from which over €6.5m was paid to Irish dairy producers. I can confirm that the referenced individual received payments through both schemes.

A further measure implemented by my Department under the 2016 EU exceptional aid package was the Agriculture Cashflow Support Loan Scheme. This scheme was developed by my Department in co-operation with the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI), making €150 million available to farmers at interest rates of 2.95%. Distributed and administered through AIB, Bank of Ireland and Ulster Bank, the Scheme provides farmers with a low cost, flexible source of working capital and will allow them to pay down more expensive forms of short-term debt, ensuring the ongoing financial sustainability of viable farming enterprises.

My Department continues to monitor the market situation for dairy and other sectors to ensure that the most appropriate supports are made available to producers.

**Departmental Agencies Funding**

509. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the cost of the Sea Fisheries Protection Agency in each the years 2013 to 2016; and the EU and Exchequer funding for the agency and projected spending to 2017 to 2019. [21427/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The information requested by the Deputy in relation to the cost of the Sea Fisheries Protection Agency in each the years 2013 to 2016, and the EU and exchequer funding for the agency and projected spending for 2017 is set out in tabular form below; funding for 2018 and 2019 will be subject to the normal budgetary procedures. Please note that additional funding was received directly by SFPA from the European Union for Control & Enforcement for the period 2013 to 2015 and
I have requested SFPA to respond directly to the Deputy on that aspect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outturn</td>
<td>€10.481m</td>
<td>€10.635m</td>
<td>€11.260m</td>
<td>€12.460m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EU Funding (EMFF)(*European Maritime &amp; Fisheries Fund)</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Projected Exchequer Funding</td>
<td>€12.8m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profiled EU Funding (EMFF)(**European Maritime &amp; Fisheries Fund)</td>
<td>€4.1m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* European Maritime & Fisheries Fund commenced in 2014

**Please note the European Maritime & Fisheries Fund (EMFF) is 90% EU funded and 10% Exchequer funded

**Fisheries Protection**

510. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the Sea Fisheries Protection Agency funding under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund will be renegotiated at the end of the current Common Fisheries Policy; and if extra powers to deal with super trawlers will be requested from the EU authorities. [21428/17]

513. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if in Brexit negotiations there is a request for increased quota and support funding for fishing; if the Common Fisheries Policy quota and supports to 2020 will be increased in these circumstances; his views on whether quota and supports will increase post 2020; and if he will allocate funding from the Exchequer to fishers in the absence of an EU increase in quota and supports. [21433/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 510 and 513 together.

The most immediate potential threat to the well being of our fishing industry is of course Brexit. At this stage it is impossible to say with certainty what effect Brexit will have on the Irish fishing industry as we don’t know yet what changes the UK may seek to the current arrangements.

The most serious issue facing the fishing and seafood sector is the kind of relationship the UK wants with the EU in terms of fisheries post-exit. When we do know what the UK want, we will work closely with our EU partners in trying to seek a new relationship with the UK.

The UK could seek to limit access to their waters and/or try to gain larger quota shares at the expense of others. However, that could only happen if the UK were content to ignore the potential repercussions that would certainly arise from the EU side. Any attempt by the UK to alter the status quo at the expense of Ireland and others must, and will be resisted strenuously.
It is important to note that the negotiations that will take place over the next few years are not a renegotiation of the Common Fisheries Policy. The CFP remains in place and will be reviewed in the normal way from 2019. That review is due to conclude by 2022.

I strongly believe that we must concentrate all our efforts on the Brexit negotiations at this time and until Brexit is completed. The discussion on the post Brexit CFP will undoubtedly occur in earnest once the Brexit arrangements are clear.

The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) provides the framework for the long term sustainability of fish stocks around our shores, the continued economic viability of our fishing fleet and fish processing industry while supporting our families and communities that depend on the sea for their livelihood.

The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) Operational Programme 2014-2020 is funding a suite of schemes implemented by Bord Iascaigh Mhara to support our seafood processing sector develop new value-added seafood products, put in place the capital investment to produce new and more seafood products, develop business and marketing strategies to take advantage of the export opportunities, and to work cooperatively with other seafood enterprises to develop marketing resources in potential export markets.

The Operational Programme provides €240 million approximately for the development of our seafood sector. Some €147.6 million is being provided by the EU (61%) and this represents more than a doubling of EU funds allocated to Ireland compared to the previous EU funding period. This increased allocation was in recognition of the strong case made by Ireland in CFP negotiations that Ireland carries a disproportionate control and data collection burden relative to our share of EU quotas in our territorial waters. That remains the case. The overall EU budget available for the EU seafood sector in the next funding period will be the subject of future budget negotiations between the EU institutions. In the absence of the UK, the overall budget of the Union is likely to be lower, so difficult negotiations can be expected. The relative share of the EU seafood funding is determined by the Commission having regard to criteria specified in the EMFF Regulation. These criteria will be an important focus of Ireland’s negotiating position for the next programming period and I will be seeking to ensure that they reflect Ireland’s control and data collection burdens.

I am and will remain in close contact with fisheries stakeholders as the issues develop and work with them to ensure that we are all fully prepared for what are likely to be extremely complex negotiations for both the UK’s exit from the EU and the subsequent CFP reform.

Fisheries Protection

511. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if, in the absence of the capability by the Sea Fisheries Protection Agency to board large foreign vessels, he will seek EU approval of the right to impound vessels while inspections take place. [21430/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** As the Deputy may be aware, the monitoring and control of fishing vessels within Ireland’s Exclusive Fisheries Zone are matters for the Irish control authorities. The SFPA and the Naval Service through the Fisheries Monitoring Centre monitor the movements of vessels when in our Exclusive Fisheries Zone, using the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS), Automatic Identification System (AIS) and declared catches through Electronic Reporting System (ERS). The SFPA is reliant on the seagoing fishery patrol activity of the Naval Service to verify compliance of vessels not land-
ing into Ireland. Further details of monitoring and control of fishing activities by all vessels within Ireland’s 200 miles Exclusive Economic Zone may be sought from the SFPA who are the competent authority.

Under the Sea Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act, 2006, all operational issues concerning sea fisheries control are, as a matter of law, an exclusive competence of the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority and the Naval Service. As Minister I am precluded from getting involved in operational matters including in relation to law enforcement.

In relation to the overall framework for fisheries control in the EU, Council Regulation 1224/2009 establishes a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy. Only the EU Commission may propose changes to that regulation and any such proposal must be adopted under the co-decision process by the EU Parliament and EU Council.

Fishing Industry Development

512. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the allocations from his Department to support research and development in fisheries and seafood production in each of the years 2012 to 2016, in tabular form. [21431/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The information requested by the Deputy in relation to exchequer allocations to Bord Iascaigh Mhara and the Marine Institute from my Department to support research and development in fisheries and seafood production in each of the years 2012 to 2016 is set out in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exchequer Allocations</th>
<th>Bord Iascaigh Mhara</th>
<th>Marine Institute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>€20.421m</td>
<td>€23.200m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>€18.906m</td>
<td>€22.772m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>€23.428m</td>
<td>€24.630m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>€22.532m</td>
<td>€27.671m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>€39.680m</td>
<td>€30.884m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Question No. 513 answered with Question No. 510.*

Agriculture Scheme Penalties

514. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person (details supplied) in County Cork is being penalised twice; and if the penalty will only be imposed under one scheme. [21448/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The penalty applied under the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme relates to breaches of Cross Compliance requirements. Under the Terms and Conditions of the Basic Payment Scheme, an applicant, as well as meeting the scheme criteria, must comply with EU regulatory requirements relating to Cross Compliance.

A report detailing findings of an inspection carried out by the Agriculture Environmental Structures area of my Department on 12th December 2016 was referred to the Cross Compli-
This report detailed breaches relating to the cross compliance requirements under the Nitrates Regulations, Public, Animal and Plant Health and Good Agricultural and Environmental Standards (GAEC).

The breach under the Nitrates Regulations related cracked concrete in the soiled water yard whereby clean water could not be separated from effluent. The breach in respect of Public, Animal and Plant Health related to pesticide usage records not being provided at inspection. The breach in respect of GAEC related to the removal of a landscape feature.

These breaches resulted in a 25% penalty being applied against the 2015 Direct Schemes payments.

The person named was notified of this decision on 12 October 2016 and of their right to seek a review of the findings from the District Inspector. To date no request for review has been received.

In the event that the person named is dissatisfied with the outcome of any such review, the decision can be appealed to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office, within 3 months.

**Knowledge Transfer Programme**

515. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied); when a decision will be made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21453/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): An appeal to amend the Sheep Census details of the person named has been accepted by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The amended figures allow the person named to meet this eligibility requirement for the Knowledge Transfer Sheep Programme.

An official from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine will be in direct contact with his Knowledge Transfer Group Facilitator to discuss participation of the person named in the programme.

**Farm Enterprises**

516. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the supports which are being put in place by his Department for farmer welfare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21493/17]

520. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to the term “farmer burnout”; if his attention has been further drawn to the fact that this is a common diagnosis by general practitioners; if mechanisms are being put in place by his Department to assist farmers who are overworked, underpaid and cannot afford to pay persons to help them on the farm; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21521/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 516 and 520 together.

I am fully aware of the significant work demands on farmers and my Department and I have worked hard to provide support and encouragement for collaborative farming arrangements, both family and non-family, for example: by establishing a register of formal farm partner-
ships, with supports for the establishment costs of partnerships available from the Collaborative Farming Scheme under the RDP; and by addressing perceived administrative barriers to putting farms in the joint names of husband and wife. In addition, tax changes over the last three Budgets have provided a comprehensive set of supports to encourage early farm transfer, long term leasing and partnership arrangements:

- Tax treatment of agricultural assets means that the family farm can be transferred on to the younger generation without any tax liability arising in almost all cases.

- Generous incentives apply to encourage farmland to be leased out in long term lease arrangement, rather than the conacre (11 month) system, allowing for proper planning and investment in relation to leased land.

- The Succession Farm Partnership scheme will promote the earlier inter-generational transfer of family farms, in line with Programme for Government commitments and the Food Wise strategy. It will encourage and support important conversations within farm families about succession planning. This Scheme provides for a €25,000 tax credit over five years to assist with the transfers of farms within a partnership structure. Administrative arrangements are being finalised and I will launch the Succession Farm Partnership Register shortly.

As a result of these efforts, we are starting to see more young people taking over farms, whether through family transfers, family and non-family partnership arrangements, and other collaborative arrangements.

The latest client data from my Department does suggest that, finally, we now have more farmers under the age of 35 than over the age of 80 – and while this represents progress, there is obviously a lot more to be done. Many farmers don’t want to retire fully, and I understand and respect that wish. What we need is arrangements that work for both the older farmer and the new generation. I think it is important to reflect the fact that most farms are family businesses, where the skills and talents of all family members, particularly farm women, can contribute to building viable businesses for the future. We are all sadly aware of the issue of farm safety, and I hope that encouraging collaborative arrangements will help to reduce the risk of accidents on farm.

In addition my Department is a member of the Farm Safety Partnership Committee and as part of the current and previous Farm safety Action Plans, programmes have been and are being implemented to promote the health of farmers. One such element was the publication of a booklet entitled: Staying Fit for Farming. This booklet was distributed as part of the FBD champions for change campaign, and it is intended to print a further run of the booklets. The booklet has been made available to facilitators of Knowledge Transfer groups on the “Farm Safety key” memory stick.

**Brexit Issues**

517. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has met with farming organisations regarding the impact of Brexit along the Border; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21499/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I am acutely aware of the potential risks and challenges that Brexit poses for the Irish agri-food sector, and particularly for farming and agri businesses along the border.

Close consultations have been ongoing with all of the relevant stakeholders since early
2016, considerably in advance of the UK referendum which gave rise to the decision to leave the EU. I and my officials have engaged at political and official levels with representative organisations, businesses, and with UK, Northern Ireland and EU Member State counterparts, in order to both fully understand and to communicate the potential implications of Brexit, as well as the most appropriate industry and government responses. An important element of that process has been the Northern Ireland dimension, and the particular issues to be dealt with in a border context.

In addition to the separate and ongoing contacts with the IFA, ICMSA, ICSA and Macra na Feirme, all of these organisations are members of the Stakeholders Consultative Committee that I established last year to exchange views and experiences on the implications of Brexit. The impact of Brexit on border areas is regularly discussed during these consultations. In addition, these organisations and their Northern Ireland counterparts have participated in the series of agri-food sectoral dialogues that I have hosted under the All Island Civic Dialogue process, specifically to look at North-South issues and areas of common interest that arise in this context.

I am of course fully aware that the implications of Brexit for North-South trade, and for the movement of raw materials, including milk, meat and live animals, are potentially severe. The implications for animal and plant health procedures on both sides of the border are also potentially very serious. Put quite simply, this substantial trade would be very significantly affected by the constraints of tariffs, customs controls, veterinary/phyto-sanitary certification and any deviation by the UK from EU common regulatory provisions and standards, if these were to arise.

For the record I have had the following formal meetings with farming organisations since the beginning of the year:

I met with the IFA on 22 March 2017 to discuss their Brexit Policy Paper and again on 30 March to discuss the effect of Brexit on the liquid milk market. I also accompanied the Taoiseach on 26 April when he met the IFA to discuss their Policy Paper. I spoke at their Brexit Conference in Goffs on 24 April. I also met a delegation from the ICMSA on 14 February, a delegation from the ICSA on 16 February and a delegation from Macra na Feirme on 13 April 2017.

The Government remains very focused on supporting the farming and agri-food industry through the challenges ahead. I will continue to meet the representative bodies both on their own and as part of our Stakeholder Consultative Committee process in order to exchange views and to monitor developments as the negotiations progress.

Fish Quotas

518. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of the review of mackerel allocation policy between the fleet segments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21518/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** As the Deputy may be aware, I received a request from the Irish South and West Fish Producer Organisation to allocate the increase over 2016 of Ireland’s mackerel quota for 2017 entirely to the Polyvalent Segment on a 1 year pilot basis in exchange for the recipient vessels forgoing demersal fishing in order to gauge the impact on the demersal vessels.

This matter has generated a lot of discussion in the industry and I have received many representations on the matter. Having carefully considered the matter, I decided that, without
prejudice, there is a case for a review of the policy on allocations between the RSW Pelagic segment and the polyvalent segment of the fleet, taking account of request by the IS&WFO. In that regard, I decided that I am restricting consideration to the increased quota for Ireland in 2017 over that in 2016.

It is important to note that I have not made any decision at this time to change the allocations between the segments in respect of this part of the quota. All relevant issues will be carefully evaluated and subject to a full consultation with stakeholders before I decide if any amendment to the policy is justified for the proper and effective management of the mackerel fishery.

The public consultation process concluded on 28th February 2017 and 353 submissions were received. All submissions are currently being evaluated.

To support transparency in this process, it is intended that all views received on the Consultation Document and/or any clarification provided will be publicly made available on my Department’s website. Following the closure of the formal consultation process, any meeting that may be held with stakeholders will be open to all interested stakeholders that have engaged in the public consultation.

Fish Quotas

519. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the way in which his Department can reconcile the policy stated in Fisheries Quota Management in Ireland (details supplied) with its implementation, which is allowing quotas to be concentrated in the hands of large fishing companies, the owners of which have the financial resources to buy up such rights; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21519/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** As the Deputy is aware, it is long-standing Government policy that fishing quotas are a national asset and the responsibility for the administration of quota rests with the Minister alone. In Ireland, quota is managed to ensure that property rights are not granted to individual operators.

While Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQ’s) which permits the transfer/sale of quotas may work for some Member States, it would not work for Ireland where we have a network of small rural coastal communities dependant on our fishing fleet, large and small, demersal and pelagic. The Irish fishing fleet is for the most part made up of family owned vessels with strong links to their home ports. These families have a long tradition in fishing with generations succeeding each other into the industry.

I have no doubt that if ITQs were put in place, our quotas both whitefish and pelagic would be purchased by large European fishing conglomerates, with no socio or economic links to our ports, and landed elsewhere, with the resultant loss of jobs and economic activity around our coast. For Ireland, this scenario would wipe out our fishing industry and we will would not get the benefit from the rich fisheries resources in the waters around our coasts. The issue of mandatory ITQs formed a part of the EU Commission proposal for the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy in 2011. This proposal was rejected following a strong case made by Ireland that management of quotas should be a matter of national competence.

To put in perspective much of the employment on shore in the seafood sector is generated by landings to Ireland by Irish vessels of all sizes. This activity delivers approximately 3,200 jobs in our fleet, with another 3,800 employed in our processing plants with additional employment in ancillary support industries. These jobs are totally dependent on Irish quotas being landed into Irish ports and any change to this would seriously jeopardise the ongoing viability
of these jobs with disastrous consequences.

The result of Ireland’s long standing policy is that the Irish fishing fleet involves a balanced spread of sizes and types of fishing vessels who have retained a strong economic link with our coastal communities and have delivered economic activity including vital employment in these communities, where there are very limited alternative economic activities.

Question No. 520 answered with Question No. 516.

Agriculture Schemes

521. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a scheme (details supplied) is coming on stream for dairy farmers in counties Cavan and Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21522/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The scheme referenced is particular to the UK only and is part of their implementation of the exceptional aid measures implemented by the EU Commission in 2016. As part of this package, Member States were given €350 million to implement schemes which were tailored to meet their needs nationally. This was to ensure that the funds were put to the most effective use possible in each State. Ireland was allocated €11.1m under this aid package.

My Department, after consultation with all stakeholders in the sector, has used our €11.1 million allocation of funds, to part finance the Agri Cashflow Support Loan Scheme. Using national funds, I increased the amount provided to implement the scheme to €25 million.

This resulted in a low-cost credit scheme with the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) which has made €150 million available to farmers at interest rates of 2.95%. The Scheme provides farmers with a low cost, flexible source of working capital, allowing them to pay down more expensive forms of short-term debt, ensuring the on-going financial sustainability of viable farming enterprises.

The SBCI has said that €60.2m has been drawn down by farmers to date. The average loan size is €32,000, with more than half the loans being advanced for terms of four years or more. 42% of loan value has been provided to dairy enterprises across the country. I am pleased at the very positive reaction by farmers to the Scheme, which has proved that significant demand exists for low cost flexible finance.

The banks advise that all of the remaining €150m is committed and is in the process of being drawn down. Based on progress to date, SBCI anticipate that in total approximately 4,000 farmers will benefit from the scheme.

Forestry Sector

522. Deputy Brendan Griffin asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a person (details supplied) in County Kerry will be permitted to plant forestry on their lands; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21634/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named currently has two forestry contracts. Planting has already commenced for the first contract and the second has received technical approval. The lands which are the subject of these forestry contracts appear to be those in the Folio given.
523. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a TAMS payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21649/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named has submitted a payment claim under the Dairy Equipment Scheme of TAMS 11. There is an issue with the claim that will require the application of a reduction. The payment will be processed as quickly as possible.

---

524. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a TAMS payment will issue to persons (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21653/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The persons named are a Registered Farm Partnership and they have submitted a payment claim under the Young Farmers Capital Investment Scheme of TAMS 11. All aspects of the claim are now being examined.

---

525. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a TAMS payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21656/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named was approved, carried out work and submitted a payment claim under the Dairy Equipment Scheme of TAMS 11. Under the provisions of the scheme a reduction must be applied before payment. The payment claim will be processed as quickly as possible.

---

526. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a TAMS payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21659/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named is an applicant under the Dairy Equipment Scheme in TAMS 11. An outstanding query concerning the application for payment has been resolved and payment has been approved and will issue to the applicant the week beginning 8 May 2017.

---

527. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if it is normal practice that the inspecting officer is not present at the appeal of a case in which they
have imposed a penalty in view of the fact this is happening in the vast majority of cases of appeals to penalties imposed by the Nenagh, County Tipperary office; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21538/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The final reviewing officer from within my Department has responsibility to attend the oral hearing as requested by the Agriculture Appeals Office.

**Agriculture Scheme Administration**

528. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on whether the practice of appeals staff being recruited from former departmental officials is having the opposite effect to that intended on the confidence of appellants (details supplied); if he will review this practice and appoint appeals officers who have no connection with his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21539/17]

**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 and that they are required to apply fair procedures thereby giving an opportunity to each side to have their case heard.

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. Any recommendations arising from that review regarding the assignment of appeals officers will be given due consideration.

**Agriculture Scheme Penalties**

529. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to set out in tabular form the amount of cross-compliance and eligibility fines that have been deducted from persons in each of the years 2011 to 2016; the destination of the moneys; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21540/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Data that the Deputy has requested is not readily available. Officials in my Department will collate the data and forward directly to the Deputy.

**Agriculture Scheme Administration**

530. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to outline the way in which appeals cases are allocated to appeals staff; if it is normal practice that five 100% fines from the Nenagh, County Tipperary office had one appeals officer deal with three of them; his views on whether this is unnecessary in view of the number of appeals staff available to deal with individual appeals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21541/17]
Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The procedure for allocating appeals is that appeals are allocated to Appeals Officers on a regional basis following receipt of the required documentation necessary to process the appeal. A region can include one or more counties. The regional allocation is rotated every three months. On occasion, for example if there is a large volume of appeals on hand for a region, some appeal cases might be assigned to Appeals Officers responsible for appeals received for a different region. The level of penalty is not a determining factor in assigning appeals to an Appeals Officer.

I am satisfied that Appeals Officers are independent in the performance of their functions and consider all of the facts before making a determination.

GLAS Eligibility

531. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will investigate the case of a person (details supplied) who received correspondence on 13 January 2016, which stated that the person was eligible for GLAS 1 and that the application would be reassessed, but 14 months later the same person was informed that he had not been readmitted to the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21542/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted a GLAS 1 application which was unsuccessful and subsequently appealed which resulted in his acceptance into the scheme.

Department officials are actively working to reinstate the application on the online system with a view to issuing payment.

Fishery Harbour Centres

532. Deputy Brendan Griffin asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will arrange for a review of harbour charges incurred by a person (details supplied) at a marina in County Kerry in view of the current impasse; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21549/17]

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 harbour charges referred to relate to mooring fees for the use of the marina, and these charges have been applied correctly.

I have been informed by my Department officials that vessel owners were notified of the works referred to in a timely manner. In this particular case, Department officials have been in correspondence with the individual concerned in an attempt to resolve agreeably any dispute regarding harbour dues. I have advised my officials to continue in their efforts to come to an amicable resolution of the outstanding harbour charges.

TAMS Payments

533. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to outline the reason for a continual delay in the processing of TAMS payments; the actions he is taking to eliminate these delays; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21554/17]
Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Payment claims submitted under the current Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Schemes (TAMS II) are being processed on an ongoing basis. However, some applications submitted have minor issues that need to be resolved before payment can be processed. In such cases Department officials are in direct contact with individual farmers to resolve issues and progress claims towards early payment.

A total number of 11,785 applications were made to my Department under the Scheme, of these 8,240 were approved, however only 1,335 payment claims have been received from applicants to date.

GLAS Payments

534. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a GLAS payment will issue to a person (details supplied); if this will be processed without further delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21604/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 2 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2016.

During the 2016 prepayment checking process an issue presented on the computerised crosscheck of Department databases. Department officials are actively working to resolve this issue with a view to further processing the application for the 2016 payment as soon as possible.

GLAS Eligibility

535. Deputy Martin Heydon asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a person in GLAS can transfer a portion of the holding, which does not have GLAS actions associated with it, under long-term lease without incurring penalties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21616/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): GLAS is not a whole farm scheme. Farmers in GLAS are required to retain all those land parcels on which a GLAS commitment has been given for the period of the contract. Where the farmer has additional parcels to those in GLAS he/she is free to lease out these parcels.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

536. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 665 of 29 November 2016 to outline the reason a person (details supplied) has not received payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21617/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named has been deemed eligible under the ‘Scottish Derogation’ measure of the Basic Payment Scheme.

Full payment in respect of the 2016 Basic payment scheme issued to the person named on 11th April 2017. A partial payment in respect of the 2015 Basic payment scheme remains outstanding and will issue as soon as possible.
537. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will ensure the immediate payment of all outstanding GLAS, AEOS and TAMS payments and an immediate review of the bureaucratic critical payment measures introduced with a view to simplifying the procedures for all. [21620/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** GLAS, AEOS and TAMS are approved and co-funded by the European Union and specific EU regulatory requirements must be complied with in processing payments under the scheme. Failure to comply with these requirements would impact negatively on the funding available through disallowances being imposed on Ireland.

GLAS payments continue to issue with 92% of payments issued to date.

The TAMS II online payment claims system has been available for the submission of payment claims since July 2016. The online system is set up to be as user friendly as possible with a series of validations in place to prompt the user to submit the required documentation. The payment claims submitted are being processed on an ongoing basis.

In respect of AEOS a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System must take place. As 2016 is the final scheme year of payment for the AEOS 2 Scheme, re-checks on payments made for all scheme years must be completed before final payment can be processed. This work is on-going and payments for valid checked files are and will continue to be released on a weekly basis.

A number of payments under all three schemes also continue to be held up due to incomplete documentation and all participants are reminded to respond to any correspondence and submit any outstanding documentation as soon as possible to facilitate payment.

---

**GLAS Payments**

538. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will expedite the GLAS 2 payments for persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21627/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The first person named was approved into GLAS 2 with a contract commencement date of the 1 January 2016.

During the 2016 prepayment checking process issues were identified. Department officials are actively working to resolve these issues with a view to further processing the application for payment at the earliest opportunity.

The second person named was approved into GLAS 2 with a contract commencement date of the 1 January 2016.

The application has now passed the pre-payment checks in respect of the 2016 scheme year and the 85% payment for 2016 has been processed and payment has issued. The remaining 15% will issues in due course.
Questions - Written Answers

Aquaculture Development

539. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 461 of 28 March 2017, if he will publish the results of his Department’s examination; and if the examination will include the need for the aquaculture operations to comply with local authority requirements on fresh water intake and outflows. [21637/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department’s investigation of this matter is ongoing and the results are not yet available. While certain aspects of the information assembled may be commercially sensitive, the overall conclusions will be released.

The objective of this investigation is to look at each of the sites of the company named with the sole view of determining whether the requirements of the organic regulations are met. In that respect, any conditions directly relevant to the award of organic status will be taken into account.

Aquaculture Licence Appeals

540. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to specify the division of his Department that has responsibility for the governance of the Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board. [21638/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board (ALAB) is an independent authority for the determination of appeals against decisions of the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine on aquaculture licence applications and was established on 17 June 1998 under Section 22 of the Fisheries (Amendment) Act, 1997. All Board members are engaged on a part-time basis.

The Sea Fisheries Policy & Management Division (Marine Agencies Unit) is responsible for oversight of the corporate governance of ALAB.

Aquaculture Licences

541. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 460 of 28 March 2017, if he will extend the terms of reference for the review of aquaculture licensing to include an examination of the conflict of interest built into his Department’s aquaculture licensing system and to the appeals system in order to respond to public concerns on this matter. [21639/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The aquaculture licensing system as currently constituted provides an appeals process through the Aquaculture Licensing Appeals Board. The function of the Board is to provide an independent authority for the determination of appeals against decisions made by me on aquaculture licence applications. As provided for under Section 23 of the Fisheries (Amendment) Act, 1997, the Board consists of a Chairman and six other members.

The terms of reference of the independent review group for aquaculture licensing were published in December 2016 and I anticipate receipt of the group’s report in the coming weeks. I am satisfied that the Group’s terms of reference provide the Group with appropriate scope to address issues arising with the licensing system.
Aquaculture Licences

542. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the objective bias built into his Department’s aquaculture licensing system at every stage applies to his Department’s system for awarding organic status to farmed salmon. [21640/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Marine aquaculture licence applications are considered by my Department in accordance with the provisions of the 1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act and the 1933 Foreshore Act. There is always a strict separation between my Ministerial role as decision maker in respect of aquaculture licence applications and my Ministerial duty to promote the sustainable development of the industry. This separation of duties is strictly observed.

As regards the award of organic status, this is secured by a formal certification process delegated by my Department to various Organic Control Bodies in accordance with the relevant EU regulations. The certification process involves regular inspection of all organic operators, production techniques and sampling of organic produce to ensure compliance with all EU requirements. In addition, all Organic Control Bodies are independently accredited by an external accreditation body.

Aquaculture Licences

543. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will commission an independent review of his Department’s procedures for awarding organic status to all forms of aquaculture to ensure full compliance with all EU regulations and to enable persons to have confidence in his Department’s procedures. [21641/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The organic status of all aquaculture products is secured by a formal certification process delegated by my Department to various Organic Control Bodies in accordance with the relevant EU regulations. The certification process involves regular inspection of all organic operators, production techniques and sampling of organic produce to ensure compliance with all EU requirements. In addition, all Organic Control Bodies are independently accredited by the relevant accreditation body. On this basis, I am satisfied that an independent review is not necessary at this time.

Aquaculture Licence Eligibility

544. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 463 of 28 March 2017, if the excess smolts in the Inishfarnard site operated by a company (details supplied) were sourced from the company’s hatcheries, which are licensed to stock only smolts; and, if so, the evidential issues surrounding the definition of a smolt that were cited on his Department’s website as the reason for not revoking the company’s licence. [21642/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department’s records indicate that the fish inputted to the site were sourced from hatcheries operated by the Company referred to by the Deputy.

The evidential issues referred to in my Department’s public notice relate to whether all the fish in question were in fact smolts.
545. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will publish the report of his Department’s investigation into the fish escape from a salmon farm in Bantry Bay following a storm in 2014. [21643/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department’s examination of the matter referred to by the Deputy, which is nearing completion, is detailed and involves all engineering, scientific, environmental and technical matters associated with the incident. In addition, the incident to which the report relates is also the subject of legal proceedings which have not yet fully concluded.

Following conclusion of the relevant legal proceedings the draft report will need to be the subject of final examination by my Department, and possibly further consultation with relevant Government Departments and State Agencies, before consideration can be given to publication.

**Veterinary Inspection Service**

546. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will report on a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21646/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The presence of some herd discrepancies on the holding necessitated the restriction of the holding.

Since the death of the herd owner, no application has been made to the local Department office to have a new keeper assigned to this holding.

Staff in the local Department Veterinary Office will contact the family concerned with a view to progressing the assignment of a new keeper to the holding. Following this process the new keeper should liaise with the local office with a view to resolving the discrepancies that will enable the restriction on the holding to be lifted.

**Agriculture Scheme Eligibility**

547. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a review of a parcel in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry will be carried out to enable them to apply for the 2017 basic payment and area of natural constraints scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21648/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** An official from my Department has been in contact with the relevant party and the application has been submitted successfully.

**GLAS Payments**

548. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a GLAS 2 payment will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21721/17]
Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 2 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2016.

During the 2016 prepayment checking process an issue presented on the computerised crosscheck of Department databases. Department officials are actively working to resolve this issue with a view to further processing the application for the 2016 payment as soon as possible.

GLAS Payments

549. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a GLAS payment will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21733/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 2 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2016.

During the 2016 prepayment checking process an issue with the Low Input Permanent Pasture action was identified. Department officials are actively working to resolve this issue.

GLAS Administration

550. Deputy Martin Heydon asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a person in GLAS can long term leave a portion of their holding which does not have GLAS actions associated with it without incurring penalties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21736/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): GLAS is not a whole farm scheme. Farmers in GLAS are required to retain those land parcels on which a GLAS commitment has been given for the full period of the contract. Where the farmer has additional parcels to those in GLAS he/she is free to lease out these parcels.

Departmental Correspondence

551. Deputy John McGuinness asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will address issues raised by a person (details supplied); if a reply will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21741/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Officials in my Department have been in correspondence with the individual named on previous occasions, and have also met with him to discuss the issues he has raised. I have also recently written directly to the individual named in relation to his case and advised that officials from my Department are available to meet with him to further discuss the matters raised, should this be required.

An official of my Department has been in further contact with the individual concerned, with a view to arranging such a meeting if required.

Coillte Teoranta Lands

552. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when
the sale of a complex (details supplied) will be complete; the number of bidders involved at the
various stages; the amount the complex has sold for; if this figure will be disclosed to the public;
and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21784/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Coillte was
established as a private commercial company under the Forestry Act 1988 and day-to-day op-
erational matters, such as sale transactions, are the responsibility of the company.

Coillte advise, however, that the exact timeline for the potential completion of the transac-
tion relating to the Killykeen Holiday Complex is not known at this stage as the process is still
on-going and that all parties will be informed accordingly when the process is completed. In
relation to information on bidders and the amount for which the Complex will be sold, Coillte
advise that these matters are commercially sensitive and are operational matters for Coillte, and
that such information will not therefore be publicly disclosed.

Live Exports

553. Deputy Bríd Smith asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the per-
centage that live animal exports represent of the overall market in agricultural exports for each
of the years 2010 to 2016 and to date in 2017; and the estimated value in euro of live animal
exports for each of the years 2010 to 2016. [21787/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The statistics
the Deputy is seeking are listed in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exports €000</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>Jan - Feb 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value of exports of live animals (€)</td>
<td>338,680</td>
<td>356,884</td>
<td>329,660</td>
<td>432,095</td>
<td>399,672</td>
<td>430,508</td>
<td>339,863</td>
<td>58,952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of live animal exports as a % of total agri-food exports</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: CSO Agri-Food statistics)

Young Farmers Scheme

554. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Ma-
rine the status of an appeal under the national reserve scheme for a person (details supplied) in
County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21795/17]
Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted applications under the ‘young farmer’ category of the 2015 National Reserve and the Young Farmers Scheme. The Terms and Conditions governing the operation of these schemes state that in order to qualify as a ‘young farmer’, a person must be setting up an agricultural holding for the first time in his/her name or have set up such a holding during the five years preceding the first submission of the BPS application. The applications were not successful as the applicant was deemed to have commenced farming more than five years before the submission of a BPS application. The applicant was notified of this decision and was offered the opportunity to submit an appeal.

My Department subsequently received an appeal from the person named in relation to the National Reserve and Young Farmers Scheme applications. This appeal was considered based on the information set out by the applicant and the original decision was upheld. The person named was notified of the outcome of the appeal and offered the opportunity to submit a further appeal to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office.

The Agriculture Appeals Office is currently dealing with National Reserve and Young Farmer Scheme appeals cases and I have been informed that they will be in direct contact with the person named shortly with a view to arranging a date for an oral hearing of his case.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

555. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payments will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal in respect of AEOS and single farm payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21910/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): An AEOS 3 contract relating to the herd number quoted commenced on 1 May 2013. Payment issued in respect of the 2013-2015 Scheme years.

Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System must take place. Issues arose relating to the transfer of this contract to the person named. These issues have now been resolved and all checks successfully completed. Payment to the person named will issue within 10 working days.

Issues relating to the Basic Scheme Payment have also been resolved. That payment was processed on 3rd May 2017 and will issue to the applicant shortly.

Departmental Correspondence

556. Deputy Fergus O’Dowd asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will address concerns raised in correspondence (details supplied). [21923/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department would not be in a position to comment on a matter relating to an individual member of staff. There are agreed processes and mechanisms available to all civil servants if they have concerns regarding their work and this is the appropriate way to deal with any individual’s concerns. I have passed your correspondence to my Department’s HR Division.
557. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person (details supplied) has not been in receipt of an ANC payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21924/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Under the Areas of Natural Constraints (ANC) Scheme, eligible applicants are required to have met a minimum stocking density of 0.15 livestock units for a retention period of seven consecutive months and to maintain an annual average of 0.15 livestock units calculated over the twelve months of the scheme year.

The Terms and Conditions of the ANC Scheme (and the predecessor schemes) set out that, under EU Regulation 21/2004, all flock owners’ and sheep keepers are obliged to count the sheep in their flock, record this number in the flock register and thereafter are legally obliged to return this number to my Department via the annual Sheep/Goat Census return. The closing date for the receipt of census returns for acceptance under the scheme was the closing date of the scheme each year.

Processing of the applications under 2014, 2015 and 2016 scheme years identified that the holding concerned had not satisfied the scheme’s minimum stocking density requirements as outlined in the Terms and Conditions.

Department records indicate no sheep census received from the person named since 2011. Accordingly, the eligibility criteria for payment have not been met.

### GLAS Payments

558. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person’s (details supplied) information was not reviewed correctly in regard to a GLAS payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21931/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named submitted an application under Tranche 3 of GLAS and has been approved into the scheme with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2017.

The first payment due to GLAS 3 participants is in respect of the 2017 scheme year and processing of such payments will commence in the final quarter of the year.

### Agriculture Schemes

559. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will consider the request of a local authority regarding schemes which are under the aegis of his Department (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21936/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** GLAS, AEOS and TAMS are approved and co-funded by the European Union and specific EU regulatory requirements must be complied with in processing payments under the scheme. Failure to comply with these requirements would impact negatively on the funding available through disallowances being imposed on Ireland.

GLAS payments continue to issue with 92% of payments issued to date. With specific refer-
ence to Co. Monaghan fewer than 50 GLAS payments continue to be processed.

The TAMS II online payment claims system has been available for the submission of payment claims since July 2016. The online system is set up to be as user friendly as possible with a series of validations in place to prompt the user to submit the required documentation. The payment claims submitted are being processed on an ongoing basis.

In respect AEOS a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must take place. As 2016 is the final scheme-year of payment for the AEOS 2 Scheme, re-checks on payments made for all scheme years must be completed before final payment can be processed. This work is on-going and payments for valid checked files are being and will continue to be released on a weekly basis.

A number of payments under all three schemes also continue to be held up due to incomplete documentation and all participants are reminded to respond to any correspondence and submit any outstanding documentation as soon as possible to facilitate payment.

GLAS Payments

560. Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a GLAS payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [21973/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 1 with a contract commencement date of 1 October 2015.

The application has now passed the pre-payment checks in respect of the 2016 scheme year and the 85% payment for 2016 has been processed and payment has issued.

The remaining 15% due for 2016 will issue in due course.

GLAS Payments

561. Deputy Mick Wallace asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of payments to a person (details supplied); the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22019/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 1 with a contract commencement date of 1 October 2015.

The application has now passed the pre-payment checks in respect of the 2015 scheme year and payment will issue shortly.

Following the issue of payment in respect of the 2015 scheme year, the application will be further processed in respect of the 2016 scheme year.

Basic Payment Scheme Eligibility

562. Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of entitlements which a person (details supplied) holds. [22028/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person
named held 6.26 entitlements under the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme with a total value of €3,135.63. Following a land reduction under the 2015 Scheme year, the eligible land was reduced to 2.55 hectares. The Basic Payment Scheme entitlement was re-calculated to take into account the reduced area. In this regard, 2.55 entitlements was established with a total value of €3,086.23.

**TAMS Payments**

563. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will review a matter regarding an outstanding TAMS II payment; when a person (details supplied) will receive the payment; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that delays in TAMS payments are causing severe financial difficulty; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22038/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The persons named have submitted a payment claim under the Dairy Equipment Scheme of TAMS II. The applicants made a payment over-claim. The Department is currently working on the processing of an over-claim. As soon as this is completed the payment will be finalised.

**Transfer of Entitlements**

564. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a review of a transfer of entitlements will be carried out in respect of persons (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22045/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The persons named submitted a 2016 Transfer of Entitlements application to my Department seeking the transfer of entitlements by lease as transferor.

An issue has arisen in relation to the value of the entitlements which were the subject of this lease. My Department is currently in the process of resolving the issue and the persons named will be notified in writing as soon as the matter is resolved.

**GLAS Data**

565. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons awaiting GLAS payments; the percentage of the total number of persons this figure represents; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22114/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Applications continue to be processed to payment as set out in the tabular form below.

Of the 2,840 cases, my Department has written to 360 applicants who have failed to submit fully completed commonage forms. The Department has also written to 70 other applicants who have failed to return complete information on low emission slurry spreading. The Department has also been in contact with a further 500 applicants and is working through the remaining cases as quickly as possible.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total in Scheme</th>
<th>Total not sent for payment</th>
<th>% not sent for payment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GLAS 1</td>
<td>25460</td>
<td>1932</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLAS 2</td>
<td>11345</td>
<td>908</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36,805</td>
<td>2,840</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GLAS Administration**

566. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons that will be removed from GLAS status further to the review of the GLAS programme; when each person will be informed of the reason their status has changed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22115/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** There is no on-going review of GLAS affecting the status of scheme participants.

All Member States are required to carry out comprehensive administrative checks on all applications for payment and on the spot checks are required on at least 5% of GLAS participants annually. The outcome of these checks may result in the imposition of a penalty for non-compliance with the scheme conditions and in some instances may result in exclusion from the scheme. Any issues arising are dealt with on a case by case basis and a right of appeal is given.

In addition farmers are free to withdraw from the scheme thereby terminating their contract.

**Milk Supply**

567. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason the samples for testing for residues in milk in the Silvermines, County Tipperary, area are being sent to the UK in view of the fact it is causing a delay in getting results; if a facility here can carry out the testing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22116/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** According to EU food hygiene regulations it is the responsibility of the food business operator (FBO) to ensure that food placed on the market is fit for human consumption. This includes the FBO’s obligation to test for undesirable substances, such as lead.

Where appropriate tests are commercially available for routine testing of food products it is the norm that the FBO would use a commercial laboratory, as has been done for the tests required in the Silvermines area. The laboratory chosen to conduct these tests is a commercial matter for the FBO in question. It is part of an international company that has laboratory sites in different countries, with specialised testing being rationalised to specific laboratories to maximise efficiencies. This is nowadays normal practice and guarantees service at a more competitive cost; overheads are high for analyses of this nature (the ability to detect lead at extremely low concentrations - where 20 parts per billion is the maximum permitted level in milk) due to the requirement for expensive instrumentation, specialised staff and tight quality control.

The role of my Department’s Laboratories is to test samples taken in the framework of official controls, surveys and investigations. In the current Silvermines investigation my Department has worked in partnership with the FBO in trying to solve this incident and my Department’s responsibility has been to test milk samples taken by my Department’s Dairy Controls & Certification officers and RVL staff. The purpose of the testing of these milk samples was to
support actions such as restriction/derestriction of marketing of milk or to help progress the investigation. A customised and well-planned system of sampling, delivery and testing has been coordinated by my Department to allow quicker turnaround times for these official samples. My Department’s Laboratories are however not able to act as a public testing laboratory because of current testing capacity and mandate.

**National Cattle Herd Data**

568. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of beef and dairy calf registrations in each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017; the number of live exports of beef and dairy calves in each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017; the way in which these exports compare to other years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22117/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The figures for beef and dairy calf registrations for 2014-2017 (to date), and the number of live exports of beef and dairy calves for 2007-2017 (to date) are as follows. These figures are also available on my Department’s website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calf Birth Registration</th>
<th>Calves born to a Beef Bull</th>
<th>Calves born to a Dairy Bull</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1,386,875</td>
<td>744,173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1,501,101</td>
<td>762,666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1,520,860</td>
<td>803,436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017 (to date)</td>
<td>941,560</td>
<td>649,726</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Live Exports</th>
<th>Beef Cattle*</th>
<th>Dairy Cattle*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0 - 6 weeks</td>
<td>6 weeks – 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>13,853</td>
<td>6,584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>6,992</td>
<td>2,526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>21,669</td>
<td>6,767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>24,615</td>
<td>5,321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2,689</td>
<td>1,618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>999</td>
<td>1,282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>3,839</td>
<td>1,548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1,643</td>
<td>1,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>6,263</td>
<td>1,665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>5,946</td>
<td>2,506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017 (to date)</td>
<td>5,747</td>
<td>398</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Defined by the progeny of a beef/dairy breed

I am very conscious of the vital role that live exports play in providing an alternative market outlet for farmers. My Department and Bord Bia are involved in on-going work to encourage and facilitate such exports.

The cattle export trade in 2017 is positive after two years of decline.

Live exports for 2017 are up 38% on 2016 levels.

Total exports for 2017 amount to 92,199 compared to 66,595 in 2016.
I recently reduced the veterinary inspection fee payable on live exports of calves under three months of age to €1.20 per animal from €4.80, in order to bring greater equity in the fees payable per consignment in respect of calves, weanlings and adult cattle. The live calf export trade with the EU has proved difficult in recent years for a number of reasons, including changes in animal health rules in Belgium and changes in the interpretation of the EU rules on animal transport in the Netherlands. However, my Department has been working closely with the Dutch authorities on the transport issue and over 36,000 calves have been exported to the Netherlands in this year to date, 10,000 more than in the whole of 2016.

Last year saw significant developments in exports of cattle to third countries. We exported almost 20,000 head to Turkey in 2016 and two shipments of cattle have taken place to date this year, with indications that there will be further shipments this year. In relation to the other significant potential third country markets for live exports, Ireland reached agreement with Egypt in 2016 on a health certificate for slaughter cattle. My Department has been actively discussing with the Egyptian authorities the possibility of agreement on a health certificate for fattening cattle. Good progress has been made on this matter and I am optimistic that an agreement can be finalised in the near future.

My Department is also looking at the possibility of bilateral health certificates for the export of cattle to Kazakhstan and has identified Israel as a live export market of potential interest to exporters. Agreement on health certificates has been reached by my Department with all other live export markets identified as being of potential interest to Ireland. At present 9 non-EU markets (Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro, Morocco, Serbia, Tunisia, and most recently Turkey) are currently open to live cattle from Ireland, in addition to all EU Member States. Demand from North Africa and the Middle East for live cattle will depend on the political environment there as well as Ireland’s cost competitiveness.

I will continue to work to ensure that Irish meat and livestock producers have the option of exporting to markets abroad.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Payments

569. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will review a payment to a person (details supplied). [22145/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** An application under the 2016 Areas of Natural Constraints (ANC) scheme was received from the person named on 16 May 2016.

The Terms and Conditions of the scheme set out that, under EU Regulation 21/2004, all flock owners and sheep keepers are obliged to count the sheep in their flock, record this number in the flock register and thereafter are legally obliged to return this number to my Department via the annual Sheep/Goat Census return. The closing date for the receipt of Census Returns for acceptance under the ANC scheme was 16 May 2016.

Department records indicate the sheep census in this case was not received until 3 October 2016. The person named was notified of this finding on 8 February 2017 and advised of the option to seek a review of this decision including any supporting documentation they may consider relevant to the matter. Further correspondence from the person named was received on 14 March 2017, indicating a delay in sourcing supporting documentation. Officials in my Department are currently awaiting the submission of the documentation in order to finalise the application.
570. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the provisions being made to enable a person to submit an eligible application under the young farmers scheme by 15 May 2017 when it is not possible for this person to have the green certificate course completed before 20 June 2017; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that changes made by his Department regarding the timeline for completion of courses is an issue of particular concern to dry stock farmers; if the necessary changes will be made in order to ensure that such farmers are not denied the opportunity to submit eligible applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22146/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** In accordance with EU Regulations governing the operation of the National Reserve and Young Farmers Scheme, Member States may define additional eligibility criteria as regards appropriate skills, experience or education. To ensure that the benefits of the ‘young farmer’ and ‘new entrant’ categories are targeted at those who have a genuine interest in farming as a career, Ireland included agricultural education at FETAC level 6 standard or its equivalent as a requirement to qualify for the schemes. Under the 2015 National Reserve and Young Farmer scheme Ireland introduced increased flexibility in order to maximise the number of eligible applicants into the schemes and students of agricultural education were included if otherwise eligible. However, this flexibility did not receive the approval of the European Commission. Therefore, successful applicants under the 2017 National Reserve and Young Farmers Scheme must have completed their agricultural educational qualification by 15th May 2017.

Where an applicant has fully completed all aspects of their course by 15th May but has not yet been verified as successful or received final certification, a Confirmation of Education Form should be submitted with the young farmer’s application. This form is available to download on the Department’s website. The form is to be filled out by a representative of the college to confirm that the applicant has fully completed all aspects of the course by the 15th May 2017.

Decisions in relation to the National Reserve and Young Farmers Scheme, including educational qualifications, are made in consultation with the Direct Payments Advisory Committee which includes members of the main farming bodies, and agricultural education and advisory services. Full Terms and Conditions of the 2017 National Reserve and Young Farmers Scheme are available on my Department’s website.

**Fishery Harbour Centres**

571. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will sanction the dredging of Howth fishery harbour centre in view of the fact that the silting problem is becoming serious; the issues to be considered and the process to be followed in respect of this application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22148/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Howth Fishery Harbour Centre is one of the six designated Fishery Harbour Centres which are owned, managed and maintained by my Department under Statute.

Regarding a possible dredging project in Howth Fishery Harbour Centre, preparation work has been underway for some time. I would advise the Deputy that a report from a site investigation works, which was commissioned in 2015, was received by my Department in March 2016. The report included vital information on the nature of the material to be dredged in any future dredging project.
The information revealed from the Site Investigation Report indicated that some of the dredge material would not be suitable for conventional disposal at sea.

In June 2016, a firm of consulting engineers were engaged to prepare a report on a potential dredging project at Howth, to include the possible scope of the project, various disposal options for the dredged material at Howth and permitting requirements.

An initial draft of this report was received by my Department in February 2017 and the final report was received on 14th March last. This report is currently being reviewed by my Department’s Marine Engineering Division.

Depending on the outcome of this review, and as is the case for all developments in the six Fishery Harbour Centres, any decision with regard to progressing this project further will be considered under future Capital Programmes on the basis of available exchequer funding and competing priorities.

Inland Fisheries Stocks

572. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the allocations of funding from his Department to promote hatcheries and spawning beds to facilitate restocking native fish species in each of the years from 2008 to 2016 in tabular form. [21432/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), the state agency responsible for the protection, management and conservation of Ireland’s inland fisheries and sea angling resources was established in July 2010 following an amalgamation of the former Central and 7 Regional Fishery Boards. Details of overall out-turns from Exchequer allocations to IFI, in the period 2011 (IFI’s first full year of operation) to date, to support its wide range of functions are set out in the following table.

The allocation is not disaggregated between operational functions and there is, consequently, no specific allocation for hatcheries and spawning beds. The support of all functions is a day to day operational matter for the Board of IFI.

In addition, IFI generates own income, which is used to contribute to its overall spend.

Details of own income are also detailed in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Exchequer Allocation</th>
<th>Own Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>€24,945,000</td>
<td>€4,994,312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>€25,448,000</td>
<td>€5,224,981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>€28,258,604</td>
<td>€4,573,509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>€24,417,000</td>
<td>€4,177,793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>€23,875,624</td>
<td>€2,954,681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>€26,803,338</td>
<td>€2,636,127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>€26,578,000</td>
<td>€2,900,000 (estimated)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ministerial Responsibilities

573. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and
Environment the Ministers who have responsibilities relating to the environment; and the details of the responsibilities those Ministers have relating to the environment. [21514/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I refer the Deputy to the reply to Questions Nos. 1251 and 1252 of 2 May 2017.

Mining Industry

574. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will address the issues associated with unused mines in the Silvermines area of County Tipperary; if he will address the ownership of the mine at Shallee, County Tipperary which is for sale; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21922/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): Since 2007, my Department in co-operation with Tipperary County Council has undertaken an extensive programme of remediation works at a number of former mining sites at Silvermines, Co. Tipperary with expenditure on the works totalling €11.2 million to date. The last substantive phase of the programme of remediation works to be completed is the work at the Garryard site. Progression of this phase of the programme is under consideration by my Department.

The Gortmore Tailings Management Facility was the largest site remediated at a cost of approximately €6 million. This work included drawing up proposals for its future maintenance having regard to the protection of the integrity of the work carried out. Since a negotiated approach with the landowner proved unsuccessful, arrangements were commenced for acquisition of the site by Compulsory Purchase Order, with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. This process stalled following the untimely death of the land owner and following the advice of the CSSO it was agreed to negotiate with the family of the landowner. This negotiation process is ongoing.

Environmental monitoring of the Silvermines sites has been undertaken for the Department by CDM Smith Ireland Ltd since 2013. The purpose of such monitoring is to ensure no significant change in the conditions occurs at the remediation sites without detection.

An Inter-Agency Group has recently been established to investigate recent unexplained cattle deaths and the presence of elevated metal levels in milk from farms in the area. The Inter-Agency Group is led by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine with participation from my Department along with other relevant state agencies. The findings of the Inter-Agency Group will help inform decisions in respect of remediation efforts at the former mining sites at Silvermines.

I am aware that lands are currently being offered for sale at Shallee in the Silvermines area. My Department has no plans to acquire these lands.

Waste Disposal Charges

575. Deputy Seán Haughey asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will provide a detailed analysis to support the claim that 90% of households will pay less under the new pay-by-weight pricing scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22047/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis
The charges applied by waste management companies are a matter between those companies and their customers, subject to compliance with all applicable environmental and other relevant legislation, including contract and consumer legislation.

I have indicated quite clearly that any system under consideration to encourage householders to prevent and segregate waste will encompass more than the previously proposed pay-by-weight per-kilogramme model. A review, which is ongoing, is seeking to facilitate the provision of options to householders on how they manage their waste costs, while still encouraging the reduction and recycling of waste. It is important to acknowledge that many people are already on plans which encourage waste prevention and segregation, including models which include an element of weight-based charging.

The figure quoted by the Deputy for the number of households that could do better under a pay-by-weight system was based on a study of a pay-by-weight model which was in operation in the south-west of the country, when compared to other pricing structures in that particular area. The area chosen had a mix of urban and rural customers and pay-by-weight was long established, so that the customers in that particular area already had time and opportunity to adapt their behaviour to preventing and segregating waste. The figures showed that households of 4 people or less in that area were better off under pay-by-weight and those figures were extrapolated, using CSO data on household size, to give an indication of the savings which were achievable.

As previously pointed out, I do not and will not have a role in setting the level of charges for waste collection. I would, however, like to see a system in operation whereby the prevention and segregation of waste was encouraged so that we reduce our reliance on landfills around the country.

Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan

Deputy Martin Kenny asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the allocations from his Department to support research and development in renewable maritime energy such as wave and tidal power and offshore wind in each of the years 2012 to 2016 in tabular form. [21431/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The 2014 Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDP) sets out the Government’s policy in the ocean energy area. The plan identifies the sustainable economic opportunity for Ireland in the period to 2030 of realising the potential of our indigenous offshore wind, wave and tidal energy resources.

In contrast to offshore wind, wave and tidal energy is still at the R&D stage globally. Notwithstanding the development of promising experimental devices, much more research, development and trials are required to bring wave and tidal energy technology to commercial viability.

Exchequer support in terms of research, development and demonstration was increased under the OREDP. This funding supports Ireland’s commitment to world class test facilities including the Lir National Ocean Test Facility in Cork, the quarter scale Galway Bay test site, and the full scale Atlantic Marine Energy Test Site (AMETS), off the coast of Mayo. This funding also supports the Prototype Development Fund, which is operated by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, and provides grant aid to support developers in bringing their devices from prototype to full scale commercial viability.
A breakdown of the funding allocated by my Department to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland for ocean energy research and development in each of the years 2012 to 2016 is set out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>2.9 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>5.7 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>5.5 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>4.75 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>4.75 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>5.5 Million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, my Department provided grant aid of €3 million over the period 2012-2015 towards the rebuilding of the Beaufort Laboratory at the IMERC campus, which now houses the Lir Ocean Test facilities.

**Angling Sector Promotion**

577. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to introduce a project to support a course (details supplied) in counties Cavan and Monaghan with a view to boosting tourism and creating local employment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21785/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) supports and sponsors Angling and Community Groups in undertaking coaching events for novice anglers nationwide. The groups apply for funding to workshops and other events and applications from the Cavan and Monaghan area are welcome. IFI has already committed sponsorship to one juvenile coaching event in Carrickmacross in July and details are set out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carrickmacross Coarse Angling and Junior Development Club’s Summer Camp</td>
<td>Co. Monaghan</td>
<td>The Summer Camp will take place at Lisanisk Lake in July 2017. The initiative will see junior anglers learning the basics of angling from equipment set-up to fish care and is open to interested novice anglers in the area. Co. Monaghan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IFI is also sponsoring numerous festivals and competitions for expert domestic and international competitors as well as juvenile anglers, 13 of which are in locations in Cavan and Monaghan. Details of all sponsored events are listed on the IFI website at the following link: [http://www.fisheriesireland.ie/Angling-Information/sponsorship-programme.html](http://www.fisheriesireland.ie/Angling-Information/sponsorship-programme.html).

In addition, I also expect that IFI will make a call for projects under the National Strategy for Angling Development (NSAD) in 2017 and applications from Cavan and Monaghan are anticipated.
The NSAD identifies 3 high level strategic objectives;

- Making angling accessible and attractive through information, infrastructure and support.
- Tourism development through promotion of our angling resource.
- Recognition of angling as a key leisure and recreation pursuit.

Inland Fisheries Ireland Funding

578. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the action he will take to ensure that Inland Fisheries Ireland will have the resources and expertise necessary to facilitate an international event (details supplied) in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21500/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Inland fisheries Ireland (IFI) provides a significant logistical support for a broad range of angling events each year including international, national, regional and local competitions. This support is dependent on available resources and the number of events in each year. The event referred to by the Deputy coincides with a long-running major Angling Festival for which IFI support has been sought and given over the years. IFI intend to provide logistical support for both events from its professional fisheries staff.

IFI recognises the importance of the competition and its benefit to the local economy and community. In that regard, IFI has already undertaken that 8 IFI staff members, involving a contribution of some 160 person hours over the five days of the event, will be allocated to assist with the draw each day and biosecurity measures at the two competition venues. IFI will also provide six sets of scales and dipping tanks for disinfection and will supervise same.

This is a significant input from IFI and will underpin the organisation and running of the event.

Telephone Call Charges

579. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of changes to EU telephone and Internet data coverage rules and charges for those travelling abroad; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21658/17]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The European Commission is currently collaborating with National Regulatory Authorities to provide detailed guidance on how Roam Like at Home (RLAH) can be introduced at retail level and is also working closely with consumer organisations across the EU (BEUC, the European Consumer Organisation). The Irish Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) is the competent statutorily independent regulatory authority for Telecoms and as such will be the authority which will regulate the Roam Like At Homeregime in Ireland from 15 June 2017. In this regard, ComReg will have a role in ensuring full legal and regulatory compliance. I expect that all mobile operators will be fully compliant with Irish and EU legislation, including RLAH from 15 June 2017.

EU Roam Like at Home will give Irish and EU consumers the ability to use their mobile devices, within other EU countries, at domestic rates, subject to Fair Use Policy, from 15 June 2017.
Throughout negotiations at EU level on this initiative, including at the EU Council of Ministers, Ireland has been fully supportive of the Roam Like at Home principle, and, in particular, the importance of obtaining a sustainable agreement for business and consumers alike.

The new EU rules clearly cover data services, along with voice and SMS. There is no exemption for the data services, only exceptional limits in case of unlimited or very competitive offers.

**Nuclear Safety**

580. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the outcome of the 27 April 2017 meeting of the UK-Ireland contact group on radiological matters. [21661/17]

581. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his Department has held discussions or correspondence with the UK Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy or the Office for Nuclear Regulation on the UK’s decision to leave the EURATOM treaty. [21662/17]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 580 and 581 together.

The UK Ireland Contact Group on Radiological Matters met in Dublin on 27 April. The meeting was attended by officials from my Department, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the United Kingdom’s Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), Office for Nuclear Regulation, and National Decommissioning Authority (NDA), as well as officials from the Isle of Man and Northern Ireland administrations.

The NDA, who manage the decommissioning and reprocessing of nuclear fuel stocks throughout the UK, provided a progress report on activities in these areas while an update on developments regarding the UK’s New Build programme was provided by BEIS officials.

Discussions on the implications of the UK exiting the terms of the Euratom Treaty were limited in the light of the upcoming UK general election on 8 June.

More detailed discussions on this topic will take place at the next meeting of the Group in October 2017, or in the interim, as required.

**Bord na Móna**

582. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has been in contact with Bord na Móna to ensure there will be no job losses at the Bord na Móna plant in Littleton, County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21707/17]

583. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has been in contact with Bord na Móna to ensure there will be no job losses at the Bord na Móna plant in County Offaly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21708/17]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 582 and 583 together.
While Bord na Móna is a commercial State company operating under the Turf Development Acts 1946 to 1998, and while the matters raised by the Deputy are operational in nature and not ones in which I, as Minister, have any function, they are nonetheless matters of concern to me. In the first instance I have encouraged the company to maintain engagement with employees and Unions as this matter progresses. Although I have no function with regard to employment within the company, I have nonetheless urged the company to consider all opportunities for redeployment, phased reductions in employment numbers, and all renewable technology opportunities which may offer the potential of sustainable and long-term regional employment alternatives.

*Question No. 584 answered with Question No. 72.*

*Question No. 585 answered with Question No. 58.*

**Illegal Dumping**

586. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the role his Department has in combatting illegal dumping in local authority areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21946/17]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** My role, as Minister, is to provide the legislative and policy framework under which both local authority and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) enforcement action against illegal dumping is initiated. In accordance with section 59(1) of the Waste Management Act, 1996, each local authority is responsible for the supervision and the enforcement of the relevant provisions of the Act in relation to the holding, recovery and disposal of waste within its functional area. Local authorities have specific powers under sections 55 and 56 of the Act to require measures to be taken, or to take measures directly, to prevent or limit environmental pollution caused or likely to be caused by the holding, recovery or disposal of waste, and to mitigate or remedy the effects on the environment of any such activity.

Underpinning waste enforcement is state funding for waste enforcement officers. I have made €9 million available from the Environment Fund this year to support the Waste Enforcement Regional Lead Authorities (WERLAs) and the recruitment and continued employment of a network of local authority waste enforcement officers. This investment is critical in tackling issues such as illegal dumping in local communities and in providing an enhanced response on the ground to other infractions of the waste code.

My Department has also developed an Anti-Dumping Initiative to work in partnership with local authorities and community organisations in identifying high risk or problem areas, developing appropriate enforcement responses and carrying out clean-up operations.

Applications for funding from local authorities were invited for consideration by the relevant WERLA with an initial allocation of €650,000 made available to support this initiative. Funding is being prioritised for projects where community groups and other state agencies work in partnership to clean-up and prevent illegal dumping and where effective enforcement actions are being undertaken by local authorities.

I have been advised that 111 applications have been received from all over the country and given this very positive response it is my intention to make further funds available to support a second phase of this initiative in 2017. I will be making an announcement in this regard shortly.
Proposed Legislation

587. **Deputy Ciarán Cannon** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status and preparation of the geothermal energy Bill. [21975/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne):** The proposed Geothermal Energy Development Bill is largely modelled on the approach taken in respect of minerals exploration and development. Many of the provisions proposed are based on aspects of the Minerals Development Bill, which in turn updates and consolidates a range of Acts dating from 1940.

It was decided therefore that it would be logical to proceed with publication of the Minerals Development Bill first. The Minerals Development Bill 2015 has completed all stages in Seanad Éireann and completed Second Stage in Dáil Éireann on 22 February 2017. It is expected that it will proceed to enactment in 2017. Final drafting of the Geothermal Energy Development Bill will then follow on, as legislative priorities permit.

Tellus Border Project

588. **Deputy Ciarán Cannon** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the progress of the Tellus programme; and the amount of the country expected to be surveyed and analysed by the end of 2017. [21976/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Tellus is a ground and airborne geoscience mapping programme, collecting chemical and geophysical data that is informing the management of Ireland’s environment and natural resources. Tellus is undertaken by the Geological Survey and funded by my Department. All results and data from Tellus are made available free of charge online.

The objectives of the programme are to ensure that policy and decision-making with respect to Ireland’s environmental, agricultural and natural resources management is supported by world class national geophysical and geochemical datasets and products, specifically in the areas of radon and human health, soil chemistry and nutrients, mineral exploration, land use planning and groundwater protection.

The programme involves two types of surveying: airborne geophysical surveying using a low-flying aircraft; and ground-based geochemical surveying of soil, stream water and stream sediment.

To date, surveying has been completed in Northern Ireland (2004-2008), the border region of Ireland (2011-2013), the north midlands region of Ireland (2014-2015), the eastern midlands region (2015), and most recently the west (2016). In 2016, over 43,000 kilometres were flown during the four month surveying period over counties Galway, southern Mayo and neighbouring parts of Roscommon, Offaly, Clare and Tipperary.

Surveying activities for 2017 consist of airborne surveys in counties Mayo and Donegal, and a ground geochemical survey in the central west of the midlands of Ireland. Both surveys commenced in early spring and will finish in autumn this year. By the end of 2017, approximately 50% of national coverage will be achieved.
Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 589, 590, 596 and 601 together.

The National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to deliver high speed broadband 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 a State intervention in those areas where commercial investment has not been fully demonstrated.

A key principle of the NBP is to support and stimulate commercial investment through policy and regulatory measures. Commercial investment since the publication of the NBP has considerably exceeded expectations. To date, the commercial telecommunications sector has invested over €2.5bn in upgrading and modernising networks which support the provision of high speed broadband and mobile telecoms services.

There has been significant progress in relation to broadband roll-out so that today, approximately 1.4m or 61% of premises in Ireland can get high speed broadband of a minimum of 30 Megabits per second. The NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector, which is continuing to expand this footprint.

On the 4 April, I signed a commitment agreement with eir in relation to its plans to provide broadband to an additional 300,000 premises in rural areas on a commercial basis. Eir has committed to concluding this work over a 90 week period, an average of nearly 500 premises per day. My Department will be monitoring this roll-out to ensure that eir meets its obligations under the Agreement. A copy of the Commitment Agreement is available on my Department’s website.

Quarterly updates will be published on the Department’s website. The Q1 2017 update will be published shortly and I am pleased to announce that the eir roll-out is in line with the Commitment Agreement. My Department has informed me that in the period from 1 January to end March 2017, 30,064 premises have been passed. This brings to 40,114 the total subset of the
300k premises that eir has passed since they commenced work in late 2016. Information on eir’s planned rural deployment is available at http://fibrerollout.ie/eircode-lookup/.

On the same day I published an updated High Speed Broadband Map which finalises the State Intervention area. The updated Map shows the following categories of areas for delivery of broadband:

- The BLUE areas represent those areas where commercial telecommunications providers are either currently delivering or have indicated plans to deliver high speed broadband services,

- The AMBER areas on the High Speed Broadband Map represent the areas that will require State Intervention and are the subject of the current procurement process.

It is intended that all premises will have access to services of at least 30 megabits per second when the procurement process is completed and the network rolled out.

The map provides information on a county by county basis together with a breakdown of coverage across the townlands in Ireland’s 26 counties. There are c2.3m premises of which c542,000 premises including some 22,000 in County Limerick are located within the AMBER area on the map and will require State Intervention. The remaining 1.8m premises including c76,000 premises in Co Limerick are located in the BLUE areas and will be served by commercial operators. Of the c76,000 premises, c15,000 premises are part of eir’s plans to deliver rural high speed broadband between now and end of 2018.

Individuals can themselves check whether their premises is in a BLUE or an AMBER area by accessing the High Speed Broadband Map and entering their Eircode at www.broadband.gov.ie. Consumers in BLUE areas who cannot access High Speed Broadband are encouraged to notify the Department at NBPBroadband@DCCAE.gov.ie, quoting their eircode. The Department is working with the operators, the local authorities and other key stakeholders on resolutions for black spot areas.

A formal procurement process is in train to select a company or companies who will rollout a new high speed broadband network within the State Intervention Area. 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 finalisation of the State Intervention Area for the procurement process is an important milestone as it means that bidders can progress their business plans and the Department can move to the next stage of the procurement. The three bidders have indicated that they are proposing a predominantly fibre-to-the-home solution. A fibre-to-the-home solution means that householders and businesses may get speeds not just of 30 Megabits per second but much higher, potentially up to 1000 Megabits per second.

The timeframe for 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. During the Department’s extensive stakeholder consultations in 2015, telecommunications service providers indicated a 3-5 year timeline to roll-out a network of the scale envisaged under the NBP once contracts are in place.

The Department will engage with winning bidder(s) on the best roll-out strategy, in order to target areas of particularly poor service, business needs and/or high demand and a prioritisation programme.

The Programme for Government also commits to measures to assist in the roll-out of the network once a contract is awarded.
In this regard, I established a Mobile Phone and Broadband Task Force in July 2016 together with Minister Humphreys to identify immediate solutions to broadband and mobile phone coverage deficits and investigate how better services could be provided to consumers prior to the full build and roll-out of the network planned under the National Broadband Plan. The report of the Task Force was published in December and is available on my Department’s website. In producing this report, the Task Force worked with Departments, local authorities, ComReg, State agencies, the telecoms industry and other key stakeholders. The report contains 40 actions that will alleviate some of the telecommunications deficits across Ireland and the implementation programme on mobile phone and broadband access identifies 19 of these actions as areas where immediate and direct action by Departments and State agencies can ensure accelerated benefits to consumers.

The work of the Task Force is being led by an Implementation Group. This group brings together all key stakeholders identified in the Task Force report with responsibility for delivery of actions. This group will formally report every 90 days on progress made on all actions to both myself and Minister Humphreys. I am expecting the first such quarterly report shortly.

In addition, I have signed regulations allowing ComReg to proceed with a 2017 allocation of spectrum in the 3.6 GHz radio spectrum band. This will provide an 86% increase in total spectrum available for mobile and fixed wireless services.

In my Department’s Estimates for 2017, I have secured an €8 million provision for RTE to allow it to free up the 700 MHz spectrum band. ComReg in turn will make plans to allocate this spectrum to provide for significantly enhanced mobile coverage. The 700 MHz band is particularly suited to rural environments where the signal can travel long distances.

These initiatives should assist in enhancing the quality of mobile phone and data services across Ireland and particularly in rural Ireland.

### Renewable Energy Generation

591. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the extent to which alternative energy currently provides an adequate portion of the energy requirement in line with previously indicated targets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22153/17]

592. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the extent to which each alternative energy sector contributes to the national grid as a percentage of total energy requirements in tabular form; the extent to which further progress is expected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22154/17]

595. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the extent to which he foresees an ability to achieve the targets in the alternative energy sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22157/17]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 591, 592 and 595 together.

A well balanced fuel mix that provides reliable and sustainable energy, minimises costs and protects against supply disruptions and price volatility, is essential to Irish consumers and businesses.

The 2009 EU Renewable Energy Directive sets Ireland a legally binding target of meet-
ing 16% of our energy requirements from renewable sources by 2020. Ireland is committed
to achieving this target through meeting 40% of electricity demand, 12% of heat and 10% of
transport from renewable sources of energy, with the latter target also being legally binding.
The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) has calculated that 25.3% of electricity,
6.5% of heat and 5.7% of transport energy requirements were met from renewable sources at
end 2015. Overall, SEAI analysis shows that 9.1% of Ireland’s energy requirements in 2015
were met from renewable sources.

The Government has a range of policy measures and schemes to incentivise the use of re-
newable energy and although good progress towards the target has been made to date, meeting
the 16% target remains challenging. The REFIT schemes underpin the development of a range
of renewable electricity technologies. In addition, my Department is developing a new Renew-
able Electricity Support Scheme and a Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) Scheme, designed to
assist in meeting our RES-E and RES-H targets. The introduction of any new scheme - includ-
ing the overall costs and technologies to be supported - will be subject to Government approval
and State Aid clearance from the European Commission.

To date, wind energy has been the largest driver of growth in renewable electricity. At end
January 2017, the total amount of renewable generation connected to the grid was 3,120 MW
of which 2,796 MW was wind. A further 3,570 MW of renewable generation is contracted for
connection to the grid. In addition, solar and biomass have the potential to also contribute to
our renewable electricity target. Eirgrid estimates that a total of between 3,900 and 4,300 MW
of onshore renewable generation capacity will be required to allow Ireland to achieve 40%
renewable electricity by 2020.

In the transport sector, Ireland aims to meet its renewable target mainly through the in-
creased use of sustainable biofuels, with electric vehicles also making a small contribution.
Further increases to the obligation rate in the Biofuels Obligation Scheme took effect from 1
January 2017 when the rate increased to 8% by volume. A public consultation on future in-
creases to the Biofuels Obligation Scheme, required to meet the 2020 renewable transport target
will take place later this year.

Details in regard to the sources of electricity generation in 2015 are publicly available in the
report entitled Energy in Ireland 1990-2015, published by the Sustainable Energy Authority of
Ireland (SEAI) in November 2016 and available on the SEAI website at www.seai.

The following table summarises those sources:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electricity Outputs (GWh)</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coal</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peat</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Gas</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renewables</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Of which:
| Hydro                                         | 2.8% |
| Wind                                          | 22.8%|
| Landfill gas, biogas, biomass and renewable    | 1.7% |
| wastes                                        |      |
| Non-Renewable Wastes                          | 0.3% |
| Net Imports                                   | 2.3% |
593. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the extent to which he continues to monitor the quality and availability of high quality mobile telephony in all areas throughout the country; if services continue to make improvements in line with requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[22155/17]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The provision of telecommunications services, including mobile phone services, is a matter for the service providers concerned which operate in a fully liberalised market regulated by the independent Regulator of the telecommunications sector, the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg). I am, however, critically aware of the frustration currently being experienced across Ireland where telecommunications networks are not always delivering the services people expect. Recognising this frustration, I specifically included in the Programme for Government a commitment to a Mobile Phone and Broadband Task Force. In July 2016, I established the Task Force together with Minister Humphreys to identify immediate solutions to broadband and mobile phone coverage deficits and investigate how better services could be provided to consumers prior to the full build and roll-out of the network planned under the NBP State intervention. The report of the Task Force was published in December and is available on my Departments’ website.

In producing this report, the Task Force worked with Departments, local authorities, ComReg, State agencies, the telecoms industry and other key stakeholders. The report contains 40 actions that will alleviate some of the telecommunications deficits across Ireland and the implementation programme on mobile phone and broadband access identifies 19 of these actions as areas where immediate and direct action by Departments and State agencies can ensure accelerated benefits to consumers. The work of the Task Force will also assist local authorities in preparing for the roll-out of the new NBP network once contracts are in place.

In order to maintain momentum created by the Task Force, I, together with Minister Humphreys, have established an Implementation Group. This group is driving and monitoring the implementation of the actions, bringing together all key stakeholders identified in the Task Force report with responsibility for delivery. This group will be formally reporting every 90 days on progress made on all actions to both myself and Minister Humphreys.

The first meeting of the Implementation Group took place on 8 March, and was followed by a series of bilateral meetings with action holders. These discussions have formed the basis of the first quarterly progress report, which I, together with Minister Humphreys expect to publish shortly. This report will show that considerable progress has been made, particularly in relation to the implementation of actions identified for Q1 2017.

In addition to the Mobile Phone and Broadband Task Force, other initiatives are underway to enhance services across the State. I have signed regulations allowing ComReg to proceed with a 2017 allocation of spectrum in the 3.6 GHz radio spectrum band. This will provide an 86% increase in total spectrum available for mobile and fixed wireless services.

In my Department’s Estimates for 2017, I have secured an €8 million provision for RTE to allow it to free up the 700 MHz spectrum band. ComReg in turn will make plans to allocate this spectrum to provide for significantly enhanced mobile coverage. The 700 MHz band is particularly suited to rural environments where the signal can travel long distances.

In terms of commercial investment, mobile operators have invested significantly in rolling
out improved services, following ComReg’s multi-band spectrum auction. At least one operator now has in excess of 90% 4G population coverage. However, as mobile services are a radio based technology, services can be affected by topography, quality of handsets and the capacity of the network, as well as by and proximity to mobile telephone antennas.

These initiatives should assist in enhancing the quality of mobile phone and data services across Ireland and particularly in rural Ireland.

**Exploration Licences Data**

594. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of exploration licences issued in the past five years; the extent to which they have been activated to date in 2017; the prospects emerging; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22156/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Details of all petroleum exploration and mineral prospecting authorisations granted are published on my Department’s website www.dccae.gov.ie on a quarterly basis. In addition, I am required, under the Petroleum and Other Minerals Development Act, 1960, and the Minerals Development Acts, 1940 to 1999, to lay before the Oireachtas half-yearly reports detailing all petroleum and mineral exploration authorisations granted during the period of the report. The last such reports under both of these Acts were in respect of the six-month period ending 31 December 2016. Tables outline, in respect of both petroleum exploration licences and mineral prospecting licences, the number of licences granted over the last five years to date.

**Exploration Licences granted 2012 to 2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Petroleum Exploration Licences granted</th>
<th>Mineral Exploration Licences granted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>551</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When an exploration licence is granted, whether relating to petroleum or minerals, it is granted subject to an agreed work programme, the progress of which is monitored by my Department. All exploration licences granted in the past five years have been activated as such.

There have been no commercial discoveries of oil or gas within the territory of the State in the last five years. Ireland, however, has witnessed a positive upswing in the level of petroleum exploration activity in recent years, in particular acquisition of new seismic data. It is anticipated that this will translate into an increased level of exploration in the coming years.

In a similar manner, while the number of active minerals prospecting licences indicate the buoyant state of mineral exploration in Ireland, no new commercially viable deposits of minerals have been discovered in the last five years, although there have been some encouraging results. It is too early to determine, however, whether these results will lead to identification of
commercially viable deposits.

*Question No. 595 answered with Question No. 591.*

*Question No. 596 answered with Question No. 589.*

**Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

597. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the degree to which he expects to meet carbon and other emission requirements in 2017 or thereafter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22159/17]

598. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the extent to which he and his Department continue to take specific steps to meet climate change challenges; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22160/17]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 597 and 598 together.

I refer to the answers to Questions Nos. 45 and 58 on today’s Order Paper.

In accordance with the 2009 EU Effort Sharing Decision, Ireland has greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets for each year between 2013 and 2020 covering the sectors of the economy outside of the EU Emissions Trading System. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the competent authority in Ireland for the preparation of official inventories of greenhouse gas emissions and projections of future emissions. Inventories of greenhouse gas emissions are normally published by the EPA for each year towards the end of the following year. While it is not possible to provide a forecast of Ireland’s greenhouse gas emissions in 2017 or in future years, the EPA has projected that for each year between 2017 and 2020, Ireland is likely to exceed its annual targets under the Effort Sharing Decision. The most recent projections, published by the EPA in April 2017, are available on the EPA’s website at [http://www.epa.ie/climate/emissionsinventoriesandprojections/](http://www.epa.ie/climate/emissionsinventoriesandprojections/).

**Waste Management**

599. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the extent to which he has studied the effect of various plastics on the environment with particular reference to the best way to deal with the situation in its various forms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22161/17]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** Our use of plastic has increased exponentially in recent decades. Plastics feature across a wide range of applications and products, such as packaging, construction, electrics and electronics, agriculture, medical and health. In Ireland, the latest statistics available show 55% of all plastic waste was sent to landfill in 2011. The last waste characterisation study showed that 12.4% of our household waste, by weight, was plastic. My Department is funding the EPA to undertake new characterisation work this year and new figures will be available over the coming 12 months. Plastic packaging waste represents a significant element of our plastic waste. Under the EU Packaging Directive, 22.5% of plastic packaging must be recycled. The most recent waste packaging statistics show that Ireland has met and exceeded this target, reaching 40% for plastic packaging recycling.
It should also be noted that waste collectors are obliged under waste management legislation to ensure that specified plastics are collected from households for the purpose of facilitating the recycling of such material.

My Department provides funding to the EPA for the commissioning of research and is providing €8.75 million for this purpose in 2017. A number of studies on plastics have been completed through this funding stream. This year, the EPA has commissioned a study to identify the sources and pathways of microplastics into our river systems and also to ascertain the harm caused to aquatic lifeforms.

Ireland has worked to address the issue of plastics in the environment and was the first EU country to address the issue of plastic bags which were a significant component of litter. The introduction of the plastic bag levy has resulted in reductions from an estimated 328 bags-per-person per-year, prior to the introduction of the levy, to 12 bags-per-person per-year in 2015, of bags subject to the levy. The EU has since introduced an amendment to the Packaging Directive to control plastic bags.

At a European level, the European Commission is preparing a Plastics Strategy for publication later this year as part of its Action Plan on the Circular Economy. The Strategy is intended to address issues such as recyclability, biodegradability, hazardous substances of concern in certain plastics.

On marine litter specifically, the Government will continue to work with partners to reduce the amount of plastic entering the riverine and marine environments as litter. My colleague, the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, recently committed to introducing legislation which will prohibit the manufacture and sale of certain ‘rinse down the drain’ products containing plastic microbeads and is supporting related research in the matter.

Waste Management

600. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the extent to which reliance on landfill waste disposal facilities continues to be monitored with particular reference to the utilisation of best practice in terms of reduce, reuse and recycle; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22162/17]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** Government waste management policy is predicated on the waste hierarchy, i.e., to prevent the generation of waste in the first instance and then to divert waste which cannot be prevented away from landfill through preparing for re-use, recycling and other recovery. There are numerous measures under the policy to give effect to minimising the amount of waste consigned to landfill. The Environment Protection Agency (EPA) is charged with reporting data on waste management, which includes reporting the amount of waste consigned to landfill. A wide range of waste statistics is available on the EPA website (http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/waste/stats/), including information on our performance against targets under the Landfill Directive and other European legislation.

In addition, annual reports on the implementation of the three Regional Waste Management Plans (2015 to 2021) are available on the respective Regional Waste Management Planning Office websites. The plans contain targets which cover the areas of prevention, recycling and landfilling. The relevant websites may be accessed at http://www.epa.ie/waste/policy/regional/

Notwithstanding the substantial progress made in terms of reducing our reliance on landfill from 95% in 1995 to 41% in 2012, I am aware that in 2016 there was insufficient capacity to
dispose of residual waste and emergency powers were invoked by the regulatory authorities to make additional landfill capacity available. My Department is working with the three Regional Waste Management Planning Offices and other regulatory bodies to ensure such emergency measures are not required going forward. This will be especially important in terms implementing Government waste, renewable energy and jobs policies and in meeting current and future targets under EU legislation.

*Question No. 601 answered with Question No. 589.*

**Tourism Funding**

602. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocations from his Department to support research and development in coastal tourism in each of the years 2012 to 2016, in tabular form. [21431/17]

**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, such as the development of tourism in marine regions, including the Wild Atlantic Way and the promotion of cruise tourism. These are operational matters for the Board and Management of Fáilte Ireland. While my Department provides capital funding to Fáilte Ireland for investment in tourism, it does not have a role in the administration of tourism capital programmes.

Accordingly, I have referred the Deputy’s question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply to the Deputy. Please contact my private office if you have not received a reply within ten working days.

**Olympic Games Ticketing Arrangements**

603. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 1236 of 21 March 2017, if he has been presented with the final report into the circumstances surrounding the distribution of tickets for the Rio Olympic Games and related matters by Judge Carroll Moran; if so, if he and the Minister of State in his Department will meet with the Joint Committee on Transport, Tourism and Sport to discuss its contents; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21447/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** In a letter to Minister O’Donovan and me, dated 31 March 2017, Judge Moran asked for an extension of time to Friday, the 19th of May 2017, for the presentation of his Report. This request has been granted. Once the Report has been presented, it will require careful consideration prior to its publication. Minister O’Donovan and I would be happy to meet with the Joint Committee on Transport, Tourism and Sport to discuss the Report following its publication.

**Tourism Funding**

604. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the budget allocated to Fáilte Ireland in each of the years 2007 to 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form. [21459/17]
605. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the budget allocated to Tourism Ireland in each of the years 2007 to 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form. [21460/17]

606. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the Exchequer funding for overseas tourism marketing in each of the years 2007 to 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form. [21461/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 604 to 606, inclusive, together.

The breakdown of the total Exchequer provision for tourism services from my Department’s vote is available in the annual Revised Estimates Volume (REV) for Public Services, which is published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and available on that Department’s website. The subheads of relevance to the two tourism agencies, Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland, are E3, E4, E5 and E6. Allocations under subheads E3 and E6 (previously E7, up to and including 2012) are for Fáilte Ireland; subhead E4 provides funding towards Tourism Ireland’s administration and general expenses; whereas allocations under subhead E5 (previously E6, up to and including 2012), the Tourism Marketing Fund, are split between the two agencies to fund overseas tourism marketing efforts.

With regard to allocations to date in 2017, of the overall annual Exchequer allocation to the tourism agencies, the amount of funding provided by my Department to Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland totals €38.289m, of which €15.956m is for overseas tourism marketing.

### Tourism Data

607. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he expects the independent evaluation of overseas tourism marketing expenditure to be published; and the details of the study. [21462/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Policy Proposal number 1.1.3 of “People, Place and Policy - Growing Tourism to 2025” stated that the State’s investment in overseas destination marketing will be externally evaluated on a regular basis in order to ensure the optimal use of the Government’s tourism budget. Action number 8 of the subsequent Tourism Action Plan 2016-18 states that my department will arrange for an independent evaluation of Ireland’s overseas tourism marketing expenditure, and the findings of this evaluation will be shared with the tourism industry. Following on from this, the Economic and Financial Evaluation Unit within DTTAS (a constituent part of the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service) has initiated work on the evaluation of overseas tourism marketing expenditure. The evaluation will be carried out under the established system of Value for Money and Policy Reviews and will entail a full analytical assessment of the efficiency, effectiveness and rationale of the expenditure. It is expected that the evaluation will be completed by the end of this year.

### Cycling Facilities Provision

608. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding extending the Dublin bikes scheme to west Dublin in Dublin City Council and to Dublin 15 in Fingal County Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21650/17]
Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Transport Authority (NTA) is responsible for the administration and development of the Dublin public bikes scheme in cooperation with the relevant local authority. Noting the NTA’s responsibility in the matter, I have referred the Deputy’s question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Bus Services

609. Deputy Jack Chambers asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the bus rapid transit project for Dublin 15; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21653/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA).

The NTA’s Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) 2016 - 2035 includes proposals for two specific BRT schemes, Blanchardstown to UCD and Clongriffin to Tallaght. The NTA is preparing an Implementation Plan for the delivery of the strategy for the period 2017 - 2022. Key to implementation over this period is the capital funding that will be available for investment in public transport infrastructure over the period.

Funding is being made available for initial planning and design work for the Blanchardstown to UCD BRT under the Government’s Capital Plan ‘Building on Recovery Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016 - 2021’. I understand from the NTA that following from a recent tender competition a design team has now been appointed to progress the design and planning documentation for the scheme.

Noting the NTA’s responsibility in the matter, I have referred the Deputy’s question to the Authority for a more detailed reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Public Transport

610. Deputy Michael Collins asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport projects that will be funded from the €3.6 billion earmarked for public transport in the Exchequer capital transport envelope 2016-2021; and the amount that will be used to enhance public transport outside County Dublin and specifically in Cork city and county. [21677/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The focus of the €3.6 billion investment in the Public Transport Capital Programme over the 7-year period of the Government’s Capital Plan, particularly in the early years of the Plan, is on achieving essential steady state maintenance of our public transport network to ensure that it remains safe and fit for purpose. It is not possible to draw a clear line between investments in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) and outside of the GDA in all cases. Approximately €1.3bn of the overall funding for public transport over the period of the Plan is required for maintenance of the heavy rail network which benefits all areas of the network both within and outside the GDA. A further €250m approximately is provisionally allocated for other improvements to the heavy rail network. While this includes almost €70m for phase one of the DART expansion programme and €30m for other heavy rail projects in the GDA, over €150m is allocated for the City Centre Resignalling project, development of the Central Traffic Control Centre and ticketing programmes.
which will deliver benefits across the whole rail network.

The light rail network in Dublin, including completion of Luas Cross City, and new Metro North will receive approximately €1bn over the period of the Plan.

Over €800m is provisionally allocated for development of the bus system throughout the country. This includes fleet replacement and enlargement programmes for the Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann PSO fleets, as well as bus network infrastructure development in the GDA and the regional cities of Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford.

Funding is also provided to continue development and further roll-out of the Leap Card Scheme over the period of the Plan. The scheme is now available in the regional cities and the GDA and is being rolled out nationally on a gradual basis. The Plan also provides over €70m for sustainable transport projects in the regional cities and accessibility programmes.

A mid-term review of the Capital Plan is underway and I will be seeking to improve the funding available for public transport in order to meet increasing demand, tackle congestion in the GDA and in our regional cities in particular.

Public Transport Provision

611. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the planned extension of the DART to Balbriggan, County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21704/17]

612. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the DART interconnector and DART underground; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21705/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 611 and 612 together.

The National Transport Authority’s (NTA) ‘Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035’ proposes implementation of the DART Expansion Programme which will provide DART services as far north as Drogheda, to Hazelhatch on the Kildare Line and to Maynooth in the west and to the M3 Parkway. The NTA is preparing an Implementation Plan for the delivery of the GDA strategy for the period 2017-2022.

The DART Expansion Programme also incorporates the DART Underground Tunnel (previously known as the DART Interconnector). The Government decided in September 2015 that the original proposal for the tunnel should be redesigned to provide a lower cost solution and work is underway on that at present.

Funding for some elements of the DART Expansion Programme is included in the Government’s Capital Plan including funding for the extension of the DART to Balbriggan on the Northern line and for the redesign of the DART Underground Tunnel.

The NTA in collaboration with Irish Rail has commenced work on the pre-planning stages of the DART Expansion Programme. A project team has been established and will develop a programme of work that can be delivered on an incremental basis in line with available funding. Subject to availability of funding and approval of the detailed business case for the project, it is envisaged that the extension of the DART to Balbriggan would commence in 2020.

With regard to the Underground Tunnel, work has commenced to determine the optimal
connection location for the tunnel to tie-in to the Heuston Mainline. Other work is also ongoing in relation to tunnel variants.

**Taxi Licences**

613. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will create a category of hackney and taxi permit to allow otherwise private vehicles owned and operated by a person living in a specific rural area to be used in that specific and appointed rural area on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights with restricted hours of operation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21544/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The regulation of the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry, including the licensing requirements for SPSVs and their drivers, is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the provisions of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013. I have therefore referred your question to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

**Taxi Regulations**

614. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will alter the manner in which resitting of the PSV test for taxi drivers is done in order that those failing one module do not have to resit both modules when resitting the test. [21612/17]

615. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will alter the manner in which feedback is given to those who fail the PSV test for taxi drivers in order that there is a question by question result rather than by topic. [21613/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 614 and 615 together.

The regulation of the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry, including issues pertaining to the SPSV Entry Test, is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the provisions of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013.

I have therefore referred your questions to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

**Road Traffic Accidents Data**

616. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of serious injuries due to road traffic collisions in each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21758/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The collection of information and statistics relating to road safety is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. Accordingly, I have forwarded your request to the Authority for direct reply to you. If a reply is not received within 10 days please contact my office.
617. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 488 of 26 January 2016, the position regarding the European reporting of serious injury and use of MAIS3+ in the reporting of serious injury here; the next steps in this project; the expected completion date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21759/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The collection of information and statistics relating to road safety, including regarding serious injury and the project to which you refer, is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. Accordingly, I have forwarded your request to the Authority for direct reply to you. If a reply is not received within 10 days please contact my office.

### Tourism Promotion

618. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the additional steps Tourism Ireland will take to increase the number of UK visitors coming here in view of the fact the number of visitors from the UK is down in quarter 1 of 2017 compared to quarter 1 of 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21767/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Tourism Ireland is responsible for promoting the island of Ireland overseas as a visitor destination and any specific measures it takes are operational matters for the agency. However, I am aware that Tourism Ireland aims to mitigate any adverse impact of Brexit in the British market through implementation of the following policy initiatives:-

- In Britain, competitiveness and the value for money message are more important than ever this year. Tourism Ireland is placing a greater focus on its ‘culturally curious’ audience, who are less impacted by currency fluctuations. It has an extensive, year-long programme in place which includes a greater focus on publicity. It is also undertaking an expanded partnership programme with airlines, ferry operators and tour operators, communicating a strong price-led message to drive home value for money.

- Market diversification: A key element of Tourism Ireland’s strategy since 2014 has been market diversification – which has seen Mainland Europe become the largest contributor of overseas tourism revenue, followed by the USA. It is continuing to implement its market diversification strategy and this year it intends to maximise holiday revenue through investment in North America and Mainland Europe.

The major promotional themes for 2017 include the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland’s Ancient East, the St Patrick’s Day global greening initiative, screen tourism and city breaks. Tourism Ireland is promoting Ireland across a range of marketing platforms, including TV, radio, cinema, print and digital advertising as well as co-operative marketing campaigns with air and sea carriers, tour operators and travel agents. It is also continuing to work closely with tourism businesses from across Ireland at international holiday fairs and promotions, sales missions and business-to-business events.

### Tourism Promotion

619. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to introduce a project to support a course to help new members to engage in outdoor pursuits to increase membership and boost visitors to natural resources and amenities in counties Cavan
and Monaghan, with a view to boosting tourism and creating local employment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21785/17]

**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. These are operational matters for the Board and Management of Fáilte Ireland.

The provision of courses in outdoor pursuits does not fall within the remit of my Department. However, my Department provides funding to Fáilte Ireland for investment in tourism offerings such as attractions, festivals, and events. Fáilte Ireland’s investment in tourism product is part of their overall strategy to attract international visitors to the country, including to places of exceptional natural beauty.

Accordingly, I have referred the Deputy’s question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply in regard to their tourism initiatives in Cavan and Monaghan. Please contact my private office if you have not received a reply within ten working days.

I understand my colleague, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment will respond in relation to fishing.

---

**Road Network**

620. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if consideration is being given to constructing the M20 motorway between Cork and Limerick. [21806/17]

**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 (including the M20) is a matter for the Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act. As the Deputy is aware, the Capital Plan published in September 2015 outlined proposed transport investment priorities to 2022. While the transport element of the Capital Plan did provide for some targeted investment in a number of new projects in the Munster region, it was not possible to include the M20 in the Capital Plan as the scale of investment to deliver it was not affordable.

I am conscious of the potential regional development benefits of an upgrade of the Cork to Limerick link and in this regard I agreed to TII spending €1 million to undertake some early activity surveys/studies. I will review the scope for progressing the project further once the Capital Plan Review is completed.

---

**Road Network**

621. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the review of the roads capital programme; when he will be in a position to confirm the inclusion in the programme of the upgrading of the N24 through County Tipperary, including the Tipperary Town and Carrick on Suir bypasses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21903/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for
Questions - Written Answers

Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects (including the N24) is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act. As regards the Capital Plan Review, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform has indicated that the additional capital funding for allocation totals about €2.6 billion. While there is a strong case for additional funding for the transport sector, there are a multitude of possible national, regional and local projects around the country, the cost of which far exceed available funding and unfortunately, this means that only a limited number can be considered for funding. The final decisions on allocations are, however, matters for the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform and Government as a whole.

Dublin Bus

622. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will request that Dublin Bus provide an extension of a service to provide additional cover for an area in south Dublin (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21908/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) in conjunction with Dublin Bus 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.

Public Transport

623. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will report on the programme for Government commitments on public transport; and the status of implementing same. [17835/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As the Deputy will be aware, the Programme for Government contains a number of commitments relating to public transport. The Programme commits to a review of public transport policy. To advance this commitment, the Deputy might also be aware that I recently announced my intention to establish a Stakeholder Dialogue on the issue of Public Transport. It is vital that stakeholders have the opportunity to voice their opinions on public transport policy issues and these issues are then considered as part of the formal policy review. I believe that a Stakeholder Dialogue provides the appropriate forum to allow stakeholders to make a meaningful contribution towards policy development. It is also important that the Review will take cognisance of recent developments in other relevant areas of public policy such as the preparation of a new National Planning Framework, the Action Plan for Rural Development, a National Mitigation Plan and Climate Adaption Paper for the transport sector. My Department is currently scoping out the proposed approach to the work. The full Review will then take place as soon as possible.

With regard to other commitments in the Programme for Government, funding is provided in the Capital Plan to facilitate construction of the new Metro North link commencing in 2021 with a view to delivery by 2026/2027. The Luas Cross City project is on target to be delivered within budget with operations due to commence in the final quarter of 2017. No decisions on any future changes to the rail network, including the Western Rail Corridor will be made before the Government has had the opportunity to consider the result of the NTA’s consultation process.
on the Rail Review.

Finally, the Programme for Government also commits to making public transport services more accessible for people with disabilities. Accessibility features are built into all new public transport infrastructure projects and vehicles from design stage and there is an ongoing programme to upgrade existing public transport infrastructure and facilities to improve accessibility. My Department is also undertaking a review of the actions in the Sectoral Plan ‘Transport for All’ and this will be progressed over the coming months.

**Taxi Ranks**

624. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the fact that Cork County Council is facilitating the operation of a taxi stand at Cobh railway station despite the absence of by-laws as required under the Taxi Regulation Act 2013; and if he will ensure that the council desists from doing so until such by-laws have been validly adopted. [21980/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Decisions regarding the location and operation of taxi ranks are a matter for the relevant local authority which is responsible for the making of bye-laws in respect of its functional area. Section 25 of the Taxi Regulation Act, 2013 provides for both the National Transport Authority (NTA) and the Garda Commissioner to be consulted by a local authority when it is proposing to make such bye-laws. I have no function in the matter. I have therefore referred your question to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

**Light Rail Projects Status**

625. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the metro west project; the status of the planned train stations along metro west; if these planned train stations remain part of the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21984/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA). Metro West was proposed under the Transport 21 initiative as an orbital metro connecting Tallaght and Blanchardstown in the west of Dublin with the original Metro North proposal to Swords but due to the financial crisis the Railway Order application for the project was withdrawn in 2011. The NTA’s GDA Transport Strategy 2016-2035 does not include the original Metro West proposal but instead proposes the future development of an east-west Luas line, commencing in the residential areas of Lucan and connecting into Dublin City Centre. This would provide a high capacity radial service from this area to the City Centre, sufficient to cater for the high transport demand along this corridor, and would serve Lucan, Liffey Valley and Ballyfermot along its route.

The Strategy also envisages the development of a Core Bus Network, which would include a range of radial and orbital routes serving Dublin West, and a Bus Rapid Transit scheme linking Blanchardstown with UCD.

The Capital Plan does not include funding for the east-west Luas line so it will not be advanced during the period of the current Plan. The timeline for the project will be determined in
the context of Integrated Implementation Plans brought forward by the NTA for implementation of the GDA Transport Strategy and the availability of funding under future Capital funding reviews.

**Transport Infrastructure Ireland Expenditure**

626. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the total spend on transport infrastructure by sector (details supplied) for each of the years 2011 to 2016 and to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21985/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The information requested by the Deputy is being collated and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible. If the Deputy does not receive a response within 10 working days please contact my private office.

**Rail Network Expansion**

627. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if business case studies have been undertaken into the possible provision of a high speed rail network; if he will direct the National Transport Authority to conduct a pilot study into high speed rail; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21986/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The main emphasis of funding for the rail network in the Government’s Capital Plan is on the maintenance of the existing network to ensure it remains safe and fit for purpose. The role of heavy rail in Ireland’s transport sector is currently under review. A public consultation process on the Rail Review document prepared jointly by the National Transport Authority and Iarnród Éireann concluded on 18 January and the NTA is currently preparing a report about the process which I intend to bring to Government in due course. No decisions on any changes to the rail network will be made until the outcome of the public consultation process has been evaluated and NTA’s report considered.

**Tourism Promotion**

628. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on whether the regional tourism brand Ireland’s Ancient East is not well delineated or coherent in terms of its thematic content and geographic coverage; his plans to improve it; and if the River Shannon and midlands region will be part of the Lakelands initiative or Ireland’s Ancient East. [22061/17]

629. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on whether there is currently no strategy promoting the middle of Ireland as a tourism brand, encompassing the midlands and Shannon region; and when he expects the Lakelands initiative brand to be made operational and to address concerns that Fáilte Ireland is not in favour of promoting this regional brand identity. [22062/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Patrick O’Donovan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 628 and 629 together.

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. These are operational matters for the Board and Management of Fáilte Ireland.

I am aware that Fáilte Ireland’s Experience Brands have been developed to present different parts of Ireland as compelling tourism experiences of scale and singularity internationally. The Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland’s Ancient East and Dublin: A Breath of Fresh Air are overarching brands under which destinations and individuals can trade collectively with greater visibility and clarity of message in the international marketplace.

Ireland’s Ancient East is crafted along four distinct thematic pillars: Ancient Ireland, Early Christian Ireland, Medieval Ireland and Anglo-Ireland. 2016 saw the establishment of the brand on the ground by Fáilte Ireland with the installation of the orientation signage and the new improved visitor experiences funded through the “New Ideas in Ancient Spaces” Grants Scheme. Fáilte Ireland is continuing to work with industry and stakeholders to engage the visitor through the delivery of story-led experiences. They are continuing to promote Ireland’s Ancient East in both domestic and international markets and aim to deliver an incremental €204 million international revenue by 2020.

In regard to the River Shannon and Midlands region, in the final quarter of 2016 and in line with the Programme for Government’s commitment to develop the ‘Ireland’s Lakelands’ brand, Fáilte Ireland commissioned a consortium of Colliers, Red C and DKM to conduct a Destination and Feasibility Study to ascertain the potential growth and best mechanism to unlock those areas that lie between the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland’s Ancient East, which includes the Lakelands. The consortium assessed the region and met with industry and stakeholders. Fáilte Ireland is awaiting a draft report from the consultants and will determine the next steps based on the report’s findings.

Tourism Capital Investment Programme

630. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will address concerns that applications for investment capital for tourism projects from Fáilte Ireland or Tourism Ireland that are not designated as being within one of the regional tourism brands are not going to be possible; and the grants available for capital investment under each of the regional tourism brands and for projects that are not designated as coming under these brands. [22063/17]

**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, such as the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland’s Ancient East and Dublin: A Breath of Fresh Air. These are operational matters for the Board and Management of Fáilte Ireland. While my Department provides capital funding to Fáilte Ireland for investment in tourism offerings, it does not have a role in the administration of those capital programmes. Accordingly, I have referred the Deputy’s question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply to the Deputy. Please contact my private office if you have not received a reply within ten working days.

Tourism Data

631. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on whether the research collected by Fáilte Ireland, in particular on visitor numbers to individual areas, counties and regions, is not being reported back to the industry in a timely enough
manner to enable businesses or local tourism promotion bodies to respond to these patterns on
the ground (details supplied); and if he will request Fáilte Ireland to publish draft figures on
regional tourism performance at an earlier date in the year. [22064/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Patrick
O’Donovan): The collection of official statistics is primarily a matter for the Central Statistics
Office (CSO). However, as the Deputy is aware, Fáilte Ireland conducts additional research and
analysis and provides complementary insights, which it shares with tourism industry groups
and businesses. The timeliness of tourism statistical reports and their publication dates are
largely determined by the availability of source data. With specific regard to Fáilte Ireland’s
estimate of the regional breakdown of tourists across Ireland, I am informed that the agency
receives the necessary raw data from several different sources - data which becomes available
with varying time lags - and then requires further time to analyse this data. However, I under-
stand that other Fáilte Ireland statistical reports - particularly those not reliant on data from
external sources - can be published with a shorter lag. For example, Fáilte Ireland publishes
the results of its Tourism Barometer, which reports on business sentiment of tourism enterprises
throughout Ireland, three to four times a year with minimal delay. Overall, I am satisfied that
Fáilte Ireland publishes the results of its research in a timely fashion, once all the necessary data
checks have been completed. I have referred the Deputy’s question to Fáilte Ireland for further
explanatory detail and direct reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a
reply within ten working days.

Tourism Promotion

632. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his De-
partment or a body under its aegis has plans to introduce incentives or funding for individual
businesses or local authorities to provide free Wi-Fi hotspots, in particular in small urban or
rural areas, for tourism promotion; and if he will examine proposals to increase the number of
free Wi-Fi hotspots. [22065/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Patrick
O’Donovan): Government policy concerning the provision of digital connectivity is a matter
for my colleague the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment. I under-
stand the forthcoming implementation of the National Broadband Plan will ensure that “next
generation broadband” will become widely available in areas where broadband speeds are cur-
rently inadequate. While I have no plans along the lines suggested by the Deputy, my Depart-
ment’s Tourism Action Plan 2016-2018 does commit to encouraging the provision of Wi-Fi
connectivity at outdoor locations to support visitors in sharing their images of Ireland through
social media. To this end, Fáilte Ireland currently provides free Wi-Fi for visitors to its Tourist
Information Offices. I further understand that the Minister for Communications, Climate Action
and Environment is liaising with Local Authorities to facilitate the speedy roll-out of broadband
infrastructure in order that next-generation broadband services would become widely available,
which would enhance the local tourism offering. Additionally, I will be encouraging the Local
Authorities in the context of their tourism strategies to facilitate the wider provision of Wi-Fi
hotspots.

Fáilte Ireland

633. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views
on whether Fáilte Ireland is not doing a good job at directly providing or facilitating the train-
ing of new chefs; his further views on whether a new public body should be established to co-
ordinate and drive an expansion in the number of training places, especially vocational training
places, in hospitality and tourism; and if he has examined plans in this regard in the recent past.
[22066/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Patrick
O’Donovan): The Department of Education and Skills has overall responsibility for skills de-
velopment policy generally across all sectors, including hospitality and tourism, and oversees
the bulk of the required education and training delivered nationally through the mainstream
higher and further education and training sectors. There are no plans to establish a new training
organisation or other oversight body for the tourism and hospitality sector specifically. Rather,
projected skills demands across the economy are being addressed through a combination of
measures involving various key stakeholders. For its part, Fáilte Ireland provides complemen-
tary tourism-related business development and training supports in line with its responsibility
for encouraging, promoting and supporting tourism as a leading indigenous component of the
Irish economy. Furthermore, in line with my Department’s Tourism Action Plan 2016-2018,
Fáilte Ireland is committed to working with the tourism industry and the wider education and
training sector to implement recommendations contained in the report of the Expert Group on
Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) in the hospitality sector. In this regard, Fáilte Ireland participates
in the Hospitality Skills Oversight Group, which oversees skills development and promotion
in the sector, including monitoring the implementation of the EGFSN recommendations. With
specific regard to chef training, Fáilte Ireland is playing a leading role in the development of a
culinary apprenticeship programme through its participation, together with industry stakehold-
ers, on the consortium collaborating on its development. I have conveyed to Fáilte Ireland my
strong desire that an excellent-quality apprenticeship regime would be brought forward as soon
as possible and Fáilte Ireland is working with all the stakeholders to that end.

I expect this approach to address the challenges regarding the supply of skilled chefs and I
will continue to monitor the situation.

Local Authority Functions

634. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views
on whether local authorities are competing unfairly with private businesses in providing tour-
ism services at below market rates (details supplied); if his attention has been drawn to this as
a more general problem; and his views on whether local authorities should not be involved in
directly providing tourism services to customers in view of the fact they also act as local regula-
tors of tourism business activities through by-laws. [22067/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Services provided by
Local Authorities are a matter for each City and County Council and I have no role or respon-
sibility in this regard. Specific queries on these should be addressed to the relevant Minister.
Under the Tourist Traffic Acts 1939-2016, Fáilte Ireland has specific functions in relation to
the mandatory registration and grading of certain types of tourist accommodation using legally
protected titles, such as caravan or camping parks. With specific regard to this category of ac-
commodation, Fáilte Ireland’s regulations apply to all premises consisting of a caravan park
and/or camping park comprising 20 or more pitches, irrespective of operator or owner. Fáilte
Ireland has no role in relation to boating berths.
635. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on whether current short-term hosting accommodation, such as a company (details supplied) is not compliant with the same health and safety standards as formal accommodation providers, such as those registered with Fáilte Ireland; if he has explored proposals for mandatory registration of all accommodation providers to ensure compliance with all health and safety regulations; and his further views on whether not implementing compliance with such regulations in the hosting sector amounts to unfair competition vis-a-vis formal accommodation providers. [22068/17]

636. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of providers of short-term hosting accommodation which have been inspected by Fáilte Ireland or another body to ensure compliance with health and safety standards in 2016 or the most recent year for which statistics are available. [22069/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Patrick O’Donovan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 635 and 636 together.

With specific regard to health and safety standards, regardless of whether or not they are registered or listed with Fáilte Ireland, accommodation providers must comply with the relevant statutory requirements, as enforced by a range of bodies including local authorities and the Health Service Executive. I, as the Minister with responsibility for Tourism, have no role in this regard. Neither my Department nor the tourism agencies are responsible for legislating for, regulating or enforcing compliance with health and safety standards. Accordingly, neither I nor Fáilte Ireland can provide information on the number of health and safety inspections conducted.

Under the Tourist Traffic Acts 1939-2016, Fáilte Ireland has specific powers and functions regarding the registration and grading of tourist accommodation. In accordance with the legislation, certain categories of accommodation (such as hotels and guesthouses) are statutorily obliged to register with Fáilte Ireland and comply with approved regulations, whereas other accommodation segments (such as B&Bs or small self-catering schemes) are not. However, these regulations mainly relate to the quality of the product and the level of service. In addition to the statutory systems, Fáilte Ireland also offers a voluntary quality assurance approval and listing system for non-statutory tourist accommodation, including Irish home B&Bs, historic houses with accommodation and other atypical tourist accommodation businesses who could seek approval under the Welcome Standard. There are no plans at present to amend the current systems.

The company the Deputy mentions is a sales and marketing platform for a variety of accommodation types, including B&B and self-catering. Short-term accommodation providers, regardless of whether or not they use intermediary sales and marketing platforms, may apply for Fáilte Ireland approval. Furthermore, Fáilte Ireland engages with any accommodation providers and intermediary platforms whose offering aligns with the strategic objectives for the development of Irish tourism.

**Tourism Industry**

637. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department or a body under its aegis have undertaken research on the cost base of Irish tourism hospitality businesses compared to European competitors. [22070/17]
Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Patrick O’Donovan): I refer the Deputy to the “Costs of Doing Business” reports published by the National Competitiveness Council, coming under the remit of the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. While neither my Department nor Fáilte Ireland has undertaken research specific to the cost base of tourism and hospitality businesses, I would highlight that the cost base of Irish tourism and hospitality businesses would be similar to that of small and medium enterprises generally.

Tourism Promotion

638. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if there will be another The Gathering event in 2018 or 2019; his views on whether it is a good idea; and if there is support within the tourism industry for it. [22071/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Action 9 of the Tourism Action Plan 2016-2018, published in January 2016, stated that the tourism agencies, in collaboration with my Department and tourism industry stakeholders, would draw up a short-list of suggested themes (including the possibility of a successor to the Gathering) for a focused tourism marketing initiative.

The original Gathering was conceived at a time when Ireland’s tourism sector was struggling with the effects of the economic crisis and tourist numbers had fallen very significantly. At that time, there were no “experience brands” like the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland’s Ancient East, and Dublin-A Breath of Fresh Air. Since then, these branding initiatives have received very considerable public and private investment in capital and marketing expenditure and have been very successful in attracting overseas visitors.

My officials have been engaging with Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland and the Tourism Leadership Group with regard to the possibility of a themed year. A number of possible themes have been put forward and further consideration is being given to the timing of a themed year. Ideally, a themed year would be timed to avail of spare capacity, particularly with regard to accommodation, and also with regard to access to Ireland through our air and sea ports. 2016 was a record year for Tourism in Ireland, as was 2015 and 2017 is continuing that trend. My officials will continue to monitor the tourism trends, along with wider developments (including the impacts of Brexit) and feed that into their consideration of the timing of a themed year.

Tourism Funding

639. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to increase the tourism marketing budget to attempt to mitigate the decline in visitor numbers from the UK in view of the decline in visitor numbers from the UK experienced in Q1 2017; and if he is examining proposals to implement a business support fund to support small tourism businesses that may be hit especially hard from a sharp decline in visitors from Britain. [22073/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Following what was a record year for overseas visitors to Ireland in 2016, recent figures published by the CSO showed that overseas visitors for the first quarter of 2017 were slightly up on 2016. Whilst there was strong growth from the North American market, visitors from Britain were down 6.5% year on year.

It is too early to state definitively what the reasons are for this decline and whether it will
carry through to the remainder of the year. It is clear, however, that the Sterling depreciation following the Brexit referendum has made Ireland, and every other Eurozone country, relatively more expensive for British travellers than was previously the case. Furthermore, research has indicated that British consumers are likely to scale back on overseas holiday activity this year.

In line with the Tourism Action Plan, I am committed to seeking to restore the Tourism Marketing Fund to pre-recession levels on a phased basis. I have secured increased funding for the Tourism Marketing Fund this year of over 2% and I will be seeking further additional funding for next year in order to mitigate any negative effects of Brexit on tourism. Tourism Ireland will continue to focus on protecting our market share in Britain, whilst at the same time seeking to increase diversification into other markets, particularly those that deliver higher tourism revenue.

Fáilte Ireland is also working on a number of fronts to assist the diversification and development of our tourism industry and the attractiveness of our tourism product offering. Ongoing work to develop the main experience brands and enhance visitor experiences is aimed at boosting our appeal to key target markets and priority consumer segments. With regard to training and business supports, Fáilte Ireland offers a suite of supports to enhance the competitiveness, enterprise capability and sustainability of the tourism sector. In addition, it is creating a new Brexit Response Programme that will focus on delivering a Capability Building programme for Industry.

Maintaining the overall competitiveness in our tourism industry is also vital at this time. While the industry itself acknowledges that it is primarily responsible for competitiveness, I will be endeavouring to seek to maintain the lower VAT rate for the tourism industry and also to keep the air travel tax at zero.

**Tourism Funding**

640. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to implement a business support fund to support small tourism businesses that may be hit especially hard from a sharp decline in visitors from Britain. [22074/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Fáilte Ireland is working on a number of fronts to assist the diversification and development of our tourism industry and the attractiveness of our tourism product offering. Ongoing work to develop the main experience brands and enhance visitor experiences - both through current programme supports and targeted capital investment in attractions and other tourism infrastructure - is aimed at boosting our appeal to key target markets and priority consumer segments. With regard to training and business supports, Fáilte Ireland offers a suite of supports to enhance the competitiveness, enterprise capability and sustainability of the tourism sector. In addition, it is creating a new Brexit Response Programme that will focus on delivering a capability building programme for tourism businesses.

Funding for such programmes and supports forms part of Fáilte Ireland’s annual operating budget, the level of which is determined as part of the annual Estimates process.

**Sports Capital Programme**

641. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he expects the recipients of sports capital funding for 2017 will be known. [22118/17]
Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Patrick O’Donovan): All of the 2320 applications received under the 2017 Sports Capital Programme will be assessed by officials in my Department over the coming months. Given the number of applications received and the detailed information submitted, it will take a number of months to complete the assessment process. It is expected that an announcement regarding allocations will be made in September.

Roadworthiness Testing

642. Deputy Brendan Griffin asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding roadworthiness testing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22143/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The fee charged for commercial vehicle roadworthiness tests in Northern Ireland, the UK, Germany or any other jurisdiction, as well as the content of such tests, is a matter for the relevant Ministries/bodies charged with responsibility for such in each of these respective jurisdictions.

The prescribed fee, per class of vehicle, for commercial vehicle roadworthiness tests in Ireland is set out in the Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness (Vehicle Testing)(No.2) Regulations 2013 (SI 347 of 2013). The fee covers the test undertaken at the testing centre, cost of the certificate of roadworthiness (CRW) and a road safety levy payable to the Road Safety Authority (RSA) in respect of an annual test.

In this jurisdiction, the Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness (CVR) testing system is operated on a fully commercial basis and without any financial contribution from the State. This means that CVR tests are delivered by privately owned garages who are responsible for the provision of the necessary infrastructure and facilities and they carry the financial and operational risks associated with that investment.

The road safety levy is being used to fund several aspects of the commercial vehicle roadworthiness reform programme which is intended to support safer roads and compliant operators. The RSA has financed the up-front capital investment associated with the reform programme to date.

The model for commercial vehicle testing has been reviewed and it was decided by Government that the prevailing model involving the delivery of commercial testing by privately owned garages should continue.

Public Service Vehicles

643. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to introduce electric, hybrid and biogas buses into each of the State bus companies; his plans to introduce electric, hybrid and biogas buses into the private bus fleets; his plans to introduce electric, hybrid and biogas taxis into the State; if he will he use quota systems to achieve these objectives; the expected start date for the process; and when these quota objectives will be achieved. [22165/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. The National Transport Authority (NTA), has statutory responsibility for the
procurement of the bus fleet for PSO services. The procurement of buses for Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann’s commercial services as well as private bus fleets is a matter for the individual companies themselves.

Ireland has expressed its intention, through a national policy position, to transition to a low carbon economy by 2050. To this end, my Department is working closely with the Department of Communication, Climate Action and the Environment (DCCAE) in the development of Ireland’s first Mitigation Plan, which will be finalised by mid-2017. This Plan will help to chart a clear and quantified path towards Ireland’s long-term climate objectives. The measures under consideration for the transport sector will be wide-ranging and will include the promotion of wholesale movement to alternative fuels and technologies for all vehicle types. Key transport objectives within the Plan include increasing public transport investment and promoting the uptake of alternatively fuelled vehicles.

My Department recently established a Green Public Transport Fund to support the uptake of low carbon technologies within the public transport sector. The fund will support pilot demonstrations of emerging low emission technologies, particularly for buses, and will also support measures to encourage the transition of the national taxi fleet towards alternative technologies. Such pilot schemes are expected to provide useful findings in an Irish context and will help inform future policy and investment priorities.

Furthermore, a low emissions vehicle (LEV) Taskforce was established in December 2016 and will assess, inter alia, the range of measures and options available to Government to help accelerate the deployment of LEVs.

Noting the NTA’s responsibility in the matter raised, I have referred your letter to the NTA for a more detailed reply. Please advise my private office if you don’t receive a reply within 10 working days.

Rural Transport Services

644. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the proposals his Department is working on in conjunction with the NTA and the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to deliver on action points 250 to 254 of the Action Plan for Rural Development to work with rural communities to assess and implement improvements to existing rural transport routes and develop new rural transport routes as necessary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19860/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I refer the Deputy to my replies to her previous Questions (Reference No. 4108/17 answered on 31 January 2017 and Reference No.11706/17 answered on 07 March 2017) on this matter.

As I advised the Deputy in those replies, responsibility for the implementation of action No. 250 of the Action Plan for Rural Development is matter for the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, in conjunction with local authorities.

The review of public transport policy, including the rural transport dimension to ensure it meets the needs of rural communities, is listed under action No. 251 of the Action Plan. To advance this commitment, the Deputy might be aware that I recently announced my intention to establish a Stakeholder Dialogue on the issue of Public Transport. My Department is currently scoping out the proposed approach to the work and the full Review will then take place as soon as possible.
As I also advised the Deputy previously, action Nos. 252 to 254 of the Action Plan fall to the National Transport Authority (NTA) to implement, given its responsibility to manage the Rural Transport Programme and I have referred this aspect of your question to the NTA for direct reply.

Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

**Bus Services**

645. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the rolling out of disability access bus stops, particularly in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21962/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the development of bus stops, bus shelters, bus stations etc in the State.

Accessibility features are built into all new public transport infrastructure projects and vehicles from the design stage and new systems are fully accessible. In addition, 100% of the Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann city fleets are wheelchair accessible, as well as approximately 80% of the Bus Éireann coach fleet.

With regard to existing infrastructure, there is an ongoing programme to upgrade public transport infrastructure and facilities to help improve transport accessibility across the country. The programme is managed by the NTA on behalf of my Department.

In 2017 under the Accessibility Grants Programme, funding is being provided to the NTA for accessibility upgrade works at a number of bus stops. I understand from the NTA that work has now commenced on two bus stops in Lifford, Co. Donegal.

In light of the NTA’s responsibility in this area, I have referred the Deputy’s question to the Authority for a more detailed reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

**Bus Éireann Services**

646. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the threat to the Dublin to Derry Bus Éireann Expressway route; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22093/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The Dublin to Derry route is a commercial licensed bus service operated by Expressway. As with any such commercial service, decisions regarding the route are a matter for the individual operator. These services receive no taxpayer funding and operate on a fully commercial basis.

As I have stated on numerous occasions, in cases where a commercial operator, such as Expressway, decides to alter or withdraw a commercial route, the National Transport Authority (NTA) has the statutory powers available to it to respond as appropriate to ensure continued transport connectivity.

The NTA published an assessment of the proposed changes on the Dublin to Derry Bus Éireann Expressway route (Route 33) and as indicated in that published assessment, the NTA does
not believe that connectivity issues arise on the route 33 corridor. The majority of the corridor will continue to be served by Expressway’s route 32 (Dublin to Letterkenny) while Dublin to Derry itself will continue to be served by two Translink operated services - the X3 and the X4.

In publishing its assessment the NTA invited feedback on its proposals. A copy of the assessment is available on www.nationaltransport.ie.

**Rail Network**

647. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the role of light and heavy rail in climate change mitigation; the plans in place to use rail to mitigate climate change outside of the Dublin and Kildare area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21867/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I fully recognise the importance of the rail network in our national efforts to reduce emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Irish Rail currently operates one of the most modern fleets in Europe, employing a number of energy efficiency initiatives including technological solutions, driver behavioural change programmes and improved train configurations. These initiatives increase fuel efficiencies, decrease energy requirements and consequentially lead to a reduction in pollutant and particulate emissions.

In line with the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, a National Mitigation Plan, is currently being developed by Government. I will submit transport sector emissions mitigation measures for inclusion in the plan to the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment later this month. The measures will reflect a multifaceted approach to reducing emissions with a particular focus on investment in public and sustainable transport in order to promote modal shift, supports for alternative fuels (including electrification of heavy rail where it is feasible and cost-effective to do so), and fiscal and taxation incentives to target behavioural change.

Rail will play an important role with rail projects supplementing the range of viable low carbon alternatives to the car, particularly in urban areas where high capacity transport plays a vital role in efficient, lower-carbon travel. A very significant proportion (approximately €1.3 billion) of the overall €3.6 billion of funding available for public transport in the Government’s Capital Plan is required for maintenance of the heavy rail network, benefitting the network both within and outside of the Greater Dublin Area (GDA). A further €250m approximately is provisionally allocated for other improvements to the heavy rail network.

The Rail Review underwent public consultation earlier this year, enabling a public discussion on the current and future role of rail in Ireland as well as the funding of the rail network and services. The public consultation process is currently being evaluated. Rail plays an important role in meeting increased passenger demand and providing an energy efficient mode of transport. Electrified rail use, in particular, is capable of achieving low emissions through utilising renewable sources of energy. However, public transport modes are only more environmentally sustainable compared to private cars when they are operating at appropriate levels of occupancy. A full train produces much fewer emissions per passenger than a large car with 1.5 passengers; however, an under-occupied bus or train emits more emissions per passenger than a full small car. Accurately matching the right mode of transport to passenger demand is critical in ensuring emission savings.
648. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if all buses operating under NTA licensed routes have an equivalent size specification whether they are Bus Éireann or privately operated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21963/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Responsibility for the licensing of public bus passenger services transferred from my Department to the National Transport Authority (NTA) in 2010 under the provisions of the Public Transport Regulation Act, 2009. Accordingly, my Department does not have a role in day-to-day bus licensing operations.

I have therefore referred the Deputy’s question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

---

**Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement**

649. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation when the CETA deal will be brought before Dáil Éireann for discussion. [21645/17]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O’Connor):** On the 30th October 2016, the EU – Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) was signed by representatives from Canada, the EU and its Member States. On the 15th February 2017, the European Parliament voted in support of the provisional application of CETA.

The process of ratification can now commence in some 43 national parliaments and regional assemblies across the EU according to their constitutional requirements. In Ireland’s case, the Dáil will be part of the final decision to ratify the Agreement.

I fully support provisional application of the Agreement. I am of the view that there should be no impediment to Irish companies immediately taking advantage of the provisions of CETA including eliminating tariffs on almost all of key exports, access to the Canadian procurement market, easing regulatory barriers and ensuring more transparent rules for market access.

Canada is currently finalising its internal implementation procedures to allow for its ratification of the Agreement, therefore CETA is yet to be provisionally applied. I believe that it is important to wait to see the benefits of CETA come into being, before CETA is put before the Dáil for ratification. Then we can have a fully informed, evidence based debate on the value of the Agreement to Ireland.

My Department is already working with our agencies and business representative groups to ensure that Irish firms take early advantage of the terms of the Agreement. In addition, Minister Breen and Minister Murphy have led sectorial trade missions to Canada this year. I will also be leading a trade mission to Canada later this month to promote the opportunities provided by the Agreement.

The Taoiseach met with Prime Minister Trudeau last week to discuss the ties between Canada and Ireland including the potential for increased economic and trade links between Ireland and Canada arising from CETA.
Questions - Written Answers

Cross-Border Enterprise Initiatives

650. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the progress of the research programme on enterprises and cross-Border trade report which was undertaken by InterTradeIreland and the ESRI; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21565/17]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O’Connor):** This Research project, which my Department has funded, will assess the potential impacts of WTO tariffs on Cross Border Trade and is expected to be finalised later this month. I propose to have it published as soon as is practicable thereafter.

Work Permits Applications

651. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the status of an application for a work permit by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21699/17]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O’Connor):** The Employment Permits Section informs me that it has no record of an employment permit application in relation to the named individual.

Departmental Staff Recruitment

652. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the criteria or instructions which are given to outside consultants in order to perform a given task (details supplied); and if a consultancy is asked to screen applicants for the position of clerical officer, if explicit criteria and qualifications are expressed to the consultants by her Department or other bodies such as the HSA. [21710/17]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O’Connor):** All Departmental recruitment is undertaken on our behalf by the Public Appointments Service except insofar as Service Grades are concerned which the Department manages itself. No consultancy would be involved.

In general, recruitment to the State Agencies under the remit of my Department is carried out through the Public Appointments Service (PAS). However, in some instances it may not be possible to use the services of PAS, for example, for certain specialist posts, or where PAS are not in a position to assist due to the volume of campaigns on hand at a particular time. In such instances a number of our Agencies have availed themselves of the services of external recruitment consultants and the following summarises the process operated in each case.

When the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) engages outside service providers for recruitment purposes the NSAI provide a job description containing an overview of the post, key tasks and responsibilities, the qualification and experience required and the remuneration of the post. The NSAI’s Grade B is equivalent to the Clerical Officer grade and recruitment to any such vacancies is managed directly by the Agency.

In the case of Enterprise Ireland (EI), where a recruitment consultant is engaged to source and/or screen applicants on behalf of EI, a detailed job specification for the relevant role is shared with the recruitment consultant at the outset of the engagement. This job specification
outlines the key deliverables of the role and details the key skills and knowledge required to successfully carry out the role. It is explicit on the job specification as to the criteria (skills, experience and/or qualifications) that are considered essential and the recruitment consultant screens and short-list candidates against these criteria prior to providing a short-list to Enterprise Ireland for a full competency based interview. Where EI has engaged the services of a recruitment consultant to source and/or screen applicants for Executive Assistant roles (Level B – equivalent to Clerical Officer), the process outlined above is followed. In addition, to assess applicants’ skill levels, specific skills tests are conducted in relation to computer literacy/proficiency and basic clerical skills. These tests are carried out by the recruitment consultant prior to providing a short-list to Enterprise Ireland for a full competency based interview.

Where a recruitment consultant is assisting the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) in filling positions, they are instructed to screen applicants in accordance with the essential and desirable qualifications and experience as set out in the job description and on the basis of the competencies for the role as also specified in the job description.

Where a recruitment consultant has been engaged by the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC), candidates are screened using the Job Description and Competencies aligned for the grade – outlining the requirements of the role and also the competencies involved (Competencies taken from PAS); the recruitment consultants then prepare a list of candidates for the CCPC to interview. This method has been used for the recruitment of Clerical Officers in the CCPC in the past and currently.

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) gives the service provider/consultant a verbal brief and a job description which enables them to screen candidates. SFI does not have any staff at Clerical Officer grade or equivalent.

IDA Ireland, PIAB and IAASA, have advised that they do not use external recruitment consultants.

Consultancy Contracts

653. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the criteria used by her Department when deciding to use an outside agency or consultancy. [21711/17]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O’Connor):** My Department considers hiring external consultants in cases where there is not the necessary expertise to deliver the project in-house, in cases where an external assessment is deemed essential, or in cases where a project must be completed within a short time scale, and although the expertise or experience may be available in-house, performing the task would involve a prohibitive opportunity cost.

In each particular case, criteria specific to the project are used in selecting an outside agency or consultancy, including cost and value for money. Contracts are awarded based on the most economically advantageous tender (specifying, in addition to price, various other criteria including running costs, servicing costs, servicing costs, level of after sales service, technical assistance, technical merit, environmental characteristics).

My Department complies with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform’s guidelines for engagements of consultants by the civil service, having regard to public procurement guidelines.
654. **Deputy Brid Smith** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number and specific details of prosecutions taken by her Department or the WRC on foot of complaints from employees for non-issuing of a contract of employment. [21739/17]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O’Connor):** The Terms of Employment (Information) Act 1994 -2014 provides that an employer must provide his/her employee with a written statement of the particulars of the employee’s terms of employment. It also provides that an employer must notify the employee of any changes in the particulars as given in the statement. There is no offence provision under the Act to provide for the taking of prosecutions on foot of complaints from employees in relation to the non-issue of a written statement.

The Terms of Employment (Information) Act 1994 -2014 was amended by the Workplace Relations Commission Act 2015 to provide a right of complaint to an Adjudication Officer of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) with a right of appeal to the Labour Court. Since its establishment on the 1 October 2015, the WRC has received 1,344 specific complaints in relation to non-receipt of a written statement of terms of employment. A small number of these complaints are Inspection related (2 in 2015 and 6 in 2016); the remainder are submitted for Adjudication.

On 2 May 2017, the Government approved draft legislative proposals as a response to the Programme for Government commitment to tackle the problems caused by the increased casualisation of work and to strengthen regulation of precarious work. The proposals seek to ensure that workers must be provided with details of five core terms of employment on or by the fifth day of employment. It creates a new offence where an employer does not provide a written statement of these five core terms of employment within one month of commencement of employment. The draft legislation was referred to the Office of the Attorney General on 4 May for priority drafting of a Bill.

**Bank Branch Closures**

655. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if she has received an update from a bank (details supplied) regarding its recent branch closures; the number of redundancies there have been in Arva, Cootehill and Carrickmacross; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21786/17]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O’Connor):** In March this year the company in question announced a number of changes to its business, which would include a number of redundancies. At the same time the company notified me of proposed collective redundancies as required under the Protection of Employment Act 1977. That Act requires employers proposing collective redundancies to enter into an information and consultation process with employees’ representatives. The company indicated that the exact location of redundancies is a matter to be confirmed through the information and consultation process.

I regret any loss of jobs. However, my Department remains focussed on creating the most competitive environment for enterprise to succeed so that we can achieve our goal of sustainable employment for all. Working with our enterprise agencies and with colleagues across Government, we are committed to delivering a range of actions outlined in our National and Regional Action Plans for Jobs to ensure that quality and sustainable jobs continue to be created.
throughout all regions of the country.

As regards the employment rights of the workers, the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) is mandated to secure compliance with employment rights legislation. The WRC’s Customer Service Section provides information in relation to employment, equality and industrial relations rights and obligations, and how to obtain redress where appropriate. WRC information officials remain available to meet staff, either individually or collectively, to discuss their employment rights, including matters related to redundancy. The WRC’s Customer Service Section can be contacted at Lo-call: 1890 80 80 90. The website http://www.workplacerelations.ie also provides extensive information on employment rights.

**IDA Site Visits**

656. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the status of IDA visits for 2017 nationwide in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21793/17]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O’Connor):** IDA Ireland maintains statistics of site visits by potential investors on a quarterly basis only. In the first quarter of 2017, there were 173 site visits, up from 136 for the same period in 2016. The following table sets out, on a county-by-county basis, the number of IDA Ireland-sponsored site visits for 2016 and for quarter one of 2017.

**Site Visits by County, 2016 and Quarter 1 2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>Q1 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carlow</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donegal</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerry</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilkenny</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laois</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leitrim</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limerick</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longford</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louth</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayo</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meath</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monaghan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offaly</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tipperary</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Employment Rights

657. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation her plans to amend the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 in order to provide a clear and fixed definition of reasonable paid allowances, pay increases and or paid time off work with respect to Sunday premiums and supplemental provisions for workers; her views on whether the current lack of clarity in this area is enabling workers to be unfairly exploited; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21798/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen):** I have no plans at this time to amend the provisions of the Organisation of Working Time Act to further elaborate on the definition of reasonable paid allowances, pay increases and or paid time off work with respect to Sunday premiums and supplemental provisions. The Deputy should note that there have been a number of Labour Court decisions that further elaborate on the interpretation of the current provisions. These decisions can, as intended, take account of all of the circumstances in each case, something that is difficult to achieve in primary legislation. The Deputy should note that this is an area where the opportunity was taken in the Workplace Relations Act, 2015 to give power to a Workplace Relations inspector to serve a compliance notice on an employer.

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 compensation 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 means of compensation to be paid is set out in that Section.

An employee can seek redress by making a complaint to 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. Appeals from the WRC are to the Labour Court.

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.workplacerelations.ie.

### Area Based Childhood Programme

658. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views on the preparing for life programme; her plans to extend it further; and if she will make a statement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>Q1 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Waterford</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westmeath</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wexford</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicklow</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>638</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme is a prevention and early intervention initiative consisting of committed funding for an area-based approach to reducing inter-generational child poverty by improving outcomes for children, young people and families in 13 areas of disadvantage. It was designed as a time-bound and co-funded arrangement between the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and The Atlantic Philanthropies (Atlantic), with a total allocation of €29.7 million being provided between the funders on a matched basis between 2013 and 2017.

The ABC Programme was preceded by the Prevention and Early Intervention Programme (PEIP) (2007-2013) in which the Preparing for Life Programme, along with two other sites: Youngballymun and the Childhood Development Initiative Tallaght participated. Preparing for Life received €6m as a participant in the PEIP. The total funding for Preparing for Life under the ABC Programme is €3.74m, bringing the funding received by Preparing for Life under both programmes to €9.74m.

I welcome the very positive results coming from the evaluation of the Preparing for Life Programme relating to the home visiting and parenting programmes elements, and am aware that a cost study is being carried out at present.

These evaluation findings and the associated costs will be key in informing the consideration of mainstreaming the learning from the ABC Programme. The ABC Programme is itself currently being evaluated. The findings from this national evaluation will be produced in Q2 2018.

In budget 2016, my Department secured additional funding of €4.5m to extend all of the existing ABC Programme to the end of December 2017. The current contract for Preparing for Life was due to conclude in August 2017. My Department has agreed additional funding allocation of €5,843 to extend this contract to the end of December 2017. It is the intention of my Department to seek additional funding in this year’s estimates process, to extend the ABC Programme to the end of August 2018 to align with the national evaluation of the ABC programme.

My Department is working to ensure that we take full account of the learning from all the interventions across the 13 ABC sites, including Preparing for Life, and the national evaluation. We will utilise these learnings to inform the delivery of prevention and early intervention initiatives in order to achieve our shared goal of improving the lives of children and families throughout Ireland.

School Completion Programme

659. Deputy Carol Nolan asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of staff who have been employed under the school completion programme over each of the past ten years and to date in 2017; the number of participants in the scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21409/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The School Completion Programme transferred to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency on the establishment of that Agency in 2014 and each School Completion Programme project is required at a minimum to employ a Coordinator to manage the day to day provision of the projects. Beyond this the staff composition of each project has to date been determined by the Local Management Committee. The information requested by the Deputy is therefore not readily available. Tusla have advised that 124 project coordinators were employed in 2014 and in each subsequent year
In 2016 Tusla conducted an employment audit of staffing levels in the School Completion Programme projects nationally. The staffing levels identified in the audit report are outlined in the following table and are based on a 96% response rate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCP Project</th>
<th>Staffing Quarter 1 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-ordinators:</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Workers:</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance / Tracking:</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sessional</td>
<td>1,074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>1,809</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Approximately 37,000 young people are supported by the Tusla School Completion Programme annually.

School Completion Programme

660. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if guidelines have been produced by her Department in respect of the operation of the school completion programme; if the programme is co-ordinated on a national basis; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21411/17]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The School Completion Programme operates under the Administrative, Financial and Employment Guidelines (Revised Edition) issued by the Department of Education and Science in 2006. The guidelines can be viewed at the below web address.


Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, co-ordinate the School Completion Programme on a national basis. Each of the 124 School Completion Programmes is managed by a Local Management Committee responsible for delivering an agreed, funded Annual Retention Plan.

Child and Family Agency Data

661. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of admissions of women to a centre (details supplied) in the past ten years. [22006/17]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The information sought by the Deputy has been requested from the Child and Family Agency and I will respond directly to the Deputy when the information is received.

Child and Family Agency Data

662. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children or babies of women attending a centre (details supplied) in the past ten year period who have been taken into care by social services as a result of being deemed at high risk.
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The information sought by the Deputy has been requested from the Child and Family Agency and I will respond directly to the Deputy when the information is received.

Child and Family Agency Data

663. Deputy Eoin Ó Broin asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 283 of 25 January 2017, the number of adults and children in Tusla-funded domestic violence refuges; and the number of adults and children in Tusla-funded domestic violence step-down accommodation on the first day of each month in 2016. [21666/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As I outlined to the Deputy in my previous response, Tusla does not collect information in respect of the numbers of women and children who use funded domestic violence refuges and step down accommodation on a month by month basis.

Tusla data indicates that in 2015, 1,736 women and 2,621 children were forced to leave their homes as a result of domestic violence and were accommodated in domestic violence accommodation. Data on the numbers of women and children who used these services in 2016 will be available in Quarter 4, 2017.

In 2016, Tusla provided €20.6 million in funding to support the provision of Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) Services. This included funding for some 60 services throughout the country comprising:

- €12.0m for emergency refuge and support services,
- €4.6m for community based domestic violence support services, and
- €4.0m for Rape Crisis Centres.

This year, Tusla is allocating €22.1m to DSGBV services, an increase of €1.5m over 2016.

The provision of domestic violence refuge spaces nationally in 2016 was 155 family units, comprising 147 emergency refuge family units and 8 emergency non-refuge family units.

In 2017, Tusla is giving priority to implementing actions contained in the second National Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence Strategy, in preparation for ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), which includes improving access to services geographically, including the provision of additional short-term and safe, emergency accommodation for women and children.

Inter-Country Adoptions

664. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when she plans to open an adoption programme between Haiti and Ireland; the steps she is taking to advance this programme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21533/17]

673. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will report on the Adoption Authority of Ireland’s recent visit to Haiti; the timeframe she
expects for the commencement of a proposed adoption programme between Ireland and Haiti; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21999/17]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 664 and 673 together.

The Adoption Authority of Ireland has responsibility for implementing the Adoption Act 2010, including Ireland’s responsibilities under the Hague Convention in relation to inter-country adoption.

Haiti ratified the Hague Convention on 1 April 2014. In May 2014 the Adoption Authority of Ireland accredited Helping Hands Adoption Mediation Agency to facilitate inter country adoption between Ireland and Haiti. Helping Hands applied for accreditation by *Institut du Bien-Être Social et de Recherches* (IBESR), the central authority of inter country adoption in Haiti. Helping Hands has been formally approved by IBESR to mediate adoptions from Haiti.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs has consulted with the Department of Foreign Affairs on consular and diplomatic matters related to Haiti. In March the Adoption Authority of Ireland and a representative from Helping Hands Mediation Agency visited Haiti and the Department is awaiting a report of this visit from the Authority.

### Child Care Services Data

665. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of child minders registered with Tusla; the number of child minders not required to register with Tusla but who have voluntarily notified a city and county child care committee of their existence; the number of children her Department estimates are being cared for by child minders; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21804/17]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Tusla have confirmed that the there were 119 services registered as child minders at the end of Quarter One 2017. Only child minders caring for 4 or more unrelated children in the child minder’s home are eligible to register with Tusla.

The City and County Childcare Committees (CCC) provided Pobal with annual figures of child minders who voluntarily notified them of their service. Pobal has confirmed that in 2016 the total number of child minders operating nationwide, as reported by the CCCs, was 1,597.

Other than the number of child minders registered with Tusla and the number voluntarily notified to the City and County Childcare Committees, the DCYA currently has no accurate source of information on the total number of child minders in Ireland. However, the recently published *School Age Childcare Report (2017)* estimates that there are 21,000 child minders in Ireland.

I have recently established the Childminding Working Group, chaired by Child Minding Ireland, and including officials from Tusla and from my Department, to make recommendations on reforms for the sector including proposals in relation to quality assurance, whether on a voluntary/non-statutory basis in the short term, or on a mandatory/statutory basis in the long term. These will include recommendations in relation to child minders who are exempt from registration with Tusla (Child and Family Agency) (those minding three or fewer pre-school children, or those minding school age children only). The recommendations are likely to include proposals to be progressed in the short, medium and long term, including the development of National Quality Standards for child minders and a proportionate system of quality assurance and regula-
tion. The Working Group is due to present its recommendations to me by the end of this month.

Child Care Services Provision

666. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to re-open a community child care service (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21944/17]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Since early 2015, my Department has supported intensive engagement with Pobal and Longford County Childcare Committee to maintain childcare provision in the service in question. Unfortunately, following an EGM of the board in March 2016, my Department was informed of the intention to proceed with an orderly wind-down of the service. Following this closure I delegated Pobal, as agents of my Department, along with Longford County Childcare Committee, to work with local bodies in relation to McEoin Park and the re-establishment of a service for the local community. Proposals were requested from a number of existing community based services in May 2016 and none were forthcoming at that time. As the Deputy will be aware, my Department does not directly provide childcare- rather we work with individuals, companies and community/not-for-profit groups to fund childcare provision. Pobal and Longford CCC have had discussions with a number of groups regarding the re-opening of a childcare facility, and are still pursuing options locally in this regard. Longford County Council have also been proactive in making a suitable premises available, and in the refurbishment and maintenance of same.

Unfortunately, to date we have not yet been able to secure a partner to operate this service. Pobal and Longford CCC are still pursuing options locally in this regard, and I am open to receiving proposals from local/community groups who may be in a position to assist.

Child Detention Centres

667. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when she will publish the report on the Oberstown children detention campus; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21989/17]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I understand the question raised by the Deputy relates to the report on the Operational Review. This review was commissioned by the Oberstown Board of Management. A copy of the report has been forwarded to my Department and is under consideration. I am working with the Chairman of the Board with regard to the publication of the report.

Child Care Services Regulation

668. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to the recently published HIQA 2016 overview, if the programme of registration of children’s special care units has commenced; the additional resources which have been provided to undertake this task; and when the registration will be complete. [21994/17]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The registration of Special Care Units is governed by Regulations made under the Health Act 2007.

A series of technical amendments to this Act were required on foot of the Child and Family
Agency Act 2013 and were made in the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015. These provided for the commencement of the relevant provisions which govern the registration of special care.

The Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015 was signed into law in December 2015. In 2016, the Health (Amendment) Act 2016 was passed to provide for transition provisions for different types of designated centres. Draft commencement orders for the relevant provisions governing the registration of special care settings have been prepared by my Department.

Work on commencement orders to bring the appropriate provisions into force has been in progress for some time. The Office of the Attorney General has identified difficulties in relation to the interaction between the various commencement proposals and the amendments that have already been made in the legislation. These difficulties are now the subject matter of specific legal scrutiny in that Office, which will be finalised shortly and any additional technical amendments identified.

Finally, the Deputy may wish to note that Officials from my Department finalised, some time ago, the relevant regulations and, in agreement with HIQA, the National Standards that would apply to HIQA inspections of special care settings. Given that, currently, there are only 3 special care units, it is not anticipated that the registration of such settings will require additional resources by HIQA.

Child Protection Services Provision

669. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to the recently published HIQA 2016 overview, the steps which have been taken to address the gaps in services for children being allocated a social worker; the number of children who remain unallocated to date in 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21995/17]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The provision of services to children being allocated a social worker, and in particular addressing the number of children who remain without an allocated social worker, is a high priority for me. I secured additional funding for this purpose in 2017. Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, is now in the second year of a 3-year plan to ensure the allocation of a social worker to all children and young people in need of one.

At the end of February 2017 (the latest data available), there was a total of 25,387 open child welfare and protection cases nationwide. An open case is one which is assessed as needing a dedicated (allocated) social work service. Of the 25,387 open cases, 77% (19,667) had an allocated social worker and 5,720 were waiting to be allocated a social worker. These cases are a mix of children in care or living with their families, whose social worker has left, either temporarily or permanently, and new cases.

The Deputy should note that all cases that are unallocated are closely monitored, supported and managed by the duty social work team under the supervision of the principal social worker.

It is a continuing priority of Tusla to address the problem of unallocated cases in 2017. Tusla currently has 1,480 WTE social workers and an end of 2017 target of 1,520 WTE. This target is short of the target set in Survival to Sustainability by approximately 100 WTE and reflects the constraints of the social work labour supply. Funding is in place to address the issue of unallocated cases, however, the recruitment environment for social workers is very challenging. Tusla is also focusing on intervening at an early stage of a family difficulty through social care and family supports. I have supported Tusla in the employment of additional social care workers and administrative staff to assist social workers in the course of their duties.
My Department will continue to closely monitor progress in this regard. I will continue to engage directly with the Tusla Board and senior management team, over the coming weeks and months, to review progress.

Child Abuse

670. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to the recently published HIQA 2016 overview, the number of adults to whom a social worker has not been allocated in cases related to retrospective allegations; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21996/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): An historical/retrospective allegation is where an adult discloses abuse experienced in childhood. The overwhelming majority of historical/retrospective disclosures are about sexual abuse.

I can inform the Deputy that Tusla has advised that, at the end of February 2017, there were 1,985 historical/retrospective cases on hand, of which 1,144 were allocated to a social worker, and 841 were awaiting allocation. An unallocated case is given a high priority where there is information that the person against whom the allegation is made has a child abuse conviction, and a role that brings them into contact with children.

All child protection referrals which allege current or past criminal activity are referred to An Garda Síochána. Tusla’s focus is to screen historical/retrospective disclosures for any indication of current risk to children. Where a risk is identified, or in cases of urgent need, the disclosure is treated as a child protection referral and acted on accordingly. Tusla may also assist the person making the allegation to access HSE counselling services.

Tusla is engaged in year two of a three year plan to reduce the number of unallocated cases and is expanding the number of social workers it employs. The funding is in place to achieve this, but the recruitment environment is proving to be challenging. The Government is committed to helping Tusla to drive forward the reforms necessary to address this unacceptable waiting list.

Child and Family Agency Services

671. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the position regarding the Tusla feedback and complaints process, Tell Us; the stage the process is at in identifying and training complaints managers; if this process is now operational within Tusla; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21997/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla, the Child and Family Agency introduced its feedback and complaint policy, Tell Us: You Say, We Listen on September 5th, 2016. All complaints received by Tusla, from this date, are managed under the Tell Us policy.

Tusla has advised that its staff have been informed on the points of difference between Tell Us and the previous policy, Your Service Your Say, which was developed by the Health Service Executive (HSE), and used by Tusla while it was developing its own dedicated system. A programme of briefings is being conducted in order to develop awareness of Tell Us, and to clarify the need to apply the new policy and its procedures in the handling of complaints. These briefings are scheduled to continue until the end of August 2017. In this time, it is expected that
over 4,000 Tusla staff members will be afforded the opportunity to attend the policy briefing sessions.

Tusla has also advised that dedicated training for Complaints Officers in complaint handling and management is scheduled to commence in Quarter 3, 2017. Staff designated as Complaints Officers will be required to attend this training.

Tusla has deemed that Principal Social Workers and equivalent grades should be considered as Complaints Officers and that Area Managers or managers at equivalent grades and above should be considered as Review Officers. Additional administrative staff are being put in place to support the complaints management function.

The Tell Us policy is available on the Tusla website: www.tusla.ie/about/feedback-and-complaints/tell-us-publications.

Child and Family Agency

672. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the position regarding the review of the governance, leadership and management arrangements within Tusla undertaken in 2016; if the review has been completed; if so, the findings of the review; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21998/17]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) initiated a Governance Review of Tusla, the Child and Family Agency in 2016. HIQA has advised me that the Governance Review is still ongoing and hence the findings have not yet been finalised. As the review is still in process, it would be inappropriate for me to comment further on the matter at this time.

*Question No. 673 answered with Question No. 664.*

Early Childhood Care and Education

674. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide the resources to set up a central system to register early years child care practitioners; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [22029/17]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs established the National Collaborative Forum for the Early Years Care and Education Sector (The Early Years Forum) to allow issues of relevance to be discussed with key stakeholders. The Forum has enabled consultation and engagement between the Minister, key Department of Children and Youth Affairs officials, and key representatives of the sector.

Based on a recommendation from the Minister, members of the Early Years Forum have convened a working group to look at Professionalisation of the Early Years sector to assist with driving improvements in the quality of services for children. One area which this group is considering is the possibility of setting up an Early Years Council or professional regulator which would have responsibility, amongst other roles, for registering Early Years practitioners. Such a Council would take over certain responsibilities currently held by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Education and Skills. Clearly the establishment of a professional regulator would require legislation and has costs associated with it. Agreement to progress same would have to be made on a cross Departmental basis and be included in an
estimates process. It is also important to note that the establishment of a professional regulator usually follows from a profession itself advancing professional standards and codes of conduct.

The Minister looks forward to continuing her engagement with the Early Years Forum on this matter.

**Fisheries Protection**

675. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to increase investment in naval surveillance to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing by foreign vessels, including having inspectors on board with access to all areas of these vessels in territorial waters. [21429/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The Sea-Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006 establishes the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) as the competent Authority for securing efficient and effective enforcement of sea-fisheries protection legislation and the sustainable exploitation of marine fish resources from the waters around Ireland. To this end, the SFPA has a Service Level Agreement with the Department of Defence to secure efficient enforcement of sea-fisheries law through support provided by the Defence Forces, namely the Naval Service and the Air Corps. In accordance with this Agreement, an Annual Control Plan is agreed between the parties that sets out the strategy for achieving sea-fisheries control targets each year. The Naval Service is empowered to board and inspect vessels and their cargos and, when necessary, to formally detain vessels and direct them to port for arrest by An Garda Síochána. The role of the Naval Service and the Air Corps in support of the SFPA is coordinated by the Fisheries Monitoring Centre which is located at the Naval Base in Haulbowline and is operated by the Naval Service on a 24/7 basis.

The White Paper on Defence (2015) sets out the investment priorities for the Defence Forces for the next decade. There has been significant investment in new Naval Service Patrol Vessels over recent years with the commissioning of the LÉ Samuel Beckett in May 2014, LÉ James Joyce in September 2015 and the LÉ William Butler Yeats in October 2016. A contract for an additional sister ship was placed in June 2016 at a cost of €54.3m, bringing investment in the new ships programme to over €250 million since 2010. This fourth ship is scheduled for delivery in mid 2018. The White Paper on Defence (2015) also provides for the replacement of the Air Corps’ two CASA 235s Maritime Patrol Aircraft, with consideration of their replacement with larger more capable aircraft.

The Naval Service and the Air Corps will continue to work closely supporting the SFPA in its work to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing by any vessel in Irish waters.

**Commemorative Medals**

676. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to issue the 1916-2016 commemorative medal to veterans of the Defence Forces in recognition of their service to the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21715/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** As part of the Programme for Government, it was proposed that a 1916 Centenary Commemorative medal be awarded to all Defence Forces personnel, both Permanent and Reserve, who were recorded as being in service in the course of 2016. The 1916 Centenary Commemorative Medal is being awarded as a commemorative medal, personal to an individual’s service in the Defence Forces.
in the course of 2016.

I met with the Veterans Organisations (Organisation of National Ex-Service Personnel (ONE), Irish United Nations Veterans Association (IUNVA) and Association of Retired Commissioned Officers (ARCO)) on 15 December last, and whilst I reiterated to them that there are no plans to award the 1916 Centenary Commemorative Medal to Veterans, it was agreed that a further meeting be held between the Department and the Veterans’ Organisations to explore alternative means of recognition including exploring further the Department’s existing proposal of issuing a Commemorative plaque.

At my request officials from my Department met with representatives of the Veterans’ Organisations on Friday 17 February 2017. My officials proposed that a single presentation will be made to the Veterans Organisations of a commemorative plaque or framed medal with an accompanying citation in recognition of the significant contribution of members of the three organisations to the 1916 centenary commemorative events and their service to the State. The plaque or medal would have a bar with the term Veteran inscribed on it.

The Veterans’ Organisations agreed to the proposal to recognise the contribution of veterans in 2016 in this way. The Defence Forces have been asked to produce mock-up designs of both a plaque and medal which will then be shown to the Veterans’ Organisations for them to indicate their preference. I expect that to happen shortly and a ceremony will be arranged thereafter for a formal presentation to the Veterans Associations.

**Defence Forces Representative Organisations**

677. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the way in which members of the Defence Forces can make representations to his Department regarding their pay and conditions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21725/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** Members of the Permanent Defence Force can make representations in relation to their pay and conditions of service through their representative bodies, PDFORRA and RACO. The Conciliation and Arbitration scheme for members of the Permanent Defence Force provides a formal mechanism for the Permanent Defence Force Representative Associations, RACO and PDFORRA, to engage with the Official side. The purpose of the scheme is to provide a means for the determination of claims and proposals from the Associations relating to remuneration and conditions of service.

It is open to the Representative Associations to submit claims to the Official side in relation to matters falling within the C&A scheme. Generally claims relate to pay and conditions, award of allowances etc. When submitted, these claims are generally the subject of negotiations and where agreement is not reached it is open to both sides to seek the assistance of an adjudicator to settle the matter. In addition, a framework exists which facilitates the Associations engaging with the official side in talks parallel to those taking place between ICTU and the official side at National level.

**Defence Forces Contracts**

678. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if there will be a review of the post-1994 contracts for members of the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21726/17]
Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The terms and conditions whereby Privates and Corporals may not serve beyond 21 years were adjudicated on in December 2015. The adjudicator made specific findings on the matter. Officials in my Department are currently analysing the issues arising in relation to the implementation of these findings and will recommend to me any necessary legislative changes in respect of the terms of service for Enlisted Personnel.

**Defence Forces Medicinal Products**

679. Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the medical service of the Defence Forces is continuing to prescribe the anti-malarial drug Lariam for members of the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21727/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Anti-malarial medications, including Lariam, remain in the formulary of medications prescribed by the Medical Corps for Defence Forces personnel on appropriate overseas missions, to ensure that our military personnel can have effective protection from the very serious risks posed by Malaria. Malaria is a serious disease that killed approximately 438,000 people in 2015, with 90% of deaths occurring in sub-Saharan Africa, as reported by the World Health Organisation. It is a serious threat to any military force operating in the area.

Significant precautions are taken by Irish Defence Forces Medical Officers in assessing the medical suitability of members of our Defence Forces to take any of the anti-malarial medications. It is the policy of the Irish Defence Forces that personnel are individually screened for fitness for service overseas and medical suitability. The objective is to ensure that our military personnel can have effective protection from the very serious risks posed by malaria.

The health and welfare of the Defence Forces are a priority for me. The choice of medication for overseas deployment, including the use of Lariam, is a medical decision made by Medical Officers in the Defence Forces, having regard to the specific circumstances of the mission and the individual member of the Irish Defence Forces.

**Defence Forces Representative Organisations**

680. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the steps he is taking to provide members of the Defence Forces the right to join a trade union; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22000/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Under the terms of the Defence (Amendment) Act, 1990 the Defence Forces Representative Associations are prohibited from being associated with, or affiliated to any trade unions, or any other body. Accordingly, the Representative Associations cannot be affiliated to ICTU. The basis for the prohibition is that it would be inappropriate to apply the provisions of the Industrial Relations Act, 1990 to members of the Defence Forces. The taking of any form of industrial action is irreconcilable with military service. This is a long standing policy position taken by respective Governments since the foundation of the State. The Defence Forces may be called on to contribute to maintaining vital services in times of industrial action. The potential for serious difficulties and conflicts could arise in these circumstances if the Defence Forces Representative Associations were associated with, or affiliated to ICTU, given ICTU rules in relation to such matters.
As the Deputy is aware, the Conciliation and Arbitration scheme for members of the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) provides a formal mechanism for the PDF Representative Associations, RACO and PDFORRA, to engage with the Official side. The purpose of the scheme is to provide a means for the determination of claims and proposals from the Associations relating to remuneration and conditions of service.

It is open to the Representative Associations to submit claims to the Official side in relation to matters falling within the C&A scheme. Generally claims relate to pay and conditions, award of allowances etc. When submitted, these claims are generally the subject of negotiations and where agreement is not reached it is open to both sides to seek the assistance of an adjudicator to settle the matter. In addition, a framework exists which facilitates the Associations engaging with the official side in talks parallel to those taking place between ICTU and the official side at National level.

I have received representations from PDFORRA seeking to have access to the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court made available to them in the event of any future legislative changes being made to provide An Garda Síochána with access to same. I am advised that the proposals in relation to An Garda Síochána being granted such access will require detailed legislative changes and the Department of Justice and Equality have established a Working Group to examine in detail what future legislative changes are required.

I remain satisfied with the present arrangements in place for the Defence Forces. However, in the light of PDFORRA’s representations the matter is being kept under review, including in the context of any future arrangements to be made for An Garda Síochána.

**Defence Forces Representative Organisations**

681. *Deputy Pearse Doherty* asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to review the restrictions on the rights of members of the Defence Forces to the collective bargaining process and to participate in various forms of industrial action; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22017/17]

*Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe)*: Under the terms of the Defence (Amendment) Act, 1990 the Defence Forces Representative Associations are prohibited from being associated with, or affiliated to any trade unions, or any other body. Accordingly, the Representative Associations cannot be affiliated to ICTU. The basis for the prohibition is that it would be inappropriate to apply the provisions of the Industrial Relations Act, 1990 to members of the Defence Forces. The taking of any form of industrial action is irreconcilable with military service. This is a long standing policy position taken by respective Governments since the foundation of the State. The Defence Forces may be called on to contribute to maintaining vital services in times of industrial action. The potential for serious difficulties and conflicts could arise in these circumstances if the Defence Forces Representative Associations were associated with, or affiliated to ICTU, given ICTU rules in relation to such matters.

As the Deputy is aware, the Conciliation and Arbitration scheme for members of the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) provides a formal mechanism for the PDF Representative Associations, RACO and PDFORRA, to engage with the Official side. The purpose of the scheme is to provide a means for the determination of claims and proposals from the Associations relating to remuneration and conditions of service.

It is open to the Representative Associations to submit claims to the Official side in relation
to matters falling within the C&A scheme. Generally claims relate to pay and conditions, award of allowances etc. When submitted, these claims are generally the subject of negotiations and where agreement is not reached it is open to both sides to seek the assistance of an adjudicator to settle the matter. In addition, a framework exists which facilitates the Associations engaging with the official side in talks parallel to those taking place between ICTU and the official side at National level.

I have received representations from PDFORRA seeking to have access to the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court made available to them in the event of any future legislative changes being made to provide An Garda Síochána with access to same. I am advised that the proposals in relation to An Garda Síochána being granted such access will require detailed legislative changes and the Department of Justice and Equality have established a Working Group to examine in detail what future legislative changes are required.

I remain satisfied with the present arrangements in place for the Defence Forces. However, in the light of PDFORRA’s representations the matter is being kept under review, including in the context of any future arrangements to be made for An Garda Síochána.