

Written Answers.

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

Questions Nos. 1 to 15, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions Nos. 16 to 36, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 37 to 45, inclusive, answered orally.

Energy Infrastructure

46. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he or his officials have had meetings or discussions with executives from a company (details supplied) regarding the proposed data centre in Athenry, specifically as regards the provision of a 100% renewable energy supply for the facility. [49096/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I can confirm that neither myself nor officials from my Department have had discussions with executives from Apple regarding the proposed data centre, or its energy supply source, in Athenry. However my officials occasionally meet with IDA representatives and their client companies as part of routine engagement on wider energy policy developments.

The level of interest from energy intensive industry such as data centres, in Ireland has increased in recent years and has the potential to drive growth in electricity demand. Significantly, one of the key reasons cited for this increased level of interest is Ireland's positive record in the area of renewable energy deployment.

Data centres consume very large amounts of energy and the scale and quantity of their development presents challenges to Ireland's national grid. EirGrid, the state's electricity transmission system operator, makes considerable efforts to ensure that the electricity system can cope with the increasing demands placed on it by the increase in the number of data centres in the last decade, as well as planning to meet future demands, as reflected in their *Tomorrow's Energy Scenarios 2017* publication.

According to EirGrid's latest Generation Capacity Statement there are currently approximately 250 megavolt amperes (MVA) of installed data centres in Ireland. Megavolt ampere is the electricity terminology mainly used for grid connections. Furthermore, there are connection offers either in place or in the pipeline for a further 600 MVA. At present, there are enquiries for more than 1,000 MVA of additional data centres. These statistics demonstrate the scale of energising existing and proposed data centres.

In recognition of the economic potential that data centres can bring to Ireland, the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation in conjunction with other relevant Minis-

ters is leading a cross-government effort to develop a national policy statement on the strategic importance of data centres as part of Ireland's Enterprise Strategy, with a first draft expected later this year. This strategic policy approach will include proposed amendments to the Strategic Infrastructure Act and take account of wider energy policy developments. I am firmly of the view that the development of data centres must be plan lead, focused on areas where there is strong grid and energy supply. The policy statement must lay out a clear and balanced approach to the development of the sector, one that will take account of a variety of elements including regional development, costs and benefits and the impact on Ireland's electricity grid.

Waste Disposal Charges

47. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will address the fact that the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission has refused to play a role in the Government's monitoring of waste collection charges; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49108/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Government gave a commitment to consumers to carefully monitor the transition in the sector when introducing the measure to phase out flat fees for household waste collection. Accordingly, I established a Household Waste Collection Price Monitoring Group. Its role is to track the rates charged by waste collectors across the country as flat rate fees are being phased out.

The Price Monitoring Group is chaired by Mr Frank Conway, an independent consumer finances expert, and comprises representatives from the Waste Policy and Resource Efficiency Division and an economist from my Department, a statistician from the Central Statistics Office, and a market research company with expertise in price monitoring. The company has now completed two data sweeps of the market and has reported the data to the Group. The Price Monitoring Group will continue its monthly market surveillance during the flat-fee phase out.

In addition, the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation has asked the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) to conduct a study on the operation of the household waste collection market. The CCPC has commenced work in this regard and it hopes to finalise the study in early 2018.

The CCPC has also outlined its role vis-à-vis the Household Waste Collection Price Monitoring Group. It indicated that it would not be appropriate for it to take part on the Price Monitoring Group as any commentary by that Group could prove problematic in the context of the independent Commission's review of the market. Furthermore, it clarified that its involvement in the Price Monitoring Group could potentially prejudice any future enforcement action that the Commission might deem necessary in the sector.

Notwithstanding the above, the results from the Household Waste Collection Price Monitoring Group will be monitored and analysed. Its surveillance, in conjunction with the study being undertaken by the CCPC, will provide an evidence base regarding future monitoring or the potential need for additional regulation of the waste market.

Electricity Transmission Network

48. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the position regarding the proposal by EirGrid to construct the North-South inter-

connector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49037/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): 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 process for the section of the project in Northern Ireland is on-going following the conclusion of an oral hearing on 27 February 2017.

Following the motions calling for an updated independent study that were passed by Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann earlier this year, I have commissioned two independent studies designed to address the main points of the motions as well as key concerns expressed by parties opposed to the development of an overhead line.

The first is an independent study to examine the technical feasibility and cost of undergrounding the interconnector. I have approved the appointment of independent experts to carry out this study and their work commenced in August. The consultants are Bo Normark, who will Chair the Group, Professor Ronnie Belmans and Professor Keith Bell. This Independent Expert Group is expected to deliver its final report by the end of January next and indeed were in Ireland for a variety of meetings in the course of their research on Thursday and Friday last week (16-17 November).

I have also commissioned a study on the levels of compensation provided to land and property owners in proximity to high-voltage transmission lines in a European context. Work is well underway on this study and its results are expected in Quarter 1 2018.

The results of both commissioned studies will be published prior to the conclusion of this procurement process. In addition, no work will be commissioned during the procurement process.

Climate Change Policy

49. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has considered the Citizens' Assembly's recommendations on climate change; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49088/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The contributions by the members of the Citizens' Assembly to this critical and urgent issue, which included consideration of a range of detailed presentations by technical experts in meetings over the course of two full weekends, have been welcomed by me and by the Government as a whole.

I understand that the Citizens' Assembly must now communicate its report and recommendations to the Houses of the Oireachtas for further consideration. The topics considered by the Citizens' Assembly as part of its module on climate change and the recommendations arising from this module address a range of Government policies and activities. The Government will study the Assembly's report and recommendations systematically and comprehensively when it receives them and will provide its response to each recommendation of the Assembly in the Houses of the Oireachtas in due course.

In the context of the Assembly's work on this module, I also understand that it has been invited to consider how the National Dialogue on Climate Action should engage with the wider public to create awareness, engagement and motivation to act in relation to the challenges of cli-

mate change. I expect that the report of the Citizens' Assembly will provide valuable input and ideas from which to draw on in the preparation of further activities under the National Dialogue in the coming months.

In the context of my engagement with representatives of Irish NGOs at COP 23 last week I was also pleased to note the very positive response to the work of the Citizens' Assembly and the suggestion that, together with the National Dialogue on Climate Action, these models for participatory engagement could be showcased at future COP meetings in the spirit of the 'Tala-noa' Dialogue that is now to be taken forward under the Fijian COP Presidency.

In general terms, I was pleased to note that many of the recommendations adopted by the members of the Assembly, as reported on during the second weekend of this module, are already being addressed in the National Mitigation Plan and in the implementation of the Energy White Paper, but I also acknowledge that other recommendations will need further consideration in the context of the Government's response to the report of the Assembly.

Climate Change Policy

50. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the implications for the State's emissions targets and broader obligations in regard to addressing climate change of potential expansion of energy intensive industry here, particularly if same is incentivised by the Government, as in, for example, plans to expand the number of data centres located here. [49014/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The 2014 National Policy Position on Climate Change and 2015 Energy White Paper include ambitious long-term commitments, respectively, to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 80% compared to 1990 levels and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the sector by between 80% and 95% by 2050. As energy use and greenhouse gas emissions are inextricably linked, meeting this objective will require a radical transformation of Ireland's energy system from being predominantly fossil-fuel based to a clean, low carbon energy system.

The level of interest from energy intensive industry, such as data centres, in Ireland has increased in recent years and has the potential to drive growth in electricity demand. Significantly, one of key reasons cited for this increased level of interest is Ireland's positive record in the area of renewable energy deployment. Ireland is also seen as having a number of additional advantages as a location for data centre development including: climate; fibre internet connectivity; energy supply; and its business environment. In recognition of the economic benefits that data centres can bring to Ireland, the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, in conjunction with other relevant Ministers, is leading inter-Departmental work to develop a national policy statement on the strategic importance of data centres as part of Ireland's Enterprise Strategy, with a first draft expected later this year.

This strategic policy approach is expected to include proposed amendments to the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act, 2006, and to take account of wider energy and climate policy perspectives. I am firmly of the view that the development of data centres must be in areas where there is strong grid and energy supply. The policy statement must set out a clear and balanced approach to the development of the sector, one that will take account of a variety of elements including regional development, costs and benefits, and the impact on Ireland's electricity grid.

As Minister with responsibility for both climate action and energy policy, I am mindful that

an increase in energy demand may have implications for both our climate and renewable energy targets. In light of economic growth indicators and energy demand growth forecasts, which include projected data centre growth, my Department is working to support and encourage the development of additional levels of renewable generation technologies via a new Renewable Energy Support Scheme which is currently under development. My Department received 1,250 submissions to the final consultation on the RESS which closed in early November. I am keen that this new Scheme encourages the diversification of renewable energy technologies in Ireland, while mindful of the need to minimise the costs on the consumers through the Public Service Obligation.

I am committed to further exploring opportunities for supporting micro generation, including at data centre sites, as I believe that micro-generation could have an important role in Ireland's transition to a carbon free economy, in assisting Ireland meet its renewable electricity targets, increasing social acceptance of, and helping to offset, any potential growth in emissions from a future increase in energy demand.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

51. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the timeframe for the national broadband plan and the measures contained to ensure equality in the roll-out of broadband services for rural areas, rural communities and regional towns; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48678/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I provided an outline on the current status of the National Broadband Plan in my response to earlier questions on today's order paper. The Deputy will be aware the aim of the NBP is to ensure high speed broadband access to all premises in Ireland, regardless of location. The NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector so that today over 65% of premises in Ireland have access to high speed broadband and this is set to increase to 77% by the end of 2018 and to 90% by the end of 2020.

My Department is engaged in an on-going procurement process to select a company or companies who will roll-out the new high speed broadband network for the State led intervention. A significant milestone in that process was reached in September with the submission of Detailed Solutions by two bidders. These Detailed Solutions are being evaluated by my Department's specialist NBP team. This is the last stage of the procurement process before receipt of final tenders and progression to the appointment of a preferred bidder or bidders.

I recognise the importance of availability of high speed connectivity for all premises in Ireland and the frustration for communities that do not currently have access to this level of connectivity. Delivering high speed connectivity to all 542,000 premises that fall within the State led intervention under the NBP remains a Government priority and my Department will engage with the winning bidder or bidders to ensure the most efficient deployment as part of the contract. In the interim, practical initiatives will continue to be addressed through the work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to address obstacles and improve connectivity in respect of existing and future mobile phone and broadband services.

National Broadband Plan

52. **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 provided by Ministers at each of these press conferences; the projected commencement date and completion date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48976/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): As I have outlined to the Deputy in previous questions on this topic, since the publication of the National Broadband Plan in 2012 by former Minister Pat Rabbitte, there have been a number of updates provided in respect of its progress.

In April 2014, the Government decided that it needed to scale up the ambition of the plan and allocated significant resources to it. The revised ambition of the NBP now aims to provide access to high speed broadband to every home and business in the country. Since then, my predecessors and I have held a number of media briefings to inform the public of key milestones in the development of the revised Plan. For example:

- In November 2014 the then Minister, Alex White, published the High Speed Broadband Map and the public consultation ;

- In June 2015, former Minister White launched the draft Intervention Strategy for public consultation;

- December 2015 saw the publication of the updated High Speed Broadband Map and Strategy and the formal launch of the procurement process by former Minister White;

- In July 2016 I announced the Government decision in relation to the ownership model for the network to be built and the shortlisting of three companies as bidders in the procurement process. I also formally announced the establishment of a Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to consider immediate measures to address telecommunications deficits in rural Ireland;

- In April 2017 I published the finalised High Speed Broadband Map for the NBP procurement process. This was also the launch of eir's rural fibre broadband deployment to 300,000 premises;

- In September 2017 I announced that my Department received two detailed submissions from bidders - Eircom Limited and the Granahan McCourt, enet, SSE, John Laing Group plc consortium. The submissions received means that we are at the final stages of this procurement process.

I am sure that the Deputy will agree that these regular progress reports on the development of this complex national infrastructure plan, at the key milestone stages outlined, is important in order to inform the public of progress.

Telecommunications Services Provision

53. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the position regarding his efforts to improve mobile telephone signals; the progress made to date in terms of the recommendations of the mobile telephone and broadband task force with particular reference to County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48950/17]

61. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the work of the implementation group on the mobile telephone and

broadband task force; the progress which has been made in implementing the actions recommended by the task force; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49049/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 53 and 61 together.

Providing telecommunications services, including mobile phone services, is a matter for the relevant service providers operating in a fully liberalised market regulated by the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg), as independent Regulator. I do not have statutory authority to require commercial companies to rollout services to particular locations. The ComReg consumer helpline is accessible at *consumerline@comreg.ie* and I would urge consumers who feel they have not received an appropriate response from service providers to make contact with the Regulator.

Notwithstanding ComReg's independence, I recognise the frustration felt by Irish consumers where telecommunications networks are not always delivering the services people expect. Accordingly, I specifically included in the Programme for Government a commitment to a Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce. In July 2016, I established the 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 Taskforce worked with key stakeholders to produce the December 2016 report available on my Department's website, which contains 40 actions to alleviate some of the deficits. The Implementation Group I co-chair with Minister Kyne is overseeing implementation of the actions and comprises all key stakeholders responsible for delivery. Meetings were held in March and July and the next is scheduled for tomorrow.

The two quarterly reports published to date demonstrate the good progress made in delivering the actions, and the third such report to be published shortly after tomorrow's Implementation Group meeting, will reflect that continuing progress and also the sustained level of engagement between actions owners and industry.

This engagement was clear in the October first National Stakeholder Forum in Athlone which I hosted with Minister Kyne. It arose from the Taskforce's recognition that, given the rapid technological change and the emergence of new equipment and solutions to deliver telecommunications services, stakeholders needed an opportunity to raise concerns on impediments to the rollout of services. Issues impacting on rollout were discussed at the Forum, and there were also some new recommended actions for the Taskforce to help improve services to consumers and in preparing for roll-out of the National Broadband Plan network, once contracts are in place.

The Taskforce's achievements to date include:

- Funding of all local authorities to assign a Broadband Officer;
- Close cooperation with local authorities to develop local digital strategies, including Government working closely with local authorities to identify approximately 320 high speed Strategic Community Access Hubs to be connected at an early juncture after award of the NBP contract;
- ComReg's development of a testing regime to check mobile handset performance which will inform consumers in choosing products and network services. ComReg will also develop a new network coverage map.

- Most local authorities applying waivers in respect of development contributions for telecoms development.

- Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) has constructed 80km of ducting on the M7/M8 corridor and 14km on the N25 in Cork, with more following in the coming months to help expedite infrastructure roll-out. TII is also reviewing the cost of duct access for telecoms.

In tandem with the work of the Taskforce, the release by ComReg of the 3.6GHz radio spectrum band, which has been identified at EU level as a primary band suitable for the introduction of 5G, will also contribute to addressing increasing mobile data demands and improve mobile coverage. Mobile operators' commercial investment has also resulted in improved services, following ComReg's 2012 multi-band spectrum auction. At least one operator now has in excess of 90% 4G population coverage.

All of these initiatives should assist in enhancing the quality of mobile phone and data services, particularly in rural areas.

Electric Vehicles

54. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans with regard to the future charging network following a recent decision by the regulator on the future financing of the public charging points for electric vehicles. [49010/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Following a public consultation, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities last month published its decision on the future ownership of the electric vehicle charging network. A key outcome of the decision is that the charging network should not form part of the regulated asset base and therefore expansions of the network should not be funded from network charges. This is in keeping with the proposals published last year by the European Commission in the Clean Energy for All Europeans package.

The decision also sets out the need for electric vehicle charging infrastructure to operate on a commercial basis. Currently, recharging electric vehicles at public charge points is free and unlimited. Deputies will, however, appreciate that free fuel for electric vehicles, funded by electricity consumers, is not sustainable in the longer term. At the same time, it is important that if payments for use of public charge points are introduced in the future, they are at a level which does not disincentivise the uptake of electric vehicles.

The Low Emissions Vehicle Taskforce, which is co-chaired by my Department and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, is considering a range of measures and options available to Government to accelerate the deployment of electric vehicles. A key focus of the work of the Taskforce is examining options for infrastructure, regulation and pricing in order to devise a sustainable policy framework for effective and efficient electric vehicle charging.

The Taskforce is assessing the decision of the Commission for Regulation of Utilities in its examination of the future requirements for electric vehicle recharging infrastructure. The work of the Taskforce is well underway and has already resulted in a package of measures in Budget 2018 designed to promote a low carbon, electric vehicle future. The Taskforce is also planning a stakeholder workshop later this month to explore issues related to the future requirements for electric vehicle recharging infrastructure.

RTÉ Staff

55. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he or his Department has had discussions with the RTÉ authority or other Government Departments regarding the future of the symphony and concert orchestras currently managed by RTÉ. [49097/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): RTÉ is an independent national public service broadcaster established under the Broadcasting Act 2009. Section 114 of the Act sets out the objects of RTÉ, including the objective ‘to establish and maintain orchestras, choirs and other cultural performing groups’. Section 98 of the Act establishes the independence of RTÉ in pursuance of its objects.

As a matter of routine, my officials and I regularly meet with the Chair and senior management of RTÉ on a range of policy and governance issues.

Renewable Energy Generation

56. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the actions he is taking to facilitate the development of solar energy in a well managed and sustainable manner; the timeframe for the introduction of a new renewable electricity support scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48705/17]

58. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the action he will take to increase Ireland’s renewable energy stock; the date by which a renewable energy support scheme will be launched here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49106/17]

64. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will report on the renewable electricity support scheme in respect of wind generation and micro scale generation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48979/17]

78. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if a support scheme for residential and-or community solar photovoltaic electricity will be introduced (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49015/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 56, 58, 64 and 78 together.

My Department is developing a new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) which will be designed to assist Ireland in meeting its renewable energy contribution to EU-wide targets out to 2030. The design of the new scheme has included an extensive independent economic appraisal. This appraisal compared the cost of supporting a range of commercial renewable technologies, including Solar Photovoltaics (Solar PV) and both onshore and offshore wind, at various scales including micro-generation, to ensure that the new scheme delivers value for money for energy users whilst also delivering on the energy pillars of sustainability and security of supply. The assessment included analysis of the optimum financial support mechanisms for renewable technologies, in line with the 2014 EU State Aid Guidelines.

The 2014 EU State Aid Guidelines set the framework and extent of financial support options for national renewable electricity (RES-E) support schemes. In general and except for small scale and demonstration projects, RES-E support levels must be set through competitive bid-

ding processes and all new RES-E schemes should provide support in the form of a premium in addition to the market price. This support mechanism is very different to current schemes in place in Ireland where all renewable electricity generators within specific sectors get a fixed price for the electricity they export to the national grid. In designing the new RESS, the cost implications for people and businesses have been a high priority and I will ensure that the new scheme is designed in a cost efficient manner.

The analysis also assessed a range of renewable electricity penetration ambitions, informed by Eirgrid's 2017 Generation Capacity Statement, to measure their impact on cost and their likely technological composition.

A cornerstone of the new scheme will be the provision of pathways for increased community ownership and participation in and benefit from renewable electricity projects in line with the 2015 Energy White Paper commitments. Communities are effectively being designed into the fabric of the new scheme and a comprehensive assessment of policies and support measures to increase community ownership from renewable electricity projects has been undertaken. The most effective policies to increase community ownership and participation in renewable electricity projects have been examined within an Irish context. Examples include a mandatory requirement for all projects supported under RESS to offer ownership or investment opportunities to the local population, facilitating grid access for community-led renewable projects, ring fencing dedicated capacity for community-led projects and putting in place structures which will support community groups overcome legal, financial and technical barriers to renewable electricity generation. Furthermore, the Government recognizes that Solar PV has the potential to contribute to meeting Ireland's renewable energy and climate change objectives and could also provide a community dividend, thereby enhancing citizen participation in Ireland's energy future.

Micro generation, which typically involves an element of self-consumption and the selling of excess electricity to the grid, was also appraised as part of the RESS economic assessment. The analysis identified a number of challenges that may need to be addressed before a support scheme for micro generation can be developed. These include a reform of network charges, an assessment of the distributional impact of such a policy decision on the PSO (cost burden sharing), and development of a fair tariff for exported electricity taking the benefits of self-consumption into account. This approach is in line with experience from other EU member states who have attempted to introduce supports for micro generation.

I am committed to further exploring opportunities for supporting micro generation, as I believe that micro-generation could have an important role in Ireland's transition to a carbon free economy, in assisting Ireland meet its renewable electricity targets, and increasing social acceptance of and promoting renewable energy projects right across the country. My Department and SEAI hosted a workshop on micro generation last month and will develop a policy position on how best to support micro generation and micro generators in Ireland.

A public consultation on the emerging principles of the proposed RESS closed on 10 November. Over 1,250 submissions were received and these will now be reviewed and considered and will inform the final design of the RESS. Following on from this public consultation and review, a final proposal will be brought to Government for approval in early 2018, including the overall costs and technologies to be supported. Subsequent to a Government decision, a formal application for State Aid clearance from the European Commission will commence.

The Economic Report to underpin the design of the new scheme (assessing a range of renewable technologies at different scales and against a range of sensitivities e.g. renewable ambitions) and the Community Report, which identifies and assesses renewable electricity com-

munity policies and measures, were published as part of the public consultation process and are available on my Department's website at *www.dccae.ie*.

At this point no final decisions have been made as regards which technologies will be supported under the new RESS. I welcome and have noted with interest the falling costs of some renewable technologies over the past year, most notably Solar PV and offshore wind. Increasing renewable technology diversity is one of several policy objectives the new RESS is trying to deliver and falling technology costs may lead to increased diversity of the renewable portfolio over the medium term.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

57. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to make changes to the national mitigation plan to introduce binding targets in view of research presented by a centre (details supplied) at COP23 which shows that greenhouse gas emissions will rise in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49091/17]

88. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his attention has been drawn to the recent study by an organisation (details supplied) on the use of gas and other fossil fuels in the EU; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49090/17]

89. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his attention has been drawn to the publication of a warning letter by a group (details supplied) highlighting the lack of adequate steps being taken by governments to safeguard the biosphere and prevent catastrophic climate change; his plans to review the national mitigation plan in order to address these concerns; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49013/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 57, 88 and 89 together.

I understand that the research studies referred to are 'Natural Gas and Climate Change,' published by Manchester, Uppsala and Teesside Universities and the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research; and a report by the Global Carbon Project with input from the Norwegian Centre for International Climate Research (CICERO), which was published at an event organised to coincide with the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties COP23 in Bonn on 13 November 2017. I am also aware of the letter published by the Union of Concerned Scientists referred to in the Question from Deputy Daly. The common theme in all of the referenced documents is that more urgent action needs to be undertaken by the international community to ensure the goals set out in the Paris Agreement can be met.

The Government's commitment to reduce Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions over the longer term is set out in the 2014 National Policy Position on Climate Change and in the 2015 Energy White Paper. These include ambitious long-term commitments, respectively, to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 80% compared to 1990 levels and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the energy sector by between 80% and 95% by 2050. As energy use and greenhouse gas emissions are inextricably linked, meeting this objective will require a radical transformation of Ireland's energy system from being predominately fossil fuel based to a clean, low carbon energy system.

I published Ireland's first statutory National Mitigation Plan in July. This represents an important initial step to enable the transition in Ireland to a low carbon economy and society. The

Plan identifies over 70 mitigation measures and 106 related actions to address the immediate challenge to 2020 and to prepare for the EU targets that Ireland will take on for 2030. Although the Plan does not provide a complete roadmap to achieve the national transition objective to 2050, it begins 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.

The National Mitigation Plan will be subject to formal review at least once every five years and will also become a living document, accessible on my Department's website, which will be updated on an on-going basis as analysis, dialogue and technological innovation generate further cost-effective sectoral mitigation options. This continuous review process reflects the broad and evolving nature of the sectoral challenges outlined in the Plan, coupled with the continued development and deployment of emerging low carbon and cost effective technologies across different sectors of the economy. As this first Plan moves into the implementation phase, this process will enable it to be amended, refined and strengthened over time and assist in keeping Ireland on target to meet our obligations.

The Paris Agreement, which entered into force in November 2016, aims to hold the global average temperature increase to well below 2°C, and to pursue efforts to limit this to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. The Agreement is designed to meet this objective through Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submitted by all parties to the agreement. Ireland will contribute to the Paris Agreement via the Nationally Determined Contribution submitted by the EU on behalf of its Member States, and which commits the EU to a 40% reduction in EU-wide emissions by 2030 compared to 1990. This is based on EU-wide reductions in the emissions trading system (ETS) sector of 43%, and in the non-ETS sector of 30%. Ireland's contribution to this overall EU effort for the non-ETS sector will be set out in the EU Effort Sharing Regulation, which is currently under negotiation.

Question No. 58 answered with Question No. 56.

Wind Energy Generation

59. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the scale of offshore wind energy he expects could be developed in the Irish Sea by 2030; and the role his Department has in co-ordinating such developments. [49093/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan 2014 (OREDPA) sets out the Government's plan for the sustainable development of our abundant offshore renewable energy resources. The Strategic Environmental Assessment carried out for the OREDPA found that it would be environmentally sustainable for 4,500 MW of offshore wind and 1,500MW of wave and tidal devices to be developed in Irish waters in the period to 2030.

The OREDPA identifies policy actions and enablers that are key to the development of this sector. Progress on these is on-going under the aegis of the Offshore Renewable Energy Steering Group (ORESG). The ORESG, chaired by my Department, includes representation from all relevant Government Departments and agencies, including the Foreshore Licencing Unit of the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government which has responsibility for the licencing of offshore renewable energy developments. The ORESG 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.

Under the oversight of the ORESG, a mid-term review of the OREDP is currently under way. A draft review document has been published on my Department's website www.dccae.gov.ie for public consultation. This consultation will close on 19 December 2017. The Environment Working Group has developed guidance for industry on the preparation of Environmental Impact Statements and Natura Impact Statements, which is publicly available. Further guidance for industry on environmental monitoring requirements for offshore renewable energy projects is nearing finalisation.

My Department is developing a new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) which will be designed to assist Ireland in meeting its renewable energy contribution to EU-wide targets out to 2030. The design of the new scheme has included an extensive independent economic appraisal. This appraisal compared the cost of supporting a range of commercial renewable technologies, including ocean technologies, to ensure that the new scheme delivers value for money for energy users whilst also delivering on the energy pillars of sustainability and security of supply. All submissions received following a recent public consultation on the emerging principles of the proposed new RESS will be considered in informing the final design of the RESS. While at this point no final decisions have been made as regards which technologies that will be supported, I welcome and have noted with interest the falling costs of renewable technologies over the past year, such as offshore wind. Increasing renewable technology diversity is one of several policy objectives the new RESS is trying to deliver and falling technology costs may lead to increased diversity of the renewable portfolio over the medium term.

Fisheries Protection

60. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if funding has been allocated in budget 2018 for an eel fisheries hardship scheme; and if so, if a proposed scheme has been devised. [49047/17]

74. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when funding can be drawn down for an eel fisheries hardship fund; the way in which funds will be allocated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49048/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): I propose to take Questions Nos. 60 and 74 together.

Ireland's Eel Management Plan (EMP) under EU Regulation 1100/2007, which included a closure of commercial fishing, was approved by the European Commission in 2009. Ireland's EMP and its conservation measures were reviewed in 2012 and in 2015, in accordance with the EU Regulation. Both reviews involved an examination of the latest scientific data and the conservation measures, the results of which were the subject of public consultations.

I recognise fully the difficulty facing eel fishermen and, notwithstanding that fact that there is no property right attaching to public eel licences, the possibility of implementing support measures for eel fishermen is a matter under consideration.

Given that Ireland's Eel Management Plan (EMP), and the conservation measures it contains, was originally approved by the European Commission under EU Regulation 1100/2007, consultation and discussion with the European Commission would be a key element in the consideration of any potential financial support measure.

Both I and the Minister have also discussed the issue of eels with ESB Fisheries who are fishery owners in this context.

Question No. 61 answered with Question No. 53.

Broadband Service Provision

62. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the Government's commitment to provide high speed broadband to every house and business in County Donegal; the deadline for same; the number of homes and businesses which have access to high speed broadband; the number of additional homes and businesses which will receive access to high speed broadband in 2017; the number which will receive access in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48977/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) will ensure high speed broadband access (minimum 30 megabits per second) to all premises in Ireland, regardless of location. The NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector so that to date approximately 1.5m or 65% of the 2.3m premises in Ireland can get access to high speed broadband and this footprint is expanding.

In April of this year, I published an updated High Speed Broadband Map which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. The map shows the areas targeted by commercial operators to provide high speed broadband services and the areas that will be included in the State Intervention Area under the NBP. The Map is searchable by Eircode/address and is colour coded:

- AMBER areas represent the target areas for the proposed State led Intervention under the NBP and are the subject of an ongoing procurement process.

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

- Light BLUE areas represent eir's commercial rural deployment plans to rollout high speed broadband to 300,000 premises by the end of 2018 as part of an Agreement signed with me in April.

There are over 101,000 premises in County Donegal, around 68,000 of which fall within a BLUE area of the Map and will be covered by commercial operators. Approximately 12,000 of these 68,000 premises form part of eir's planned rural deployment to deliver high speed broadband to 300,000 premises throughout Ireland between now and the end of 2018. Figures provided to my Department show that, in Q3 2017, eir's rural deployment passed approximately 5,000 premises in County Donegal. The remaining 33,000 premises in County Donegal fall within an AMBER area and will be part of the State led Intervention under the National Broadband Plan.

To improve both mobile phone and broadband services in rural Ireland in advance of the rollout of the high speed broadband network to be built in the State intervention area, I established, in July 2016, a Taskforce to identify solutions which can be implemented in the short, medium and long term to alleviate mobile phone and broadband coverage deficits, to identify priority areas for rollout and investigate how better services could be provided to consumers. These solutions will enhance the existing services prior to the full build and rollout of the network planned under the NBP State led intervention.

Under this Taskforce, engagement between telecommunications operators and local authorities through the Broadband Officers is continuing to strengthen. These Broadband Officers are acting as single points of contact in local authorities for their communities. The appointment of

these officers is already reaping rewards in terms of ensuring a much greater degree of consistency in engagements with operators and clearing obstacles to developing infrastructure. There is a link to a list of these local Broadband Officers on my Department's website.

National Mitigation Plan Implementation

63. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the steps being taken to effect the removal of subsidies on peat extraction in view of the State's emissions reduction targets and the recent vote of the Citizen's Assembly whereby 97% of assembly members voted in favour of the removal of Government subsidies on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49052/17]

65. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to incorporate the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly into the national mitigation plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49089/17]

81. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the way in which his Department will progress the recommendations from the Citizens' Assembly on the subject of climate change; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48978/17]

84. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the degree to which he expects existing provisions and future proposals to narrow the gap between what is required and what is already proposed in regard to the report from the Citizens' Assembly; if he is in a position to quantify the precise extent of the requirements that need to be met over the specified period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49079/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 63, 65, 81 and 84 together.

I refer to the reply to Question No. 49 on today's Order Paper.

The contributions by the members of the Citizens' Assembly to this critical and urgent issue, which included consideration of a range of detailed presentations by technical experts in meetings over the course of two full weekends, have been welcomed by me and by the Government as a whole.

I understand that the Citizens' Assembly must now communicate its report and recommendations to the Houses of the Oireachtas for further consideration. The topics considered by the Citizens' Assembly as part of its module on climate change and the recommendations arising from this module address a range of Government policies and activities. The Government will study the Assembly's report and recommendations systematically and comprehensively when it receives them and will provide its response to each recommendation of the Assembly in the Houses of the Oireachtas in due course.

In general terms, I was pleased to note that many of the recommendations adopted by the members of the Assembly, as reported on during the second weekend of this module, are already being addressed in the National Mitigation Plan and in the implementation of the Energy White Paper, but I also acknowledge that other recommendations will need further consideration by Government.

Upon publishing the National Mitigation Plan in July of this year, the Government explicitly

recognised that this first statutory Plan does not provide a complete roadmap to achieve either Ireland's proposed 2030 target or the 2050 transition objective. It begins the process of development of medium to long term mitigation choices for the next and future decades, without underestimating the scale of what this entails. Analysis underpinning the Plan suggests the bringing forward of additional measures with a cumulative greenhouse gas mitigation capacity of 89 Mt CO₂eq over the period 2021 to 2030. This will require significant societal transformation and, more immediately, very substantial investment by both the public and private sectors, as well as a broad range of non-financial policy tools including regulations, standards, education initiatives and targeted information campaigns. Work is ongoing on the analysis and costing of various suites of measures that could meet the 2030 target as cost-effectively as possible, and the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly will feed into this work.

While the Government, in its response to the Assembly's report, will also address the specific recommendation to end all subsidies for peat extraction on a phased basis over the next 5 years, it should be noted that the PSO support for Bord na Móna's Edenderry peat-fired power station expired in December 2015. The Edenderry power station is now in receipt of support for biomass co-firing via the Renewable Energy Feed-in Tariff 3 (REFIT 3) support scheme for up to 30% of the size of the plant. In addition, Bord na Móna has stated that it intends to cease harvesting peat for electricity generation by 2030. The company has committed to replace large-scale peat production with alternative energy sources. This will contribute significantly to the decarbonisation of electricity and is in keeping with the aims of the Energy White Paper. On top of this, the PSO support for the ESB's West Offaly and Lough Ree peat power stations expire in 2019. These two peat plants may, like Edenderry, also move to co-firing with biomass, and are eligible for support under REFIT 3.

In this context, the National Mitigation Plan also recognises that fully realising the economic opportunities in the low carbon economy is key to ensuring a just transition, in particular for the groups and communities most affected by the scale of the transformation required such as those involved in peat extraction. Investment in the low carbon economy has the potential to create decent work and quality jobs to support local communities and workers in regions most strongly impacted by the ongoing transformation to a decarbonised society. In support of existing Government policy, as set out in the Regional Action Plans for Jobs, and the significant roles played by the IDA, Enterprise Ireland and Local Enterprise Agencies in creating and sustaining employment and supporting enterprise development, a report will be prepared on the spatial or geographical economic and employment implications of the transition. The National Dialogue on Climate Action will also afford citizens and communities the opportunity to actively participate and engage in this important area of Government policy.

Question No. 64 answered with Question No. 56.

Question No. 65 answered with Question No. 63.

Bord na Móna

66. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his Department must approve the proposed purchase of a wood pellet plant in the US state of Georgia by Bord na Móna (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49092/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Pursuant to section 2 of the Turf Development Act 1983, my approval as Minister, given with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, is required for Bord

na Móna to enter into capital commitments such as the proposed purchase referenced by the Deputy. At this juncture, there has been no formal request for Ministerial consent in respect of this project.

National Mitigation Plan

67. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if a discussion in Dáil Éireann on the national mitigation plan will be arranged; and the way in which this plan will help the State meet its commitments under the Paris treaty. [49011/17]

468. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will facilitate a Dáil Éireann discussion on the national mitigation plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49098/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 67 and 468 together.

The publication of Ireland's first statutory National Mitigation Plan in July 2017 was an important initial step to enable Ireland's transition to a low carbon economy and society. The Plan provides a framework to guide investment decisions by Government in domestic measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and sets out what Ireland is currently doing, and is planning to do, to further the national transition objective as set out in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act, 2015. Although this first Plan does not provide a complete roadmap to achieve the national transition objective to 2050, it begins 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.

The governance and reporting arrangements that underpin the National Mitigation Plan will be critical to successfully delivering on the full range of over 70 measures and 106 related actions in the Plan.

Under section 14 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment is required to present an Annual Transition Statement to each House of the Oireachtas by 10 December each year. The Annual Transition Statement for 2017 will have two main elements. The "Annual National Transition Statement" will set out an overview of both mitigation and adaptation policy measures adopted; a record of emissions of greenhouse gases set out in the most recent national greenhouse gas emissions inventory and a projection of future greenhouse gas emissions; and a report on compliance by the State with any existing or future obligations under EU law or international agreements referred to in Section 2 of the Act.

In addition, each sectoral Minister designated under the 2015 Act for the purposes of the National Mitigation Plan (Communications, Climate Action and Environment; Housing, Planning and Local Government; Transport, Tourism and Sport; and Agriculture, Food and the Marine) is required to include an "Annual Sectoral Mitigation Transition Statement." Each Sectoral Mitigation Transition Statement must set out a record of the sectoral mitigation measures adopted by the Minister of the Government presenting the annual sectoral mitigation transition statement concerned, and an assessment of the effectiveness of the sectoral mitigation measures in the achievement of their purpose.

Starting in 2018, it is my intention to produce an annual progress report on the implementation of the National Mitigation Plan. This annual progress report will incorporate the key

provisions of the Annual Transition Statement and will also record progress in relation to each of the actions set out in the National Mitigation Plan. In order to align the Annual Transition Statement requirements under the 2015 legislation with the National Mitigation Plan annual progress report, I propose to incorporate these into a single document from 2018 onwards. This annual reporting process will facilitate debate on the implementation of the National Mitigation Plan in both Houses of the Oireachtas in each subsequent year.

Ireland will contribute to the Paris Agreement via the Nationally Determined Contribution submitted by the EU on behalf of its Member States, and which commits the EU to a 40% reduction in EU-wide emissions by 2030 compared to 1990. This is based on EU-wide reductions in the emissions trading system (ETS) sector of 43%, and in the non-ETS sector of 30%. Ireland's contribution to this overall EU effort for the non-ETS sector will be set out the EU Effort Sharing Regulation, which is currently under negotiation.

Climate Change Policy

68. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on the scientific consensus on the need to leave 80% of proven reserves of fossil fuel in the ground; the way in which the continued issuing of licences by his Department can help achieve this climate change goal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49012/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): The Paris Agreement, which entered into force in November 2016, aims to limit global average temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, with an ambition of 1.5 degrees Celsius. The Agreement is designed to meet this objective through Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submitted by all parties to the agreement. In this regard, the European Union submitted an NDC committing 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 Emission Trading System (ETS) and 30% in the non-ETS sector compared with 2005 levels.

Ireland will contribute to the Paris Agreement via the NDC tabled by the EU on behalf of its Member States. The specific details of Ireland's contribution are currently being negotiated between the EU and its Member States.

The Energy White Paper "Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030" sets out a vision and framework to guide Irish energy policy and the actions that Government intends to take in the energy sector from now up to 2030, aimed at transforming Ireland's fossil-fuel based energy sector into a clean, low carbon system by 2050. This ambitious vision for Ireland's energy system envisages a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from that sector by 80-95% relative to 1990 levels by 2050. The White Paper identifies the long-term strategic importance of diversifying Ireland's energy generation portfolio and largely decarbonising the energy sector by 2050.

Ireland's transition to a low carbon energy future will involve progressively moving to lower emissions fuels, e.g. moving initially from peat and coal to natural gas, and ultimately towards an even greater reliance on renewable energy. In that regard, the Government has introduced a range of policy measures and schemes to incentivise the use of renewable energy and deliver energy efficiency. In 2015, over 25% of Ireland's electricity was generated from renewable energy sources.

The White Paper also recognises that oil and natural gas will remain significant elements of Ireland's energy supply in that transition period.

Ireland sources all its oil needs from abroad. In addition, Ireland currently sources its gas supply from the Kinsale gasfields, the Corrib gasfield and the gas pipeline from Moffat in Scotland. Corrib and Kinsale are not in a position to meet all of Ireland's annual gas demand and so Ireland will continue to rely on gas via Great Britain for the foreseeable future. The Kinsale fields are expected to cease production by 2021 while Corrib production is projected to decrease to 50 per cent of its initial levels by 2025.

Taking this into account, exploration in Ireland's offshore has the potential to deliver benefits to Irish society and the economy, particularly in terms of enhanced security of supply and reduced fossil fuel imports, as we transition to a low carbon future. In that regard, I recently made a suggestion to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment that Ireland's policy on energy security deserves a full debate by the committee in the context of our policy framework for energy transition, energy efficiency, renewable energy and offshore exploration.

Renewable Heat Incentive

69. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if there will be the creation of a renewable heat incentive under proposals in budget 2018; the long-term role of this incentive; when it will be established; and if it will be directed toward commercial, community projects or domestic use. [49009/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The proposed Renewable Heat Incentive addresses key objectives set out in the National Mitigation Plan, the Energy White Paper and the Programme for Government. The scheme has a significant role to play in contributing to meeting our renewable energy and emission reduction targets for 2020 and beyond. In addition, the scheme will open up new opportunities for the domestic bioenergy sector.

The development of the scheme has involved detailed economic analysis, extensive engagement with industry and two public consultations. The scheme is designed to stimulate and support the replacement of fossil fuel heating systems with renewable energy by commercial, industrial and agricultural heat users in the non-emissions trading sector (non-ETS).

In Budget 2018, €7m was allocated for the proposed Renewable Heat Incentive which will fund the first phase of the RHI scheme, which I expect to commence in 2018 subject to Government and State Aid approval.

Exploration Licences Applications

70. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will report on all applications for exploration licences that have been received by his Department; the indications he has of upcoming applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49101/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): A report is compiled and laid before the Oireachtas by my Department every six months, which sets out details of State Mining Leases, State Mining Licences

and Prospecting Licences and the total amount of all moneys collected under or by virtue of any such Lease or Licence or otherwise in connection with the minerals. These reports are available in the Library of the Houses of the Oireachtas and on my Department's website at www.dccae.gov.ie.

There are currently 611 active Prospecting Licences (PLs) in Ireland.

In 2017, 56 PL applications have been received to date. It is not possible to indicate the number of applications that may be received in the future as this is dependent on a number of variables, including the market sentiment and the areas available for licensing.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

71. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the cost-benefit analysis that has been conducted with regard to the cost to the State of not meeting its emissions reduction targets as against the cost of achieving same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49053/17]

77. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the precise reduction or derogation that his Department is seeking on the 2020 targets. [49006/17]

90. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the way in which Ireland will address poor performance in comparison with other EU states on reaching climate change targets; and the way in which he plans to address this going forward. [49084/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 71, 77 and 90 together.

The 2009 Effort Sharing Decision 406/2009/EC established binding annual greenhouse gas emissions targets for EU Member States for the period 2013 to 2020. 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 latest projections of greenhouse gas emissions by the Environmental Protection Agency indicate that emissions from those sectors of the economy covered by Ireland's 2020 targets could be between 4% and 6% below 2005 levels by 2020. 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 not consistent with what would be achievable on an EU wide cost-effective basis. A European Commission Communication published on 7 November 2017, Two years after Paris – Progress towards meeting the EU's climate commitments (COM (2017) 646), indicated that in addition to Ireland, Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Luxembourg and Malta are also expected to miss their 2020 EU targets on the basis of current projections.

Ireland's 2020 target is a binding obligation under EU law and Ireland is not seeking a derogation from it. 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. Using banked allowances from the period to 2015, Ireland is projected to comply with its emissions reduction targets in each of the years 2013 to 2018. However, our cumulative emissions are expected to exceed targets for 2019 and 2020, which may result in a requirement to purchase additional allowances. While this purchasing requirement is not, at this stage, expected to be significant, further analysis will be required to quantify the likely costs involved, in light of the final amount and price of allowances required.

Ireland's first statutory National Mitigation Plan, which I published in July of this year, provides a framework to guide investment decisions by Government in domestic measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Plan sets out what Ireland is currently doing, and is planning to do, to further the national transition objective as set out in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act, 2015. Although this first Plan will not provide a complete roadmap to achieve the national transition objective to 2050, it begins 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.

Delivery of the measures in the National Mitigation Plan will, in many cases, require significant investment. However, decisions on the funding of particular measures will be a matter for Government consideration in the context of expenditure planning in the Estimates and Budgetary processes, and in the forthcoming National Investment Plan for 2018-2027. Individual investment or expenditure decisions will also, in the normal course, be subject to appropriate appraisal in line with the Government's Public Spending Code.

Where relevant, the National Mitigation Plan already includes information on the expected Exchequer cost of implementing individual measures, either in the context of direct expenditure or in relation to tax foregone. The actual expenditure on a given measure will depend on progress in implementation of each measure, including its possible expansion as a result of additional funding, for which the relevant sectoral Minister retains direct responsibility.

In addition to measures in place, the National Mitigation Plan includes measures under consideration by Government. The potential costs for many of these measures have yet to be quantified and will depend on the basis on which a given measure is adopted for implementation.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

72. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the roll-out of the national broadband plan to properties in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49039/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): In April I published an updated High Speed Broadband Map which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. This map shows the areas targeted by commercial operators to provide high speed broadband services and the areas that will be included in the State Intervention Area under the National Broadband Plan (NBP).

The Map is searchable by Eircode/address and is colour coded:

- The AMBER areas represent the target areas for the proposed State led Intervention under the NBP and are the subject of an ongoing procurement process.

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

- The Light BLUE areas represent eir's commercial rural deployment plans to rollout high speed broadband to 300,000 premises by the end of 2018 as part of an Agreement signed with me in April.

There are over 90,000 premises in County Kildare, around 78,000 of which fall within a BLUE area of the Map and will be covered by commercial operators. Approximately 4,000 of these 78,000 premises form part of eir's planned rural deployment to deliver rural high speed broadband to 300,000 premises throughout Ireland between now and the end of 2018. Quarter three figures provided to my Department show that, in Q3 2017, eir's rural deployment passed approximately 1,700 premises in County Kildare. There are over 13,000 premises which fall within the AMBER area of the Map and which fall to be covered by the State Intervention area in County Kildare.

Information on eir's planned rural deployment is available from eir at <http://fibrerollout.ie/eircode-lookup/>. Citizens can access this website to determine the connectivity availability status for their premises using their eircode. The website also provides a list of retail service providers who offer services using high speed fibre network in the area.

My Department is in a formal procurement process to select a company or companies who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network in the State intervention area. That procurement process is now at an advanced stage. "Detailed Solutions" submitted by two bidders on 26th September are being evaluated by the NBP specialist team. The next stage in the procurement process is the receipt of final tenders followed by the appointment of a preferred bidder(s) and contract signature.

As part of this procurement process, the bidder(s) will be required to submit their strategies, including timescales, for the network build and rollout. Delivering connectivity to the 542,000 premises that fall within the State led intervention under the NBP remains a Government priority and my Department will engage with the winning bidder(s) to ensure the most efficient deployment as part of the contract.

To improve both mobile and broadband services in rural Ireland in advance of the rollout of the high speed broadband network to be built in the State intervention area I established, in July 2016, a Taskforce to identify solutions which can be implemented in the short, medium and long term to alleviate mobile phone and broadband coverage deficits, to identify priority areas for rollout and investigate how better services could be provided to consumers. These solutions will enhance the existing services prior to the full build and rollout of the network planned under the NBP State led intervention.

Under this Taskforce, engagement between telecommunications operators and local authorities through the Broadband Officers is continuing to strengthen. These Broadband Officers are acting as single points of contact in local authorities for their communities. The appointment of these officers is already reaping rewards in terms of ensuring a much greater degree of consistency in engagements with operators and clearing obstacles to developing infrastructure. There is a link to a list of these local Broadband Officers on my Department's website.

Energy Prices

73. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has the power to issue a policy direction to the regulator under the Electricity Regulation Act 1999; and if he has considered the use of this power to address rising electricity prices here. [49008/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Section 10A of the Electricity Regulation Act 1999, as amended, sets out the procedure under which the Minister may give “general policy directions”. The legislation sets out details on the tasks and inter-alia timelines, consultation requirements with the independent regulator and Oireachtas, and identifies restrictions on the areas where such directions may not be given.

The electricity and gas markets in Ireland are commercial, liberalised, and competitive, and operate within a European regulatory regime that effectively seeks to end the regulation of electricity and gas retail markets of member states. The position of successive Governments has been that competitive energy markets result in greater choice for consumers and businesses, in terms of suppliers, products and prices. Competition exerts downward pressure on suppliers’ prices.

Responsibility for the regulation of the gas or electricity markets is a matter for the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU), which carries out statutory market monitoring functions to ensure that competition continues to develop, and that customers benefit from competition. Two reports published by the regulator this year conclude that Irish energy markets are competitive, with the most recently available EU comparable electricity and gas supplier switching data also pointing towards a competitive Irish market. The CRU is an independent statutory body, and solely accountable to a committee of the Oireachtas for the performance of its functions.

The regulation of retail market prices for electricity in Ireland ended in 2011 and for gas prices in 2014. The Government has no statutory function in the monitoring or setting of electricity prices, with the main thrust of Government policy on energy costs focused on the competitive market and supports for energy efficiency. Government policy, consistent with EU Legislation has supported competition to drive down prices, and data from approved price comparison sites (www.bonkers.ie and www.switcher.ie) shows that consumers can make significant savings by switching energy suppliers. Accordingly, attempting to revert to price controls is not considered an appropriate option.

Question No. 74 answered with Question No. 60.

Waste Management Regulations

75. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if under the current waste management framework or otherwise consideration has been given to mandating that the waste management companies add a collection for glass bottle waste to their operations, similar to the way in which compostable waste, recyclable waste and general waste are currently separated and collected from the home; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49016/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Under waste management legislation, collectors of household waste are required to provide receptacles for the collection of residual, recyclable and food waste, in line with the requirements of their waste collection permit issued under the Waste Management Act 1996 (No. 10 of 1996), the Waste Management (Collection Permit) Regulations 2007, (S.I. 820 of 2007) as amended, and the European Union (Household Food Waste and Bio-waste) Regulations 2015. There is no obligation currently on collectors of household waste under waste management legislation to provide a collection service for glass or glass bottles.

Glass is a packaging material under the EU Packaging Directive. This Directive sets re-

covery and recycling targets for all packaging material. The target for glass is 60% by weight. Ireland has a very successful producer responsibility scheme in place, operated by Repak, for dealing with packaging. The scheme has consistently exceeded the targets set by the Directive with 88% of glass reported as recycled in the most recent statistics produced by the Environmental Protection Agency.

My Department has also provided grant assistance of over €200 million to local authorities since the year 2000 towards the development of waste recycling facilities and there are over 2,200 bring banks and 100 recycling centres across the country, which support high recycling levels for glass.

Waste Disposal Charges

76. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the arrangements agreed with the waste management companies on the introduction of the pay-by-weight schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49102/17]

469. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the arrangements agreed with the waste management companies on the introduction of the pay-by-weight schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49099/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 76 and 469 together.

In line with the commitments set out in A Resource Opportunity - Waste Management Policy in Ireland published in 2012 and in the interest of encouraging further waste prevention and greater recycling, flat-rate fees for kerbside household waste collection are being phased out over the period autumn 2017 to autumn 2018, as customers contracts come up for renewal. The necessary regulatory steps have been put in place to give effect to this measure. It is worth noting that this measure is not 'new' for about half of kerbside household waste customers, who are already on an incentivised usage pricing plan, i.e. a plan which contains a per lift or weight related fee. As already announced, mandatory per kilogramme 'pay by weight' charging is not being introduced.

This year has seen the progression of a number of other household waste collection initiatives, including:

- the roll-out of food/organic "brown" bins to all communities with a population in excess of 500 people;

- the roll-out of information and awareness campaigns by my Department and the Regional Waste Management Planning Offices, which concentrate on the use of the "brown" bin; improving and increasing recycling; driving waste prevention; the correct use of the kerbside collection system; and,

- the establishment of a Household Waste Collection Price Monitoring Group, which is tracking rates across the country as flat rate fees are being phased out.

Question No. 77 answered with Question No. 71.

Question No. 78 answered with Question No. 56.

Post Office Network

79. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the measures he plans to implement to support the post office network; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49038/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I refer to the reply to Priority Questions Nos. 37 and 40 on today's order paper.

Energy Efficiency

80. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the reason his Department continues to primarily fund shallow retrofits for homes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49104/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Ireland has a target to improve energy efficiency by 20% by 2020. How this is to be achieved is set out in the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan, the latest version of which was published earlier this year and is available on my Department's website. The achievement of this target requires a combination of shallow and deep retrofits, maximising the varying levels of capacity among householders to engage in energy efficiency.

For example, simple, relatively inexpensive grant aided measures, such as attic and cavity wall insulation, can deliver a significant amount of energy savings at low cost, thus delivering value for money for the taxpayer, a short payback for the householders who make the investment and increased awareness of energy efficiency among citizens. Focusing on these low cost, high impact measures first is important. Research by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) clearly demonstrates that people who have a positive experience in undertaking a small energy efficiency upgrade are more likely to engage in further energy efficiency measures in the future.

However, shallow interventions must be complemented by deeper interventions as these will be necessary to deliver the energy savings that are required to meet the Government's long term climate ambitions to reduce carbon emissions in the Built Environment. This is why I have established two new energy efficiency schemes to deliver deep retrofits. This year SEAI initiated the Deep Retrofit Pilot, which offers 50% grant funding for householders to bring the energy efficiency of their home up to an A3 on the Building Energy Rating (BER) scale. That funding increases to 95% for the homes of those who are living in energy poverty. Commenced in 2016 and delivered by SEAI and the HSE, the Warmth and Wellbeing scheme makes deeper energy efficiency upgrades available free of charge, to people in, or at risk of, energy poverty who are also suffering from a chronic respiratory condition. The research component of this scheme will evaluate the impact improved energy efficiency can have on a person's health and wellbeing. Over the last 2 years deeper measures have also been progressively rolled out in the Better Energy Communities and Warmer Homes schemes.

The aim of all of this innovative activity is to build demand for deeper measures and market capacity to deliver them. These initiatives will gather the evidence necessary to determine how best Government can motivate people to engage in deep retrofits on a much wider basis, build the necessary skills and the supply chain in the construction industry, and provide tangible demonstrations throughout the country on the most suitable deep retrofit options for various types of home. In this context the newly established SEAI Behavioural Economics Unit has a critical role to play.

Question No. 81 answered with Question No. 63.

Offshore Exploration

82. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Question No. 195 of 8 November 2017, if the environmental impact assessment carried out prior to his approval in July 2017 for offshore drilling at the Druid Drombeg exploration field addressed the potential impact that the combustion of the fossil fuels stored at the site could have on the environment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49082/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): On 11 July 2017, approval to drill an exploratory well within Block 53/6-A in the southern Porcupine Basin off the south west coast of Ireland was granted to Providence Resources Plc.

Prior to granting approval, the application to drill was considered against a range of technical, environmental, and financial requirements. In addition, the company had to obtain a safety permit from the Commission for Regulation of Utilities and approval by the Irish Coast Guard for the company's Oil Spill Contingency Plan and Well Emergency Response Plan.

In respect of environmental requirements, the company was required to submit an Environmental Risk Assessment (EIA Screening) and a Natura Impact Screening (Appropriate Assessment) Statement in support of its application to commence drilling activities and these were considered in the context of the likely effects on the environment of the proposed drilling. A review was undertaken for my Department by Bec Consultants, an independent consultancy appointed for their expertise in ecological and conservation marine biology to, inter alia:- examine the submitted Environmental Statement and assess whether or not it met the scope and quality of requirements set out or implied by the specific European and Irish Environmental Impact Assessment legislation and guidelines;- appraise the Environmental Statement, highlighting any deficiencies in respect of the statutory requirements of the Statement and detailing the outcome and resolution of any such deficiencies; and- ensure that the requirements of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011, for an assessment to be carried out on any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a protected site or species were met by the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report.

In addition, the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, was requested to provide its observations in terms of Natura 2000 sites, where relevant, and Annex IV species (Cetaceans) in accordance with the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

The application did not propose the storage of fossil fuels at the site of the exploratory well, nor the development of any hydrocarbons found, and as such the Environmental Risk Assessment and Natura Impact Screening Statement did not consider the potential impact of same on the environment.

Documentation associated with the grant of approval to drill has been posted on my Department's website.

Energy Efficiency

83. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the way in which the funding of the energy efficiency programmes was spent between residential, commercial and public sector buildings since 2011 in view of the fact that the expenditure allocations for 2018 to 2020 document allows €35 million to expand the energy efficiency programmes; his plans to change the breakdown in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49086/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Funded by my Department, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) operates a wide range of energy efficiency programmes across the residential, commercial and public sectors. From 2011 to 2017 a total of €452m has been allocated to energy efficiency. Between 2011 and 2015 all sectors were funded through the National Retrofit Programme, (which became the Better Energy Programme), with the bulk of the spend on the residential sector - details are set out in Table 1. Since 2012 the Better Energy Communities scheme has made funding available for partnership across the residential, commercial and public sectors.

Table 1 - Total allocation for National Retrofit/Better Energy Programmes for year 2011-2015

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total €m
Capital Allocation €m	100.4	68.0	45.3	54.6	47.2	315.5

From 2016 dedicated capital programmes for the commercial and public sectors have been increasing as shown set out in Table 2.

Table 2 - Allocations for Residential, Commercial and Public sectors - 2016-2018: Capital Allocation - €m

Year	Total Allocation	Residential	Public and Commercial Sectors
2016	€61	€58	€3
2017	€75.8	€67.3	€8.5
2018	€107	€84	€23

In the residential sector the focus is on home retrofit measures such as upgrading of heating systems, insulation etc. In the commercial sector efforts have focused on providing advice and support to businesses and achievement of energy management certification. In addition, I have established a number of schemes to pilot new approaches and develop an evidence base for future policies and measures. These include the Warmth and Wellbeing scheme and the Deep Renovation Pilot, and SME pilot schemes - the Dairy Pilot scheme and the Smart Lighting Scheme. Details of measures are provided in the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan, and in the National Mitigation Plan published by my Department this year and available on my Department's website.

In addition, I secured €10m in current funding, which is critical to support the necessary engagement with energy users to motivate them to act on energy efficiency. Recognising the importance of Energy Efficiency to national energy and climate action objectives, my Department continues to significantly expand energy efficiency programmes. In Budget 2018 I secured €107m in capital funding for energy efficiency schemes in 2018. Of this €84m will support residential energy efficiency programmes, €9m will support projects in the public sector and the €14m will support the commercial and industrial sector – including small businesses and farms.

Further information on allocations for next year can be made available when the details have been decided between my Department and SEAI and when the Revised Estimates Volume for Public Services is published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Question No. 84 answered with Question No. 63.

Inland Fisheries

85. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans for the 2018 fishing season on the river Slaney; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48679/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): I gave statutory notice on 15 November 2017 of the draft Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Scheme Regulations, 2017 to provide for the management of the wild salmon and sea trout fishery by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) from 1 January 2018.

A copy of the draft regulations, which are made every year, is available on my Department's website, www.dccae.gov.ie/natural, and is open for public inspection at the offices of the Inland Fisheries Division of the Department in Cavan and also at the offices of Inland Fisheries Ireland around the country. Observations on the draft regulations may be made at any time during the period of 30 days concluding on 14 December, 2017.

The draft regulations provide for an individual management regime for each of Ireland's 147 salmon rivers, river sections and estuaries based on the conservation imperative for their individual genetic stock. The regulations are based on management advice received from IFI. This advice from IFI is supported by assessments carried out by the independent Standing Scientific Committee for Salmon comprising scientists from a range of organisations.

With regard to the river Slaney it is proposed that the river, based on assessment of the extent to which it is meeting its conservation limit, will be open to angling on a catch and release basis from 12 May 2018.

Bord na Móna

86. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he received reports on the developments of the horticultural sector of Bord na Móna. [49007/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Bord na Móna is a commercial State company operating under the Turf Development Acts 1946 to 1998. As shareholder, I regularly receive reports on developments across all of Bord na Móna's various business areas, including the horticultural business unit.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

87. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on whether rural communities and rural houses are being pitted against each other as a result of the way in which sites were selected for broadband upgrade; and his further views on the cherry picking nature of a company (details supplied) in selecting the best

sites. [49081/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) will ensure high speed broadband access (minimum 30 megabits per second) to all premises in Ireland, regardless of location. The NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector so that to date approximately 1.5m or 65% of the 2.3m premises in Ireland can get access to high speed broadband and this footprint is expanding.

As the Deputy may be aware, in April, I signed a Commitment Agreement with eir in relation to its plans to provide high speed broadband to an additional 300,000 premises, predominantly in rural areas on a commercial basis. A copy of the Commitment Agreement is available on my Department's website www.dccae.gov.ie.

Decisions by private telecommunication operators, relating to the rollout and siting of infrastructure to provide high speed broadband services, are undertaken on a commercial basis by competing service providers operating in a liberalised market. The decision as to what areas and premises are served as part of their rural deployment is a commercial decision for eir as a private operator and not one in which I have a statutory role.

In order to ensure all premises regardless of location have access to high speed broadband, my Department is engaged in an on-going procurement process to select a company or companies who will roll-out the new high speed broadband network for the State led intervention. The 542,000 premises in the State led intervention, the majority in rural locations, are categorised as AMBER in the High Speed Broadband Map which can be accessed via www.broadband.gov.ie.

A significant milestone in the procurement process was reached in September with the submission of Detailed Solutions by two bidders. These Detailed Solutions are currently being evaluated by the NBP specialist team. This is the last stage of the procurement process before receipt of final tenders and progression to the appointment of a preferred bidder(s).

Delivering connectivity to the 542,000 premises that fall within the State led intervention under the NBP remains a Government priority and my Department will engage with the winning bidder(s) to ensure the most efficient deployment as part of the contract.

Questions Nos. 88 and 89 answered with Question No. 57.

Question No. 90 answered with Question No. 71.

Seanad Reform

91. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his Department's statement of strategy on implementing in full the Manning report on Seanad Éireann; and the status of same. [48744/17]

The Taoiseach: In the Programme for a Partnership Government, the Government stated its commitment to pursuing the implementation of the Report of the Working Group on Seanad Reform (the Manning Report) and I intend to honour this commitment.

One of the recommendations of the Report, published in 2015, was the establishment of an Implementation Group to oversee implementation of the reforms contained in the Report.

As my predecessor previously said in the House, he agreed with a suggestion made some time ago by Deputy Martin that this Group should be based in the Oireachtas and should com-

prise members of the Dáil and Seanad from all parties and groups, with access to independent expert advice as required. He wrote to Party Leaders in September last year seeking their agreement to this approach and their intention to participate.

I would like to progress this and have asked Minister of State John Paul Phelan to engage with the Parties.

Strategic Communications Unit

92. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the detail the director and staff in the strategic communications unit sought and were provided with when they consulted with their counterparts in the UK and the Netherlands regarding strategic communications; the format the consultation took; and if meetings took place. [48745/17]

93. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on the six procurement contracts issued in respect of the strategic communications unit; and the status of same. [48746/17]

94. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the Cabinet committee under which the remit of the strategic communication unit falls. [48747/17]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 92 to 94, inclusive, together.

The Director and a member of staff in the Strategic Communications met with their counterparts in the UK and the Netherlands to learn at first hand how both countries went about the streamlining and optimisation of government communications, from the perspective of the citizen. Both countries have adopted a whole of Government approach to communications with the citizen placed at the centre.

Their communication systems aim to simplify how government information is communicated to the public so that it is delivered in a coherent, accessible and cost effective manner.

The procurement contracts issued in my Department are as follows:

TENDER
Research and Insight
Pitch Specialist
Creative Services
Digital Creative Services
Design Services
Media Buying

Standstill letters or letters awarding contract issued in 3 cases (Research/Pitch/Creative) - Decision made not to award a contract in the mini competition for design services. Evaluation being concluded in remaining two competitions.

Procurement for these contracts is taking place centrally for major cross government campaigns, which improves efficiency. All contracts are being procured in accordance with standard public procurement rules through the Office of Government Procurement.

The Strategic Communications Unit does not come under the remit of a Cabinet Committee. The Unit is integrated within the Civil Service structures in my Department, with the Director of the Unit reporting to the Secretary General of the Department.

The Civil Service Management Board (CSMB) has established a sub group of the CSMB which acts as a high-level working group and is chaired by the Secretary General to the Government. It held its first meeting on October 25th.

In addition, responsibility for communications has been assigned to an Assistant Secretary in every Government Department, who will work collectively to ensure cross Government cooperation. This initiative will be progressed as part of the civil service renewal programme.

Commissions of Investigation

95. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the status of an inquiry (details supplied). [48750/17]

The Taoiseach: The IBRC Commission was established on 16 June 2015 under the Commission of Investigation (Irish Bank Resolution Corporation) Order 2015. Mr. Justice Brian Cregan, a judge of the High Court, is the Commission's sole member.

The Commission is entirely independent in its work and it is not possible for me to make any comment on the status of the Commission other than in relation to administrative matters for which I am responsible as the specified Minister under the Act.

The timeframe for the final report on the first module of the Commission's work, in relation to the Siteserv transaction, is the end of December 2017. However, as I informed Opposition representatives when I met them on 14 November 2017, the Commission is now of the view that its investigation into Siteserv could take a further twelve months i.e. until December 2018 and it will be seeking an extension of its timeframe for reporting.

Since it was established to the end of October 2017 the Commission spent €2,589,911. This figure does not include significant third party costs or legal fees that have been incurred and will arise for payment in due course. I also informed Opposition representatives when I met them that the Commission has requested an increase in the level of fees to be paid to legal counsel. At the meeting concerns were expressed about the potential significantly increased cost of the Commission and my Department is communicating with the Commission in relation to these issues.

Departmental Staff Training

96. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach the cost of providing external coaching and-or training services for staff development in his Department over the past five years and to date in 2017, by cost per year, in tabular form; and the company that delivered the training courses. [48813/17]

The Taoiseach: The training and development needs of the staff in my Department are identified through the performance management process. This is to ensure that staff are equipped with the skills and competencies to both perform their roles efficiently and progress their careers. The cost of providing training and coaching for the development of staff in my Department in the five year period from 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2016, and to 20 November 2017 is €213,361.93.

The information is set out in the following tables.

2012 Total €25,807.00

COMPANY	AMOUNT
CARR COMMUNICATIONS LIMITED	€5,586.00
CHRISTINE ARUNDE	€325.00
CONSOLIDATED ENTERPRISES	€435.00
IRISH ACADEMY OF COMPUTER TRAINING	€4,760.00
INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	€4,025.00
JOHN G GERAGHTY	€130.00
NOREEN ROWSOME	€130.00
PUBLIC AFFAIRS IRELAND	€796.00
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN	€8,925.00
WARD SOLUTIONS LTD	€695.00

2013: Total €46,483.12

COMPANY	AMOUNT
ACHILLES PROCUREMENT SERVICES	€195.00
CARR COMMUNICATIONS LIMITED	€1,750.00
CONSOLIDATED ENTERPRISES	€425.00
FLEXTIME LTD	€640.50
GRIFFITH COLLEGE DUBLIN	€690.00
IRISH ACADEMY OF COMPUTER TRAINING	€4,675.00
MICHAEL HYLAND	€2,400.00
PUBLIC AFFAIRS IRELAND	€1,044.85
SAFETY IRELAND FIRST RESPONSE LTD	€500.00
SEAMUS O'DWYER	€288.00
SPICEWORKS TRAINING	€140.85
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN	€33,733.92

2014: Total €41,435.44

COMPANY	AMOUNT
AYLESBURY SCIENTIFIC	€450.00
BROADLY SPEAKING	€265.50
CARR COMMUNICATIONS LIMITED	€1,750.00
ETC CONSULT	€900.00
GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE IRELAND LTD	€10,640.00
IRISH ACADEMY OF COMPUTER TRAINING	€1,990.00
INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	€1,870.00
OPTIMUM RESULTS	€895.00
PUBLIC AFFAIRS IRELAND	€245.00
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN	€17,929.94

2015: Total €26,794.99

COMPANY	AMOUNT
CARR COMMUNICATIONS LIMITED	€6,500.00
CONSOLIDATED ENTERPRISES	€770.00
ECDL IRELAND LTD T/A ICS SKILLS	€1,425.00
IRISH ACADEMY OF COMPUTER TRAINING	€2,985.00
INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	€3,295.00
ITRONICS LTD	€450.00
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN	€11,369.99

2016: Total €34,901.75

COMPANY	AMOUNT
ANDEC COMMUNICATIONS	€1,845.00
BYRNE WALLACE SOLICITORS	€1,168.50
CARR COMMUNICATIONS INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS CONSULTANTS LTD	€2,550.00
CARR COMMUNICATIONS LIMITED	€13,752.00
DCM LEARNING	€695.00
E-CAREERS.COM	€39.00
ECDL IRELAND LTD T/A ICS SKILLS	€475.00
INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	€1,750.00
LEARNING FOCUS LTD	€3,420.00
PUBLIC AFFAIRS IRELAND	€612.25
READING DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE	€3,300.00
SAFETY IRELAND FIRST RESPONSE LTD	€2,620.00
SELECTION BY DESIGN LTD	€720.00
SURESKILLS LTD	€1,580.00
YVONNE FAGAN COACHING	€375.00

2017 (to 20th November): Total €37,939.63

COMPANY	AMOUNT
ALLIANCE FRANCAISE	€388.80
BYRNE WALLACE SOLICITORS	€1,018.44
CARR COMMUNICATIONS LIMITED	€2,587.50
CARTER & CORSON PARTNERSHIP LTD	€1,990.43
CLEARMIND COACHING	€2,214.00
DEPT PUBLIC EXPENDITURE & REFORM	€17,550.00
INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	€1,450.00

PUBLIC AFFAIRS IRELAND	€1,605.00
RACHEL DOOGUE CONSULTING	€2,152.50
SURESKILLS LTD	€3,312.00
THE IRISH TIMES LTD	€1,125.00
YOUNG PROGRAMMES EVENTS LTD	€1,460.96
WP LEGAL ISLAND	€335.00
YVONNE FAGAN COACHING	€750.00

Departmental Contracts

97. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach the names of the companies renting a fixing and-or space on telecoms and-or communications masts from his Department; the income received for each of the past five years for same, in tabular form. [48847/17]

The Taoiseach: My Department receives no income of the nature referred to by the Deputy.

Appointments to State Boards

98. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach the gender balance on each of the State boards under his remit, in tabular form. [48887/17]

The Taoiseach: I appoint members to the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) under the National Economic and Social Development Office Act 2006 and the NESC (Alteration of Composition) Order 2010 - SI 603/ 2010.

In the case of the NESC, the legislation provides that I appoint members on the nomination of the organisations and interests set out, ie business and employer, ICTU, farming and agriculture, community and voluntary and environmental sectors, public servants and independent members. The public servants are mainly Secretaries General and must include a representative of my Department and the Department of Finance. In the independent category three independent members have been appointed, one of whom is a woman. There are four vacancies in this category at the moment and these will be filled in accordance with the *Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards*.

The Statistics Act 1993 provides for an eight member National Statistics Board, including the Director General of the CSO, ex officio, and an Assistant Secretary from my Department and the Department of Finance. Two members are nominated by the Taoiseach and three by organisations representative of the users of official statistics and providers of information under the Act. The two independent members appointed by the Taoiseach are women.

The following table sets out the required information.

Board	Number of Men	% of Men*	Number of Women	% of Women
NESC	16	67%	8	33%
NSB	6	75%	2	25%

These percentages include members appointed in an ex-officio capacity or on the basis of nominations from sectoral organisations.

Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements

99. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he has spoken to Chancellor Merkel since the election in Germany in September 2017. [48888/17]

The Taoiseach: As I indicated to the House on 4 October, I spoke informally with Angela Merkel at the Digital Summit in Tallinn. I also saw and interacted with her at the October European Council.

Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements

100. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he has spoken to Prime Minister Rajoy since the October 2017 EU Council meeting. [48890/17]

The Taoiseach: I engaged informally with Prime Minister Rajoy at the European Council in October, and at the Social Summit in Gothenburg on 17 November. I have not yet had a formal bilateral meeting with the Prime Minister, but I look forward to having a chance for a more detailed engagement in the near future.

Ongoing political engagement with our EU and international partners remains crucial, especially as negotiations on Brexit proceed. I will, of course, see many of my EU counterparts in the margins of the EU-Africa Summit next week.

Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements

101. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his visit to Enniskillen on 12 November 2017; if he attended meetings while he was there; and the issues that were discussed. [48891/17]

The Taoiseach: I attended Remembrance Day ceremonies in Enniskillen on Sunday 12 November. I laid a wreath at the Cenotaph and attended a Remembrance Service in Saint Macartins Cathedral before visiting the Royal British Legion hall for lunch.

In the afternoon, I visited the South West Acute Hospital, Enniskillen. After a tour of the facility, I had a private meeting with staff who cared for victims of the 1987 Bombing and had a brief meeting with DUP Leader Arlene Foster.

RTÉ Revenue

102. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Taoiseach if the Central Statistics Office included the debts of RTÉ on the State balance sheet in view of the fact that the majority of income in RTÉ is received from the Government following collection of TV licence fees and that this has been the case for a number of years. [49020/17]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh): RTÉ is currently classified in the General Government sector and consequently all of its revenue, expenditure, assets and liabilities are included in the government finance statistics produced by the CSO. This classification was applied in 2012 with retrospective effect to 2009, following a routine review by CSO of the market nature of RTÉ. All bodies classified to the General Government sector are listed in the Register of Public Sector Bodies in Ireland published by the

CSO which is available at <http://www.cso.ie/en/methods/nationalaccounts/classificationdecisions/registerofpublicsectorbodiesinireland/>.

Central Statistics Office

103. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Taoiseach if the Central Statistics Office examined the accounts of each of the commercial semi-State organisations and other semi-State bodies that are in receipt of significant public funding as to whether the majority of their funding comes from public sources; and whether their debts should be included on the State balance sheet. [49029/17]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh): Under Council Regulation (EC) No. 479/2009 (as amended by Council Regulation 679/2010 and Commission Regulation (EU) No 220/2014) the Central Statistics Office (CSO) is responsible for the official reporting of Ireland's General Government Deficit/Balance (GGDeficit / GGB), Debt (GGDebt) and other Government Finance Statistics (GFS). In particular, this requires the CSO to define the scope of the Public Sector (which includes the General Government Sector) in Ireland. In fulfilment of this requirement the CSO maintains and publishes a Register of Public Sector Bodies in Ireland which is available at <http://www.cso.ie/en/methods/nationalaccounts/classificationdecisions/registerofpublicsectorbodiesinireland/>. This register includes a listing of bodies classified in the general government sector, whose revenue, expenditure and financial balance sheet is included in the Government Finance Statistics reported to Eurostat and published nationally. It also includes a listing of publicly controlled corporations not classified in the general government sector due to their market nature.

To compile this register the CSO use a number of sources including surveys of all central government departments, in co-operation with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, and all local authorities, in co-operation with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. This is done in order to confirm or revise existing listings and to obtain further information as needed on all bodies under the aegis of these government units to ensure their correct classification according to the relevant European System of Accounts 2010 criteria. A preliminary analysis of the results of the central government survey conducted in 2017 is reflected in the latest version of the register. Work on the local government survey and consequent updates to the register are ongoing. The composition of the register is not static. Government controlled bodies are established, closed and merged over time. Also the market/non-market status of bodies must be continually reviewed. Consequently the Register of Public Sector Bodies is reviewed and updated periodically (at least annually).

Data on publicly controlled corporations (including commercial and other semi State bodies) not classified to the General Government sector are reported annually to Eurostat in a Questionnaire on government controlled units classified outside general government. This data includes a calculation of the quantitative market/non-market for the previous three years for those bodies whose total liabilities exceed 0.01% of GDP. The CSO also conduct periodic reviews of the classification of bodies controlled by government either at its own initiative or on request by Eurostat or other government departments or agencies. This work forms a central part of the preparation of Government Finance Statistics and is a core component of the work of the CSO Government Accounts division.

Departmental Communications

104. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Taoiseach the domain names registered to or owned by his Department or through a third party company. [49061/17]

The Taoiseach: The list of current valid domain names registered in my Department follows. As part of the Government's eGovernment strategy 2017-2020 the Office of the Chief Information Officer has been working on the development of a Digital Service Gateway - a single digital point where citizens can easily access information about the Government services that are available to them. This work, which began at the beginning of this year, is ongoing and will involve the rationalisation of existing Government websites and online services over time. The project will be managed and developed by existing resources within the civil service. Some of the registered domains relate to roles which my Department no longer has responsibility for, and may be assigned to other Departments. A number of domains have expired and will not be renewed, following a review.

www.Taoiseach.ie

www.antaoiseach.info

www.bunrecht.ie

www.constitution.ie

www.okeeffecommission.ie

www.fennellycommission.ie

www.ibrccommission.ie

www.merrionstreet.ie

www.sraidmhuirfean.ie

www.merrionstreet.eu

www.governmentofireland.eu

www.skillstowork.ie

www.GovernmentofIreland.info

www.antaoiseach.com

www.Irishprimeminister.info

www.Irishcabinet.eu

www.Poistae.ie

www.chiefwhip.info

www.eupresidency.ie

www.taoiseach.eu

www.Irishprimeminister.eu

www.thetaoiseach.com

www.thetaoiseach.info

www.Chiefwhip.eu

www.antaoiseach.eu

www.Allaboutjobs.ie

www.Governmentnews.eu

www.thetaoiseach.eu

Parliamentary Questions Costs

105. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Taoiseach the average costs associated with processing and answering written and oral parliamentary questions. [49131/17]

The Taoiseach: Information is not currently available which would make it possible to distinguish the cost to my Department of answering Parliamentary Questions from the overall administrative cost associated with the operation of the Department more generally. The cost in answering Parliamentary Questions would also need to take account of the costs arising for the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Exports Data

106. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Taoiseach the number of businesses exporting to Britain; the number of persons employed by these businesses; and the value of this trade in 2015, in tabular form. [48517/17]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh): The information on the number of businesses exporting to Great Britain and the numbers of people employed as requested by the Deputy are not available.

Trade in goods data between Ireland and Great Britain is collected via the Intrastat survey, which is carried out by VIMA (Revenue Commissioners) on behalf of the CSO. In order to minimise the burden on enterprises, only those whose exports exceed €635,000 per annum, or whose imports exceed €500,000 per annum are included in the survey. There are around 2,200 exporters and 5,500 importers required to complete this survey on a monthly basis. This covers 98.8% of the total value of exports and 96.5% of the total value of imports.

The CSO makes estimates for the remaining enterprises whose trade is below the threshold level. In 2017, this equates to around 9,800 exporters and 43,000 importers. As detailed data is not available for these enterprises, it is not possible to state how many of these enterprises export to Great Britain, or the employment levels of these enterprises.

The value of Exports to Great Britain in 2015 is shown in table A.

Table A: Exports to Great Britain by division 2015.

Division	€000's
Animal and vegetable oils, fats and waxes	11,681
Beverages and tobacco	243,999
Chemicals and related products	3,899,986

Division	€000's
Commodities and transactions not classified elsewhere	335,168
Crude materials, inedible, except fuel	393,744
Food and live animals	3,914,147
Machinery and transport equipment	2,557,483
Manufactured goods classified chiefly by material	915,356
Mineral fuels, lubricants and related products	418,289
Miscellaneous manufactured articles	1,120,173
Total	13,810,026

State Aid

107. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Taoiseach the number of organisations in the State in receipt of State funding that have expended resources seeking the repeal of the eighth amendment; the amount of funding these organisations have received from the State in the past five years; the number of organisations in the State in receipt of State funding that have expended resources seeking the retention of the eighth amendment; and the amount of funding these organisations have received from the State in the past five years. [49298/17]

The Taoiseach: The Taoiseach has no official function or responsibility to the House in relation to this matter. Under Standing Orders questions addressed to a member of Government must relate to public affairs connected with his Department or to matters of administration for which he or she is officially responsible.

Ministerial Responsibilities

108. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation further to the former Taoiseach's statement in September 2016, the detail of the 11 areas of responsibility of the Minister of State, Deputy John Halligan; if responsibilities have been added or removed in the interim; and if she is satisfied with the way in which duties under each of the 11 areas have been carried out. [48751/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): On the 20th June, the Taoiseach re-appointed Mr. John Halligan T.D. as a Minister of State with responsibility for certain policy areas under the remit of my Department.

On 26th July, the Government made orders for the delegation of Ministerial functions to Minister Halligan at my request.

Minister Halligan has been delegated responsibility for Innovation, Research and Development (IRD) and will oversee implementation of the Government's national strategy in this area, Innovation 2020. He has been given responsibility for the delivery of IRD programmes across the agencies of my Department and the development of a successor to the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions. He has also been delegated responsibility for Ireland's membership of International Research Organisations and European Space Agency in addition to sectoral research initiatives that my Department is involved in, Ireland's engagement with the EU Framework Programme in Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020, and maintaining an

Intellectual Property framework aimed at promoting and rewarding creativity, supporting innovative activity and improving the business environment.

These areas of responsibility are similar to what had been delegated to Minister of State Halligan prior to June 2017. Statutory Instrument No. 363 of 2017 entitled “Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Delegation of Ministerial Functions) (No 3) Order 2017” sets out in detail the specific areas of responsibility that Minister of State Halligan has.

I am fully satisfied with the way in which Minister of State Halligan has carried out his duties.

International Treaties

109. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her plans to ratify the Beijing Treaty on Audiovisual Performances in the future; if there is a timeframe for doing so; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49032/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The World Intellectual Property Organisation’s (WIPO) Beijing Treaty on Audiovisual Performances was adopted by the Diplomatic Conference on the Protection of Audiovisual Performances, which took place in Beijing from June 20 to 26, 2012. The objective of the Treaty is to establish rules ensuring the adequate protection and remuneration of actors and allowing their performances to be made available, whether they are distributed on physical media (such as DVDs) or on the internet.

The Treaty will enter into force three months after 30 eligible parties have deposited their instruments of ratification or accession in WIPO. To date, 19 WIPO member states have ratified the Treaty. Ratification of the Treaty requires contracting parties to adopt national law provisions that permit the reproduction, distribution, rental and making available of recorded audiovisual performances; broadcasting, making available and fixation of live performances; as well as certain moral rights in relation to performances.

The text of the Treaty can be found on the WIPO website at the following link: http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/treaties/text.jsp?file_id=295838

Ireland recognises the importance of the Beijing Treaty in strengthening the economic rights of performers in audiovisual recordings, granting moral rights to prevent lack of attribution or distortion of their performances, and in providing performers with protection in the digital environment. Ireland signed the Beijing Treaty on 19th June 2013 but has not ratified the Treaty itself, in line with normal protocol which requires Government approval for the ratification of international Treaties.

I would like to take the opportunity to highlight that, as it currently stands, Ireland’s existing legislation does provide for protection of a range of rights in relation to performances, and that the term of protection of those rights is 50 years for all performances created before 1st November 2013, and 70 years for all performances created since that date. This is a greater term of protection than is required to comply with the Treaty, which is “at least 50 years”.

My intention is to bring a Memo to Government in due course once analysis of the final adopted text of the Treaty and of the relevant Irish law is complete.

Retail Sector

110. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Question No. 556 of 22 November 2016, if she has had updates from or engagement with the groups the former Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation addressed at the retail consultation regarding a differential in euro and sterling in the context of retail sales here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48730/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I wish to underline the Government's commitment to ensuring that the benefits of a stronger Euro are passed on to Irish consumers. My Department has engaged with the retail sector on this issue through the Retail Consultation Forum, which I now Chair. Specifically, it was raised and discussed at a meeting of the Retail Consultation Forum on 21 November 2016.

In response, retailers explained that some of the differentials between prices quoted in Euro and Sterling may be attributed to such factors as the exchange rates at the time of the purchases by the retailers, the relative costs of doing business between the two jurisdictions, and tax rates.

While it is not my function to set prices for retailers, it is my view that retailers should explain to their customers, and to the economies in which they operate, the reason for price differentials where they exist. Actions by retailers to restore consumers' confidence that they can get a fair deal will help not only to address issues around the differentials in prices but will also help in assisting businesses to retain trade and, thereby, help to maintain employment.

I also recognise that retailers themselves are concerned about the impact of sterling fluctuations on Irish consumer sentiment. Retail sales figures show that the volume of retail sales is growing at a faster rate than the value of sales growth, which indicates that there continues to be heavy discounting by retailers and promotional activities to drive footfall and sales.

In October this year, Retail Ireland copied my office on their correspondence to Deputy Joan Burton following the Deputy's Parliamentary Question of 11th September on the issue of the fall in the value of sterling, outlining the reasons for any price differentials where they exist and the value that is available in stores across Ireland.

Brexit, and the resulting consequences for both retailers and consumers, will continue to be a focus of the Retail Consultation Forum and was discussed in detail at the most recent meeting of the Forum on Monday 20 November.

Brexit Issues

111. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the preparations made in her Department in the event of no agreement being reached between the United Kingdom and the European Union on the terms of the UK's exit from the EU; and if such preparations involve the drawing up of detailed and specific contingency plans in the event of a hard Brexit and a trade regime based on WTO tariffs. [48770/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Minister Coveney has responsibility for coordinating the whole-of-Government response to Brexit. In this capacity, he is working closely with his colleagues across Government to address the many challenges resulting from Brexit. This cooperation also involves the relevant State Agencies.

Work at Cabinet level is being prepared through cross-Departmental coordination structures. These represent a frequent and active channel through which the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and all relevant Departments are providing their research, analysis and

overall policy input to the Government’s wider response to Brexit, including its priorities for the ongoing Article 50 negotiations between the EU and the UK.

As the outcome of the negotiations remains uncertain, an important focus of the planning and preparation being undertaken through these structures is on deepening the Government’s analysis and understanding of the exact consequences of a range of different possible scenarios. This represents an intensification of efforts to build on the Government’s contingency planning.

On 9 November, I published “Building Stronger Business: Responding to Brexit by competing, innovating and trading”. This paper sets out work underway and planned by the Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation and its Agencies in response to Brexit.

The paper summarises impacts of Brexit across key policy areas within the Department and outlines the policy and operational mitigation measures underway and planned by the Department and its Agencies to minimise risks and maximise opportunities associated with Brexit, including supports available to companies to help them prepare for Brexit. It also describes the research programme designed to inform that response as well as new structures put in place to ensure a coherent approach across my Department and its Agencies.

The Deputy will be aware of the various research projects underway in my Department to help build an understanding of the possible implications of Brexit on Ireland for enterprise, consumers and trading relations. These studies examine a range of scenarios and will provide an evidence base to inform Ireland’s policy positions as part of the wider negotiation on the UK’s future relationship with the EU and further mitigation measures to respond to Brexit. The research projects considering a hard Brexit scenario are:

Title	Summary
Sectoral implications arising from Brexit: Most exposed sectors	This research examines the firm level implications of the UK being outside of the European Single Market and Customs Union for Ireland’s most exposed enterprise sectors.
Strategic Implications arising from EU-UK Trading Patterns	Profile trade and investment to highlight dependence at sectoral and product level; Quantify impact of various scenarios on trade and investment; Develop policy options for Ireland – negotiations and enterprise (mitigation) policies.
Import Content of Irish Exports and Implications of Brexit	This study examines the Import Content of Irish Exports: Implications of Brexit for Inputs and Competitiveness and the extent to which Irish firms source intermediate inputs from the UK. This research will provide empirical evidence on the import content of Irish firms’ exports, how firms may be exposed to changes in the trading environment after Brexit and the impact of Brexit on inputs, and competitiveness.

Title	Summary
*The Potential Impact of WTO Tariffs and other key relevant issues on Cross-Border Trade	The first topic in the research programme examined scenarios on how trade flows between Ireland and Northern Ireland might be affected in the event of the imposition of WTO-level tariffs and other non-tariff barriers on cross-border trade in manufactured products. That report was published earlier this Summer. Two remaining phases will be carried out - The second phase will assess some important aspects of how this cross-border trade is structured at a firm level and how flexible firms are in the face of trade shocks. It will also look at the integration of supply chains. The third phase will look at wider ecosystem trade issues and will assess trends and developments relevant to trade in Services (as opposed to manufactured products), between both jurisdictions.
**Financial impact of Brexit on consumers in Ireland	Analysis of impacts on Irish consumers due to price changes on UK imports under a number of potential post Brexit trade scenarios

* Project being carried out by InterTrade Ireland in consultation with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation

** Project being carried out by the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission in consultation with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation

Departmental Staff Training

112. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the cost of providing external coaching and-or training services for staff development in her Department over the past five years and to date in 2017, by cost per year, in tabular form; the company that delivered the training courses; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48799/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department places a high priority on the development of staff to ensure that they are provided with the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute to the work of the Department. Investing in our staff ensures we further enhance individual and collective capacity, improve organisational performance and enable a high performing and agile workforce.

The Learning and Development Unit is responsible for providing targeted learning and development initiatives, including coaching and other training services. The details requested by the Deputy are set out in the following table.

Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation Learning and Development Costs and Training Providers for the period Requested 2012 – 2017 to date

Questions - Written Answers

Year	Cost	External Coaching and Training Providers
2012	€232k	ACCA Ireland, 1to1 French Tuition, Griffith College, BT Communications Ireland, Carr Communications, CERNAM Ltd, Chartered Accountants Ireland, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, DBS, DIT, Espion Ltd, Independent Colleges, IPA, Carlow IT, Sligo IT, iPass, Irish Academy of Computer Training, Irish Times Training, Irish Bankers Institute, Jefferson Computer, Letterkenny IT, National College of Ireland, New Horizons, Olas, Open Management Training Ltd, Oracle, PAI, Rothwell, Sureskills Ltd, Institute of Bankers, Trigraph, La Touche Training, Achilles, UCD, Trinity, Griffith College, National College of Ireland, DBS, Trinity College, CSTDC: Civil Service Training and Development Centre.
2013	€265k	Carr Communications, IPA, iPass, Irish Bankers Institute, Irish Sign Language Academy, Irish Times Training, OMT, PAI, RA Consulting, Rothwell, Seamus O'Dwyer Consulting, Kings Inns, Tiger, Trigraph, UCD, Michael Smurfit Graduate School of Business. Olas Software Training, Shannonside Audio Video Ltd, Arrow ECS, Blue Wave Technology, Keytrainer Ireland Ltd, SQT Training, Dublin Civil Defence. Phoenix Safety Services, The Company Shop, Dublin Solicitors Bar Association, Institute of Chartered Accountants, Espion, Irish Human Rights Commission, Salus Training, PDP, Pro Safe, Plain English, Trinity College, DBS, Griffith College, University of Limerick, DIT, Sligo IT, Strathclyde University.
2014	€408k	Achilles Procurement Ltd, Carr Communications, IIA Training Ltd, IPA, Irish Times Training, International Centre for Parliamentary Studies, Life and Executive Coaching Institute, Gaelchultur Teoranta, Hibernian Training Courses, European Institute of Communications, Sureskills Ltd, PAI, RA Consulting, Kings Inns, Tiger, Trigraph, UCD Michael Smurfit School of Business, Michael Smurfit Grad School, Young Programme Events Ltd, BT Communications Ltd, Olas Software Training, New Horizons Irl, Espion Ltd, Keytrainer Ireland Ltd, Nifast, Consolidated Enterprises, Life Skills Training, IOSH Ireland Eastern District, Dublin Civil Defence, Baker Tilly Ryan Glennon, Blue Sky Training, Chartered Accountants of Ireland, CSL Chartered Secretaries, Penna, State Claims Agency, Antifyre Ireland, Fujitsu Ireland, Apex Fire Ltd, Keytrainer, Institute of Banking, IPA, Trinity, Griffith College, Athlone IT, DIT, National College of Ireland, Open University, Independent Colleges, UL.
2015	€332k	Carr Communications, Chartered Accountants of Ireland, IIA, IPA, Irish Times Training, PAI, Kings Inns, Tiger, Trigraph, UCD, NALA, Institute of Directors in Ireland, Resilience International, Irish Deaf Society, Gaelchultur Teoranta, Art of Navigation, Ceran Lingua Ltd, Auditware Training and Consultancy, Business Risk Management Ltd, Olas Software Training, BT Communications Ireland Ltd, Statistical Data Analysis Ltd, Keytrainer Ireland Ltd, Consolidated Enterprises, Dublin Civil Defence, Safety Ireland First Response Ltd, Nifast, First Aid Aware. IHREC, Chartered Institute of Management, Legal Island, Kilroys College, Institute of Banking, Agence Comptable de L'intefp., DBS, DIT, Law Society, Carlow IT, Griffith College, Open University, Garda College/UCD, UL, Athlone IT, National College of Ireland.

Year	Cost	External Coaching and Training Providers
2016	€364k	Achilles Procurement Ltd, Aileen O'Meara Media, Alliance Francaise, Art of Navigation, Auditware Systems Ltd, BIM, Carr Communications, Chartered Accountants Ireland, City Colleges, CMG Professional Training, Crowleys DFK Chartered Accountants, Dept PER, European Institute of Communications, Kingstown College, Gaelchultur Teoranta, International Training Centre of the ILO, IPA, Irish Times Ltd, Legal Island, Lexxion Publisher, NALA, Public Relations Institute of Ireland, Raomal Perera, Resilience International, Retirement Planning Council of Ireland, SQT Training, Beacon HRM Group, Communications Clinic, Kings Inns, Tiger, Trigraph, UCD, Young Programme Events, Safety Ireland First Response Ltd, Dublin Civil Defence, Olas Software Training and Development, Perception Consulting Ltd, Storm Island Ltd, New Horizons Ireland, Advance Systems, Consolidated Enterprises, Digital Imaging Services, EUIPO, Irish Centre for European Law, La Touche Training, Legal Training Services, PQMS Ltd, Samson Training, Sight and Sound Technology, Communications Clinic, UCD & ELAI, UCD, DIT, Carlow IT, Blanchardstown IT, Kings Inns, Griffith College, Law Society, Open University, UCD Smurfit School of Business, UL.
2017	€421k	Arcline Ltd, Carr Communications, Chartered Accountants Ireland, Civil Service College, Institute of Internal Auditors, Dept PER, European Academy for Taxes, Economics and Law, Kingstown College, Gaelchultur Teoranta, Hibernian Training, IPA, iPass, Irish Times Training, IT Governance Europe Ltd, Law Society, Lexxion Publisher, NALA, PAI, pTools Software, Shannon Consulting, Beacon HRM Communications Clinic, Trigraph, UCD, Young Programme Events. Premier First Aid, Bsafe at Work, First Aid Aware, Celtic Safety Training Ltd, BIM, O'Dwyer Safety Services, ACCA Ireland, CMIT, DBS, DIT, Griffith College, IBEC, Carlow IT, IPA, Mercyhurst College, National College of Ireland, Kings Inn, UCD.

Departmental Functions

113. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if the social partners or employment policy experts were consulted before the decision was made to transfer labour affairs functions in her Department to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection; if her officials carried out an impact assessment of the transfer of functions; and if so, if she will publish same. [48822/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): From time to time responsibilities transfer between Departments in order to better align functions and policy. In moving the employment rights and minimum wage agendas to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP), we are effectively aligning employee based rights with the welfare to work agenda, focusing on ensuring that our policies encourage people into the workforce with fair terms and conditions. DEASP also has responsibility for INTREO, the national contact point for employment and income supports, as well as acting as a pathway to employment for many job seekers.

It is not usual to consult externally when it comes to the realignment of functional responsibilities between Government Departments.

Brexit Issues

114. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the preparations her Department is making in the event of there being a hard Brexit, in particular following Michel Barnier's comments on same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48895/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Minister Coveney has responsibility for coordinating the whole-of-Government response to Brexit. In this capacity, he is working closely with his colleagues across Government to address the many challenges resulting from Brexit. This cooperation also involves the relevant State Agencies.

Work at Cabinet level is being prepared through cross-Departmental coordination structures. These represent a frequent and active channel through which the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and all relevant Departments are providing their research, analysis and overall policy input to the Government's wider response to Brexit, including its priorities for the ongoing Article 50 negotiations between the EU and the UK.

As the outcome of the negotiations remains uncertain, an important focus of the planning and preparation being undertaken through these structures is on deepening the Government's analysis and understanding of the exact consequences of a range of different possible scenarios. This represents an intensification of efforts to build on the Government's contingency planning.

On 9 November, I published "Building Stronger Business: Responding to Brexit by competing, innovating and trading". This paper sets out work underway and planned by the Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation and its Agencies in response to Brexit.

The paper summarises impacts of Brexit across key policy areas within the Department and outlines the policy and operational mitigation measures underway and planned by the Department and its Agencies to minimise risks and maximise opportunities associated with Brexit, including supports available to companies to help them prepare for Brexit. It also describes the research programme designed to inform that response as well as new structures put in place to ensure a coherent approach across my Department and its Agencies.

Clearly, a disorderly exit would be very damaging, particularly for Ireland, and Michel Barnier's recent call for EU Member States to plan for such a contingency is fully in line with the Government's approach.

The Deputy will be aware of the various research projects underway in my Department to help build an understanding of the possible implications of Brexit on Ireland for enterprise, consumers and trading relations. These studies examine a range of scenarios and will provide an evidence base to inform Ireland's policy positions as part of the wider negotiation on the UK's future relationship with the EU and further mitigation measures to respond to Brexit. The research projects considering a hard Brexit scenario are:

Title	Summary
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Strategic Implications arising from EU-UK Trading Patterns	Profile trade and investment to highlight dependence at sectoral and product level; Quantify impact of various scenarios on trade and investment; Develop policy options for Ireland – negotiations and enterprise (mitigation) policies.
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**Financial impact of Brexit on consumers in Ireland	Analysis of impacts on Irish consumers due to price changes on UK imports under a number of potential post Brexit trade scenarios

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** Project being carried out by the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission in consultation with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation

Severe Weather Events

115. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on whether the health and safety Acts need to be amended after Storm Ophelia in order that accidents commuting to and from work during severe weather conditions can be negated. [48909/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The national response to Storm Ophelia was coordinated by my colleague, the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, Eoghan Murphy T.D. and the National Emergency Coordination Committee. I understand that the response to Storm Ophelia is being reviewed and a report will be prepared which will be submitted to the Government Taskforce on Emergency Planning for its attention before being submitted for the approval of Government in January 2018. A number of issues already identified for consideration as part of the review related primarily to having arrangements in place to the greatest extent possible pre-emergency, so that appropriate processes can be activated without delay, as required.

The primary piece of legislation relating to occupational safety and health is the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005. Under this legislation employers, including the self-employed, have a statutory obligation to provide for the safety of their employees while at work.

This statutory responsibility includes employees that are required to drive as part of their work, but it does not extend to commuting. Commuting to and from an employee's normal assigned place of work, in the employee's own private vehicle or using other modes of transport, is currently outside the scope of the legislation and having consulted with the Health and Safety Authority (HSA), there is currently no evidence or proposal to suggest a revision of the legislation to include commuting is required.

The HSA does focus on Driving for Work and has for many years had a programme in place and they work in conjunction with the Road Safety Authority and An Garda Síochána. Extensive guidance material is available to employers and employees from the HSA website (www.hsa.ie).

Job Creation

116. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the status of a project (details supplied); the number of jobs that will be created as a result; the services that will be provided by this facility; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48931/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I understand that the project referred to in the question relates to an application submitted under the Enterprise Ireland Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF).

The €60m REDF is aimed at accelerating economic recovery in every part of the country by delivering on the potential of local and regional enterprise strengths. Over the next four years, the Fund will support significant collaborative regional initiatives to build on specific industry sectoral strengths and improve enterprise capability, thereby driving job creation.

A first Call under the REDF was issued earlier this year and the assessment of applications by Enterprise Ireland under this competitive call is currently underway. Full details on how applications are assessed have been published on Enterprise Ireland's website.

I expect the decisions on the applications received arising from the competitive process to be announced shortly and since the process is ongoing, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the process or in respect of any individual application at this time.

IDA Ireland

117. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she will engage with the IDA with regard to a site (details supplied) as a location for the construction of a major data centre; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48958/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Earlier this year, IDA Ireland sought submissions from suitable service providers to undertake a study to identify potential strategic land banks in Ireland that would be suitable to accommodate the sustainable development of large scale Data Centre projects. Following this process Jacobs Engineering, supported by AOS Planning, were appointed to produce this

report.

The study, which will assist efforts to ensure that Ireland continues to be best placed to compete for, win and sustain data centre investments, is now approaching its final stages. The study will evaluate viable property options nationally that are both supported by the necessary infrastructure and able to meet the complex and evolving needs of data centre investments.

Over recent years, leading international technology and computing companies have announced significant data centre investments for Ireland and the IDA is committed to ensuring that this trend continues. The Agency, supported by other relevant key stakeholders, will continue to highlight credible and flexible property solutions that form part of the competitive value proposition for this sector.

More broadly, the IDA continues to market County Tipperary to relevant FDI opportunities, enquiries and potential investors through our IDA overseas network. IDA Ireland will continue to encourage potential investors to locate in Tipperary and in regional counties throughout Ireland.

Work Permits Applications

118. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on a work permit delay (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49034/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): This application for an employment permit was received in the Department on 27th July 2017 and was processed within the normal timeframe. A decision was made to refuse the granting of the application on the 13th September 2017 and the applicant was notified of this decision in writing and of their right to request a review of this decision in line with the provisions of the Employment Permits Acts within 28 days.

This application was refused on the basis that the foreign national appeared to be in the State without current immigration permission from the Minister for Justice and Equality and the employer did not appear to be registered with the Companies Registration Office. Furthermore, the employer failed to provide the necessary additional documentation which is required in cases where the employment concerned is to be carried out in a restaurant such as documentation from the Revenue Commissioners and Utility Bills.

The applicant requested a review of this decision on the 9th October 2017. Having examined the review, the Reviewing Officer having considered the original application and the additional information provided in support of the review was satisfied that the original refusal reasons were not addressed and upheld the refusal decision in this case. This was advised to the applicant in a letter dated 1st November 2017.

A refusal to grant an employment permit does not preclude an applicant from submitting another application for an employment permit. Such an application should comply with all of the legislative requirements pertaining to the immigration status of the foreign national, the applicable registration requirements of the employer and all of the legislative documentary requirements for the particular employment permit type.

Departmental Communications

119. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the domain names registered to or owned by her Department or through a third party company. [49063/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Records indicate that the following domain names are registered by or on behalf of my Department. Not all of these domain names are associated with a unique website. Some of these domain names are alternative aliases for websites, some are associated with information campaigns, or with activities which are still in planning, or with supporting the Department's technology infrastructure.

actionplanforjobs.com

actionplanforjobs.ie

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patentsoffice.ie
pointofsingcontact.ie
regionalapj.ie
sciencecouncil.ie
skillsireland.ie
solvitireland.ieworkplacereactions.ie

Parliamentary Questions Costs

120. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the average costs associated with processing and answering written and oral parliamentary questions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49117/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department receives a large number of Parliamentary Questions seeking information on issues across the broad remit of the Department. The amount of time spent dealing with individual questions varies significantly depending on the level of information requested, and it is therefore not possible to estimate the average costs of processing and answering questions.

Employment Data

121. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the estimated value of the augmented reality and virtual reality industries here; the estimated levels of employment involved in these sectors; the number of companies based in this country operating in these sectors; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49208/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department in its work on new and emerging sectors is constantly striving to identify areas of opportunity for Irish-based enterprise. Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality is seen as a significant growing global market with worldwide revenues for the Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) market set to jump 100 per cent or more over each of the next four years. According to a new forecast by research firm IDC total spending on such products and services is estimated to be valued at \$11.4 billion this year and expected to increase to nearly \$215 billion by 2021, achieving a compound annual growth rate of 113.2 per cent along the way.

As part of the evidence base for the Refresh of Priority Areas under Research Prioritisation Data Visualisation Technologies, and in particular, Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) were identified as technologies that are critical to Ireland's economic and social development out to 2035.

AR/VR has a wide range applications across key sectors of the economy ranging from leisure and entertainment; product development and manufacturing; retail; to health and education service delivery systems.

AR/VR is a new disruptive technology impacting on many verticals and as a result it is difficult to scope the numbers of companies involved and the corresponding employment levels albeit a significant area of opportunity for Ireland. AR/VR is at a very early stage in Ireland with currently 3 multinational companies in the pure play AR/VR with many other MNCs having significant involvement in AR/VR and estimated to employ in the region of 10,000. There is also a mixture of High Potential Start-Ups (HPSUs) and more established indigenous companies also involved. The most recent sector brief on Digital Content Creation (Games, Animation and Film) provides an indication of the potential scale of AR/VR particularly in the gaming sector which is increasingly focussing on AR/VR. It is estimated that there are ca. 2,000 employees in the gaming sector across 30 agency-supported companies.

Competition and Consumer Protection Commission

122. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission has reported yet on the operation of the household waste collection market; her plans to publish this report; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49318/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): On 4 July 2017, a motion was passed by Dáil Eireann called on the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment to ask the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) to report on the operation of the household waste collection market.

Following a formal request on 25 September from the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, I, as Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, in accordance with section 10(4) of the Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2014, requested the CCPC to carry out a study on the operation of the household waste collection market.

I understand this exercise is currently underway and it is anticipated that the report will be finalised in the early months of 2018. The issue of publication will be considered at that stage.

Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement Data

123. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of the 248 public complaints received by the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement, ODCE, in 2016 that resulted in further action being taken by the ODCE; the number that were dismissed; and the number that remain open. [49406/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Section 949(3) of the Companies Act 2014 provides that the Director of Corporate Enforcement shall be independent in the performance of his statutory functions.

I, as Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation have no direct function in such matters.

Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement Reports

124. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation when a report (details supplied) will be made public in view of the receipt of advice from the Attorney General on same. [49407/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Section 955(1)(a) Report from the Director of Corporate Enforcement has been the subject of detailed consultation with the Office of the Attorney General.

On the advice received recently from the Attorney General, I do not have a legal power to publish statutory reports prepared pursuant to section 955 of the Companies Act, 2014.

I am conscious, however, that the shortcomings identified by Judge Aylmer in his ruling in the case of DPP v Sean Fitzpatrick have been the subject of significant concern. It is important to understand what factors led to such mistakes being made and we must take appropriate steps to address these shortcomings and ensure that they are never repeated.

In view of this, while I cannot publish the Report itself, I intend to publish an account of the investigative failures identified by Judge Aylmer and the steps that are being taken to address them. These include ongoing reform within the ODCE and the establishment, as announced by Government earlier this month, of the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement as a new independent company law enforcement agency, to provide greater autonomy to the agency and ensure it is better equipped to investigate increasingly complex breaches of company law. Work on the drafting of the necessary General Scheme of a Bill to give effect to this decision has commenced.

Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement Expenditure

125. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the reason over €2.2 million was surrendered back to the State by the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement in 2016, in view of the fact that no prosecutions or convictions were achieved by this office; and her views on whether this represents an agency

that is adequately policing white collar crime here. [49408/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Expenditure by the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement (ODCE) in 2016 was €2.727m, against a budget allocation of €5.015m.

This allocation was comprised of a pay spend of €2.006m against an allocation of €2.808m and a non pay spend of €0.721m against an allocation of €2.207m.

A significant element of the non-pay allocation provided to the ODCE provides for possible legal costs. These costs, as well as their timing, are difficult to forecast as the ODCE has little or no control over the timing of when the cases will be determined. It is also the case that the ODCE cannot be sure of the outcome of cases in terms of costs orders and it cannot anticipate the scale of costs that other parties may seek. Whilst it is entirely prudent that provision continues to be made to meet legal costs in the ODCE's subhead, the uncertainty in relation to amount, timing etc. of such costs means that there can often be an underspend in the budget.

The ODCE Annual Report for 2016 points to a number of key successes during the year, as follows:

- Following the examination of reports submitted to the Office by liquidators of insolvent companies, 90 company directors were restricted and 11 disqualified by the High Court;

- 93 Restriction Undertakings were obtained from directors of insolvent companies;

- As an alternative to formal enforcement actions, cautions issued to a total of 61 companies;

- The securing of the rectification on a non-statutory basis, of suspected infringements of the Companies Act 2014, in relation to Directors' loans in 60 cases, to an aggregate value of €17m approximately;

- 108 directions were issued to relevant parties requiring them to comply with their statutory obligations under company law;

- The submission of 5 investigation files to the DPP for consideration, with recommendations including charges under both company law and the Criminal Justice (Theft and Fraud Offences) Act 2001;

- 7 demands issued to companies for the production of their books, records and other relevant documents;

- During the year, the register of disqualified, deemed disqualified and restricted persons, as maintained by the Registrar of Companies, were reviewed. Arising from that review, a total of 83 instances were identified where persons appeared to be acting in contravention of Court Orders/legislative provisions. Following intervention by the ODCE, the individuals' positions were regularised;

- In excess of 1,050 statutory reports and referrals were received from liquidators, auditors, examiners, professional bodies and other regulatory and enforcement authorities. There were 130 internally generated inputs and almost 250 complaints received from members of the public.

- To encourage compliance with company law, the ODCE issued in excess of 16,000 copies of its various publications during 2016.

Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement

126. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of times she has met the Director of Corporate Enforcement since coming to office; if she has confidence in the director in view of the collapse of a trial (details supplied) in May 2017 due to the failed ODCE investigation and in view of the fact that no prosecutions or convictions have been achieved by this office in the past two years. [49409/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I have met the Director on one occasion since becoming Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

Since his appointment in 2012, the Director of Corporate Enforcement has demonstrated his commitment to reforming the Office, to enhancing the capability of the Office to investigate increasingly complex breaches of company law and to amending the investigative procedures used by the Office. These are set out in further detail as follows.

Though the trial referred to by the Deputy concluded in May 2017, the investigative process in question began in 2009 and concluded during 2012.

Organisational reforms in the ODCE were commenced in 2012 by the current Director of Corporate Enforcement upon his appointment, to ensure a more efficient and effective use of its resources. These include:

- Reorganising the structures of the Office;
- Recruiting additional expertise, including six forensic accountants, a digital forensic specialist and 2 Enforcement Portfolio Managers;
- As senior-level vacancies have arisen, reconfiguration of the skill sets, competencies, roles and responsibilities associated with those posts in order to better reflect the organisation's needs;
- Fundamentally amending the investigative procedures used by the Office so that members of an Garda Síochána take the lead in all criminal investigations; and
- Fostering a greater culture of risk management.

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- 93 Restriction Undertakings were obtained from directors of insolvent companies;
- As an alternative to formal enforcement actions, cautions issued to a total of 61 companies;
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- 108 directions were issued to relevant parties requiring them to comply with their statutory obligations under company law;
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Offences) Act 2001;

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- In excess of 1,050 statutory reports and referrals were received from liquidators, auditors, examiners, professional bodies and other regulatory and enforcement authorities. There were 130 internally generated inputs and almost 250 complaints received from members of the public.

- To encourage compliance with company law, the ODCE issued in excess of 16,000 copies of its various publications during 2016.

Help-To-Buy Scheme Eligibility

127. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Finance if people purchasing a second-hand house can be considered under the help-to-buy scheme; if they must pay property tax in the first year in view of the fact they are first-time buyers; and if they can claim back DIRT on savings used to purchase the home (details supplied). [49188/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Help to Buy initiative does not apply to the purchase of second-hand properties. It is instead a targeted response that is aimed at first-time buyers, buying (or building) new residences.

I am advised by Revenue that local property tax is generally payable following the purchase of a second-hand house where the house was built before 1 May 2013. In relation to first-time buyers, there was a limited exemption available where a house (whether new or second-hand) was purchased during the year 2013. However, purchases of houses after that time no longer qualify for this exemption.

I am advised by Revenue that Section 266A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 provides for refunds of Deposit Interest Retention Tax (DIRT) for first-time buyers who purchase a house or apartment to live in as their home. It also applies to first time buyers who self-build a home to live in. Refunds can be claimed by a first-time buyer of a house or apartment who purchases or self-builds a property between 14 October 2014 and 31 December 2017. The first-time buyer must not have, either individually or jointly with any other person, previously purchased or built a house or apartment. In order to make a claim for the DIRT refund the property must be registered for Local Property Tax (LPT) as the refund is processed through the LPT system. It is not required that Local Property Tax has been paid on the property in order to avail of the DIRT refund. Further information on the DIRT refund scheme is available on Revenue.ie - *DIRT refunds for First Time Buyers*"

Carbon Tax Yield

128. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of revenue that has been raised by the carbon tax since its introduction; the number of departmental staff who

are tasked with enforcement in this area; the total staffing costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49193/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that since its introduction in 2010 to the end of 2016 carbon tax receipts amounted to almost €2.5bn. Provisional figures for receipts for the first 10 months of 2017 amount to just over €350m. Further information on carbon tax receipts is published on the Revenue statistics website at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/excise/receipts-volume-and-proce/excise-receipts-commodity.aspx>. This includes a breakdown by commodity since 2010.

With regard to enforcement activities related to carbon tax it is important to note that Revenue is a fully integrated tax and customs administration. I am advised by Revenue that it is not possible to disaggregate the resources deployed exclusively at any given time to the enforcement of carbon tax law. Revenue currently has approximately 2,000 staff countrywide dedicated to targeting and confronting non-compliance. These activities include anti-smuggling and anti-evasion, investigation and prosecution, audit, assurance checks, anti-avoidance, returns compliance and debt collection.

Energy Prices

129. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the extent to which his Department monitors the economic impact of energy costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49451/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department monitors energy costs as part of its overall assessment of inflation trends on an ongoing basis.

CSO data indicate that the Energy Products component of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased by an average of 3.9 per cent on an annualised basis over the first ten months of 2017. As a result, Energy Products have provided a positive boost to overall inflation this year, contributing on average 0.3 percentage points.

In general, as an energy importer Ireland has benefitted from the steep fall in oil prices since 2014. While futures markets suggest that oil prices will remain subdued, a rapid rebound in oil prices could pose a risk to the economy's growth prospects. For example, higher oil prices would reduce consumer spending power and lower corporate profitability. However, at present my Department would view the probability of a rapid rise in oil prices as being low.

Stamp Duty

130. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Finance if a person is liable to full charge (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48682/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that transfers of farmland between certain blood relatives qualify for a reduced rate of stamp duty of 1% provided certain conditions are met. This is referred to as consanguinity relief. This measure currently applies where the person transferring the land is less than 67 years of age.

In Finance Bill 2017 I have introduced measures to extend consanguinity relief for a further three years until 31 December 2020 and also to remove the age limit of 67 years for the person transferring the farmland. Both of these measures will come into effect on the enactment of the

Finance Bill which I expect to happen around the end of December.

As the extension to the age limit will not come into effect until the enactment of the Finance Bill, any transfer of property prior to that date where the person transferring the land is over the current age limit will not qualify for consanguinity relief and the transfer will therefore be subject to stamp duty at a rate of 6%.

Financial Services Regulation

131. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 266 of 7 November 2017 and without disclosing any information pertaining to any individual institution, if the Central Bank has received complaints or carried out an investigation into business loans in which the person is of the view that they were wrongly removed from an interest rate linked to EURIBOR or were denied the option of reverting to a rate linked to EURIBOR following a period on a fixed rate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48688/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I have been informed by the Central Bank due to the confidentiality requirements imposed by domestic and EU legislation, which provides for confidentiality of information relating to ongoing supervision and limits disclosure to circumstances specifically provided for in Section 33AK of the Central Bank Act 1942, the Central Bank cannot comment on individual interactions with regulated entities or release supervisory information regarding any regulated entity.

Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises who are customers of lenders are protected under the SME Regulations, including the right to make a complaint.

On 18 December 2015, the Central Bank published the Central Bank (Supervision and Enforcement) Act 2013 (Section 48) (Lending to Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises) Regulations 2015 (the Regulations). A small number of technical amendments were made to the Regulations in June 2016, the Central Bank (Supervision and Enforcement) Act 2013 (Section 48) (Lending to Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 were published. These Regulations came into effect and apply to regulated entities, except credit unions, since 1 July 2016. For credit unions the Regulations came into effect on 1 January 2017. The Regulations replaced the existing Code of Conduct for Business Lending to Small and Medium Enterprises 2012.

The Regulations state that in good time before a borrower is bound by a credit facility agreement, the regulated entity shall provide the borrower with information in a durable medium including : “terms and conditions applying to the credit facility agreement together with the relevant fees, charges and interest rates which will apply to the credit facility agreement including an explanation of the basis for calculation of the interest charge”.

In addition, regulated entities must, at least once a year, provide a borrower with a statement which must, where applicable, include the interest rates charged. Where the enterprise is a ‘micro and small enterprise’, a regulated entity must also inform a borrower of any change in the interest rate and the notice must inform the borrower -

(a) of the date of the change to the interest rate,

(b) of the payment amount after the entry into force of the new interest rate and, if the number or frequency of the payments changes, particulars of the changes,

(c) that the borrower should contact the regulated entity if he or she anticipates difficulties meeting the change in repayments, and

(d) where the change in interest rate arises as a result of a change in the interest margin on a credit facility, of the details of that change.

Where the enterprise is a medium-sized enterprise, the regulated entity must inform a borrower of -

(a) any change in the interest rate where the change in interest rate arises as a result of a change in the interest margin on a credit facility, and

(b) the details of that change.

The Regulations also set out requirements which must be complied with by regulated entities in relation to offering borrowers the option of a review meeting on an annual basis, to include a review of credit facility agreements.

If a consumer is concerned or unhappy with how they have been dealt with by a firm regulated by the Central Bank, there are clear processes in place in the Regulation for handling complaints. The Central Bank encourages consumers who are dissatisfied with their experience of financial products or services to ensure that they communicate their complaint directly to their financial services provider. This ensures that their complaint receives the protections provided by the Regulations.

Tax Treaties

132. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to commission a report on the way in which the State's tax policies and treaties affect developing countries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48708/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Ireland, in accordance with our International Tax Strategy, is committed to engaging constructively and respectfully with developing countries in relation to tax matters, and to supporting such countries in raising domestic tax revenues in ways that are more efficient, that promote good governance and equitable development, and that can allow them to eventually exit from a dependence on official development assistance.

As part of this commitment the Department of Finance commissioned the International Bureau for Fiscal Documentation to undertake a spillover analysis to look at the possible effects of the Irish tax system on developing economies. Ireland was only the second country in the world to undertake such an analysis. The Spillover Analysis was published on Budget Day in October 2015.

The statistical analysis identified very limited flows of capital and trade between Ireland and developing countries, indicating a small likelihood of spillovers from the Irish tax system. Limited flows make it difficult to draw firm conclusions, but there are some indications that Ireland's treaties with developing countries may have the potential to increase trade flows, possibly in particular in trade of differentiated goods where treaty provisions can enhance the alignment of tax rules.

The analysis of Ireland's double tax agreement network looked at a range of treaty provisions and compared Ireland's treaties to other treaties concluded by those developing countries.

The analysis was broadly positive in respect of Ireland's treaty network with developing countries. Some points of concern in relation to two older treaties were noted, but new treaties with these countries have already been agreed and ratified.

The review of domestic tax legislation examined provisions relevant to multi-national trade such as withholding taxes, and the influence of multi-lateral agreements such as EU Directives on these provisions. The outcomes of this analysis were again broadly positive, and it also noted the work ongoing internationally to update the anti-abuse provisions in multi-lateral agreements.

While there is a regular review of Ireland's International Tax Strategy, there are no immediate plans to repeat the spillover analysis.

It should also be noted that earlier this year, Ireland signed up to the Addis Tax Initiative which commits us to doubling our aid spending on tax and development initiatives by 2020.

Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears

133. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance his views and those of the Central Bank on whether the policy of a bank (details supplied) of charging an extra 1 percentage point interest rate on all restructured tracker mortgages is within the spirit and letter of the code of conduct on mortgage arrears; if this issue has been raised with him or the Central Bank; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48709/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I can confirm for the Deputy that the matter referred to has not been raised with me.

I would remind the Deputy, however, that although the State has a 14% minority shareholding in BOI, I in my role as the Minister for Finance, have no direct function in the relationship between the bank and its customers. Decisions taken by the bank in this regard are matters for the board and management of the institution. The Minister for Finance must ensure that the bank is run on a commercial, cost effective and independent basis to protect the value of the bank as an asset to the State. A Relationship Framework has been specified that defines the nature of the relationship between the Minister for Finance and the bank. This Framework was published on 30 March 2012 and is available at: <http://www.finance.gov.ie/sites/default/files/Bank-of-Ireland1.pdf>.

Notwithstanding this, it is imperative that the bank is fully compliant with all regulatory requirements, including CCMA and measures put in place for consumer protection. I note, in this regard, the following reply which the Central Bank has provided in response to the Deputy's question:

“The Central Bank's Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears 2013 (CCMA) sets out how mortgage lenders must treat borrowers in or facing mortgage arrears. The CCMA applies to the mortgage loan of a borrower which is secured by his/her primary residence. The CCMA contains specific protections in respect of tracker mortgages. A lender cannot require a borrower to change from an existing tracker mortgage to another mortgage type, as part of any alternative repayment arrangement offered to the borrower, except in specific circumstances.

“If the lender has considered the available alternative repayment options and concluded that none of the options that would allow the borrower to retain his or her tracker interest rate are appropriate and sustainable for the borrower's individual circumstances, the lender may offer the borrower an alternative repayment arrangement which requires the borrower to change from

an existing tracker mortgage to another mortgage type.

“This can only be done if the alternative repayment arrangement:

a) is affordable for the borrower, and

b) is a long-term sustainable solution which is consistent with Central Bank of Ireland policy on sustainability.”

Tax Code

134. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the date which the tax on sugar sweetened drinks will commence in April 2018. [48732/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As I have said all along, it is my intention to introduce the tax on sugar-sweetened drinks at the beginning of April to align with the introduction of Soft Drinks Industry Levy in the UK, subject to State aid approval from the European Commission.

Carbon Tax Implementation

135. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Finance the number of studies that his Department has commissioned or conducted into the impacts of carbon taxes. [48754/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Carbon tax was introduced on a phased basis and applied to motor fuels with effect from December 2009. It was extended to non-solid fuels in 2010 and finally to solid fuels in 2013 and 2014. As with all taxes it is reviewed on an ongoing basis in the context of the Tax Strategy Group deliberations on annual budget options.

In addition to such reviews, pursuant to a commitment in the National Mitigation Plan, my Department is engaged in a joint research initiative with the ESRI to examine the social and economic implications arising from changes in the rate of carbon tax. It is expected that this analysis will inform budgetary decisions on the future direction of policy in this area.

Brexit Issues

136. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance the preparations made in his Department in the event of no agreement being reached between the United Kingdom and the European Union on the terms of the UK’s exit from the EU; if such preparations involve the drawing up of detailed and specific contingency plans in the event of a hard Brexit and a trade regime based on WTO tariffs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48777/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade with special responsibility for Brexit, Minister Coveney has responsibility for coordinating the whole-of-Government response to Brexit.

Work at Cabinet level is being prepared through cross-Departmental coordination structures. These represent a frequent and active channel through which all relevant Departments are providing their research, analysis and overall policy input to the Government’s wider response to Brexit, including its priorities for the ongoing Article 50 negotiations between the EU and the UK.

As the outcome of the negotiations is not yet known, an important focus of the planning and preparation being undertaken through these structures is on deepening the Government's analysis and understanding of the exact consequences of a range of different possible scenarios. This represents an intensification of efforts to build on the Government's contingency planning.

Department of Finance contingency work is ongoing and continues to examine all possible scenarios and challenges, and is a key input into the whole of Government approach. The Department has been assessing and preparing for the impact of Brexit since well before the UK referendum in June 2016, with this work now intensified. The Department's macro-economic forecasts have been updated on a number of occasions in order to take into account the economic impacts of Brexit. In addition, the Department has been to the fore in producing and funding a number of Brexit-related studies, both before and since the UK's referendum decision, including:

- 'Scoping the Possible Economic Implications of Brexit on Ireland' – Scoping study of scenarios for the future relationship between the UK and the EU. Published under the Department of Finance-ESRI research programme in November 2015;

- 'An Exposure Analysis of Sectors of the Irish Economy'. An in-depth analysis of the possible sectoral and regional impacts of Brexit arising from Ireland's trade relationship with the UK, published by Department of Finance October 2016 (Updated March 2017);

- 'Modelling the Medium to Long Term Potential Macroeconomic Impact of Brexit on Ireland' - Published under the Department of Finance-ESRI research programme in November 2016, which modelled the medium to long term macroeconomic impact of Brexit under a number of scenarios, including a hard Brexit whereby trade between the EU and UK reverts to WTO tariffs, and;

- 'Trade Exposures of Sectors of the Irish Economy in a European Context' – An analysis of trade exposure to the UK in comparison to other EU Member States, published by Department of Finance September 2017.

It is clear from the Department's own published research that the potential impact on the Irish economy is significant. The medium to long term economic impacts of a 'hard Brexit' with reversion to the WTO trade rules are set out in the November 2016 study referenced above. Looking at the effect ten years after a UK exit, a hard Brexit scenario results in the level of GDP being almost 4% below what it otherwise might have been in a no Brexit scenario.

The best and most immediate policy under the Government's control to counter the likely negative economic impacts of Brexit is to prudently manage the public finances in order to ensure that Ireland's economy continues to remain competitive in the face of future economic headwinds.

The Government has taken a number of important steps to prepare our economy for the challenges of Brexit, including in Budgets 2017 and 2018, the Action Plan for Jobs, our Trade and Investment Strategy and the preparation of a new 10-year Capital Plan. On the fiscal side, the Government has continued its policy focus of enhancing the resilience of our public finances to any Brexit-related shock. Specifically, it is projected that Ireland will achieve its medium-term budgetary objective of a balanced budget next year. Linked to this, over the forecast horizon, it is projected that the General Government Debt-to-GDP ratio will continue on a downward trajectory, reaching the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) 60 per cent threshold in the early part of the next decade and continuing to improve thereafter. Whilst not complacent to potential challenges, including our currently elevated debt level, these developments will help provide fiscal capacity in the event of Brexit. Complementing this, Budget 2018 further estab-

lished the ‘Rainy Day Fund’, which provides a further counter-cyclical buffer, and represents an important measure to strengthen the shock absorption capacity of the national finances to such external risks.

Budget 2018 also announced further measures to prepare Ireland’s economy for the significant challenges ahead. These measures include: a doubling of capital investment between 2015 to 2021 - boosting the growth potential of the economy; improving the competitiveness of our personal tax system - through income tax reform; introducing a Key Employment Engagement Programme (KEEP) – a new incentive to attract key employees; a new €300 million Loan Guarantee Scheme for Brexit-impacted business and a complementary €25 million Agriculture Brexit Loan Scheme – targeted at enhancing the competitiveness of the businesses most exposed to Brexit; the retention of the 9% VAT rate in the hospitality sector – to reduce the impact of currency volatility in the wake of the UK’s decision; and a the doubling of additional Brexit-related staff in state agencies.

The Department of Finance will continue to monitor the economic impacts of Brexit, to carry out relevant analysis and contingency planning and and to frame budgetary policy advice in this context.

Departmental Staff Training

137. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of providing external coaching and-or training services for staff development in his Department over the past five years and to date in 2017, by cost per year, in tabular form; the company that delivered the training courses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48806/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Due to a clarification sought, the Department has been unable to complete this response in the timeframe required. The Department will write to the Deputy within 10 days with the information requested by her.

Property Tax Exemptions

138. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to introduce an exemption for old age pensioners for the payment of local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48817/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The 2012 inter-Departmental Group which considered the structures and modalities of a property tax that a universal liability to the Local Property Tax (LPT) recommended that it should apply to all owners of residential property with a limited number of exemptions. Limiting the exemptions available allows the rate to be kept low for those liable persons who do not qualify for an exemption. While there is no specific exemption from the requirement to pay LPT for pensioners under the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended), such persons may be entitled to an exemption on other grounds or may qualify for a deferral subject to meeting the qualifying conditions.

The inter-departmental Group considered the provision of deferrals for households unable to pay the tax or where a payment requirement would cause hardship. As a general principle, eligibility for deferral should be based on gross income. Part 12 of the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended) accordingly provides for a system of deferral arrangements for owner-occupiers where there is an inability to pay the tax and the person meets certain criteria based on income thresholds. These deferral arrangements also take account of mortgage inter-

est payments made by the property owner.

The property must be the sole or main residence of the liable person and his or her gross income must be below certain thresholds. The thresholds are €15,000 for a single person and €25,000 for a married couple, civil partners or cohabiting couple. Deferral in respect of half of the local property tax payable is possible, where the gross income is above the threshold but less than €25,000 in the case of a single person and €35,000 in the case of a couple.

Following his 2015 review of LPT, Dr Don Thornhill recommended that the deferral options should continue to apply and that the relevant income thresholds be revised periodically in line with changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Dr Thornhill also recommended that for owner-occupiers aged 80 years or over and also for those with stated certified long term illnesses and disabilities who are living alone, that consideration be given to raising the eligible income limit for deferrals to €20,000. My Department will be considering issues relating to the implementation of this and other recommendations made by Dr Thornhill in due course.

I have no current plans to introduce an exemption along the lines proposed by the deputy.

Mortgage Interest Relief Data

139. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance the rationale for the change in mortgage interest relief that reduces the amount of relief on a sliding scale to the year 2021 by 25% per year; his plans to monitor the effect this reduction will have on qualifying mortgage holders availing of the relief; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48824/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The provision introduced in Finance Bill 2017 will extend Mortgage Interest Relief up to and including the year 2020 for the remaining recipients. This measure extends the relief, which would otherwise have ceased completely at the end of 2017, to provide for 75% of the current relief to continue into 2018, 50% of the current relief into 2019 and 25% of the current relief into 2020.

The process of phasing out Mortgage Interest Relief for homeowners has been under way since 2009. Relief has expired for qualifying mortgages taken out prior to 2004 and the relief was abolished for new borrowings taken out after 31 December 2012. Therefore only qualifying borrowings taken out between 2004 and 2012 remain in receipt of the relief.

I am aware of the financial pressures that individuals continue to face and of the fact that, without any action in this Finance Bill, the remaining recipients MIR would have faced a ‘cliff’ where their relief would have ceased entirely in January 2018. This extension allows for a gradual tapered withdrawal of the relief, running between January of 2018 and December of 2020, to allow the remaining recipients a phased period of adjustment to the cessation of the relief. In designing the taper, my Department sought to put in place a mechanism which aimed to provide a smooth withdrawal of the relief over time as well as one which was horizontally equitable. The operation of the measure will be kept under review in conjunction with Revenue.

It must be remembered that this relief has ceased for homeowners who purchased before 2004, and that those who purchased their homes from 2013 on have never benefited from the relief. This tapered extension of the relief strikes an appropriate balance between supporting those current recipients and also considering fairness to homeowners who have never benefited from the relief.

Departmental Contracts

140. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance the names of the companies renting a fixing and-or space on telecommunications and-or communications masts from his Department; the income received for each of the past five years for same, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48840/17]

145. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance the income received by his Department from the renting to companies of space to use and or take fixings from telecoms and or communications masts on site or on the roof of his Department, in each of the past five years, by location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48878/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 140 and 145 together.

The questions raised by the Deputy are matters in the first instance for the Office of Public Works and I understand that my colleague, Minister of State Kevin Moran, is providing an answer to the Deputy.

However, my Department is not aware of any telecoms or communications masts being operated from the roof of the offices occupied by my Department.

Banking Sector Regulation

141. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the fact that the section 110 tax status availed of by qualifying companies operating as non-bank loan originators in the State could be breaking state aid rules in view of the fact that new banks or lenders which could set up non-retail lending operations here and do not meet the current qualifying criteria for section 110 status would not be afforded the same tax neutral treatment. [48849/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Loan originations involve a company fronting for a foreign bank and either lending directly to larger more sophisticated borrowers, or immediately issuing newly made loans to smaller borrowers from the foreign bank. Provided the foreign bank is established in one of the countries with which we have signed a double tax agreement, then no Irish tax would have arisen on its interest income had it lent directly to the Irish borrowers.

Section 110 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 sets out the Irish regime for the taxation of special purpose companies set up to securitise assets. The tax provisions are intended to create a tax neutral regime for securitisation and structured finance purposes. If the loan origination company is a qualifying company (within the meaning of section 110 TCA 1997) then it would be able to operate in Ireland in a tax neutral way.

Section 110 is therefore equally available to all participators in the loan origination market provided that the qualifying conditions set out in legislation the are met.

State Aid Investigations

142. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the implications of the European Commission's recent ruling that a company (details supplied) has to pay €250 million to Luxembourg having received illegal tax benefits from Luxembourg, in terms of state aid from Ireland to a company in view of its taxation arrangements with the State and the parallels between Luxembourg and Ireland regarding companies. [48850/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The European Commission recently concluded that a tax ruling given by Luxembourg to Amazon constituted an illegal State aid amounting to approximately €250 million. This announcement is part of a wider investigation by the European Commission encompassing tax rulings in all 28 Member States which has been ongoing since 2014.

As the final Commission Decision has not yet been published, it is not possible to provide any further comment in this regard.

State Aid Investigations

143. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if the EU Commission has informally or formally requested information on Irish tax schemes for the purposes of state aid rules or specific tax relationships with companies; the details of such requests; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48851/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The European Commission has been gathering information from all 28 EU Member States on tax rulings since 2014 and it has examined over 1,000 rulings across EU Member States.

I understand that the European Commission issues information requests to Member States on an ongoing basis.

Ireland has always cooperated with such requests and will continue to do so. It is not appropriate for me to comment on the nature of any such requests, as such enquiries are confidential between Ireland and the Commission.

The Commission Decision in respect of Apple was published in August 2016. Aside from this, no other State aid cases have been opened against Ireland. The Government disagrees profoundly with the Commission's State aid analysis in that case and have lodged annulment proceedings in the General Court of the European Union.

Money Laundering

144. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of letters issued in each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017 by banks (details supplied) to political representatives, their families or associates requesting additional information concerning identification, evidence of sources of funds, evidence of residential address and certified statement of assets as per section 37 of the Criminal Justice Act, 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48855/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Deputy will understand that the information requested is not held within my Department. I have therefore requested a response to the Deputy's question from each of the banks identified by the Deputy.

AIB Response:

"AIB has comprehensive policies and procedures in place to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act, 2010 (CJA 2010). This includes with regard to its obligations to determine whether it has relationships with politically exposed persons (PEPs) and relatives and close associates thereof. AIB notes the current definition of PEP under CJA 2010 which only relates to PEP customers who are currently "residing in a place outside the State"

and the proposed expanded definition to this proposed by the Fourth EU Anti-Money Laundering Directive (4AMLD) which has yet to be transposed into Irish law. AIB contacted the following numbers of non-resident PEPs in each of the years below in order to comply with the requirements of section 37 of CJA 2010:

Year	Amount
2014	48
2015	54
2016	66
2017 (YTD):	73”

Bank of Ireland Response:

“Under Section 37 of the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2010, as amended, Bank of Ireland has an obligation to apply enhanced customer due diligence measures to customers who are, or have become, politically exposed persons (PEPs), and to customers who are immediate family members or close associates of a PEP. The enhanced measures that Bank of Ireland is obligated to apply include a) verification of the identity and permanent residential address of the PEP, immediate family member or close associate; and b) determination of the source of funds and source of wealth of the PEP, immediate family member or close associate. The application of these enhanced customer due diligence measures is driven by specific statutory compliance requirements to which the Bank is subject. The Bank does not disclose customer specific detail, including numbers involved, arising from the requirements of the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2010.”

Permanent TSB Response:

“ As a ‘designated person’ under the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2010 (‘the Act’), PTSB is required to undertake customer due diligence to comply with Sections 33 to 40 of the Act, including obligations in respect of any customer who is a ‘Politically Exposed Person’ as defined under Section 37 of the Act. PTSB recognises the important role the financial services sector has in the prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing and has put in place comprehensive policies and procedures to meet its obligations under the Act, including those relating to customer due diligence. PTSB may request additional information from customers to enable it to comply with any of its obligations to undertake customer due diligence. PTSB does not disclose details of its engagements with customers related to compliance with its obligations under the Act.”

Question No. 145 answered with Question No. 140.

Departmental Reports

146. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Finance when the report of the working group on the tax and fiscal treatment of rental accommodation providers, expected to be submitted to him in July 2017, will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48924/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Strategy for the Rental Sector, published in December 2016, contained a commitment to establish a Working Group to examine and report on the tax treatment of landlords (or rental accommodation providers), and to put forward, where appropriate, options for amendments to such treatment. The Working Group was chaired by the Department of Finance and its membership included officials from the De-

partment of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG), Revenue and the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB).

The final report of the Working Group was published on Budget day, 10 October 2017, and it is available on the Budget 2018 website at the following link: http://www.budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2018/Documents/Report_of_the_Working_Group_on_the_Tax_and_Fiscal_Treatment_of_Landlords.pdf.

It is also available on the Department of Finance website at the following link: <http://www.finance.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/171010-Report-of-the-Working-Group-on-the-Tax-and-Fiscal-Treatment-of-Landlords.pdf>.

The Report of the Working Group includes 10 options for consideration for implementation in the short, medium and long-term. As I announced in my Budget speech, I have introduced one of the short-term options in this year's Finance Bill. It is a new time-limited deduction against rental income for pre-letting expenditure incurred on a residential premises that has been vacant for a year or more. The purpose of the measure is to encourage owners of vacant residential property to bring that property into the rental market, for a minimum of four years, thereby increasing the overall supply of residential accommodation.

Tax Clearance Certificates

147. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding an application for a tax clearance certificate by the estate a person (details supplied). [48934/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the requested letter of clearance has issued to the agent handling the estate of the person concerned.

Central Bank of Ireland Supervision

148. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Finance how the Central Bank regulates the Irish Credit Bureau; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48935/17]

149. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Finance what checks the Central Bank has in place to ensure the accuracy and veracity of the information held on consumers by the Irish Credit Bureau; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48936/17]

150. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Finance the recourse that the Central Bank has put in place for a person in cases in which the information on them held by the Irish Credit Bureau is incorrect or inaccurate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48937/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 148 to 150, inclusive, together.

The Irish Credit Bureau is not regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland. It is a private organisation, owned and financed by its members, and it is not under the remit of the Central Bank.

Credit Register Administration

151. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether the func-

tions carried out by the Irish Credit Bureau which is owned and run by the financial institutions in the State would better serve the economy and better protect persons if it were outside the control of the financial institutions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48938/17]

152. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Finance if the Central Bank supports the objectives of the Irish Credit Bureau (details supplied); the manner of that support; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48939/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 151 and 152 together.

As the Deputy may be aware, the Irish Credit Bureau does not fall under the statutory remit of the Minister for Finance. Furthermore, the Irish Credit Bureau does not fall under the regulatory remit of the Central Bank of Ireland. The stated objectives of private companies are a matter for the companies themselves.

However, the Deputy may wish to note that the Government gave a commitment as part of the EU/IMF Programme of Financial Support for Ireland to develop a legal framework that would facilitate the collection and centralisation of financial information on loans. The Credit Reporting Act 2013 was framed from the recommendations of the Report of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Credit Histories, which recommended the establishment of a central credit register to resolve weaknesses identified in various reports published subsequent to the banking crisis. The Credit Reporting Act 2013 provides for the establishment of a Central Credit Register, a new centralised system for collecting, on a mandatory basis, specified personal and credit information on loans and other credit agreements and which will be operated by the Central Bank of Ireland. The Register will collect and hold information on loans valued at €500 or higher. Lenders will be required to check the Register when considering credit applications for €2,000 or more.

The Central Credit Register is being implemented on a phased basis with phase 1 focusing on the submission of information on consumer loans. Phase 1 commenced on 30 June 2017 and lenders must have completed the submission of Phase 1 data by 31 December 2017, backdated to 30 June 2017.

Phase 2 focuses on submission of information from licensed moneylenders, local authorities and business loans and is scheduled to commence on 31 March 2018. Subject to data quality assurance, it is anticipated that credit reports will be available for lenders and borrowers in 2018.

Once operational the Central Credit Register will:

- Provide lenders with information on a borrower's existing credit position to aid their assessment of a borrower's creditworthiness
- Equip borrowers with information on their financial profile
- Give the Central Bank better insight into financial markets and support several functions such as prudential supervision, statistics, and financial stability.

Under the Act, borrowers have the following rights:

- Request their credit report for information on the central credit register in respect of them
- Insert an explanatory statement on their credit report
- Apply to have information amended

- Report and be informed of suspected impersonation

Lenders may only request a borrower's credit report when a borrower has:

- Made an application for a new loan
- Applied to have an existing loan restructured
- Arrears on an existing loan or breached the limit on a credit card or overdraft.

Pension Provisions

153. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Finance if the pension being paid to a person (details supplied) is the correct amount; if the tax deductions are correct; and if an examination of the matter will be expedited. [48990/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the matter of whether the amount of pension being paid to the person concerned is correct is a matter in the first instance for the pension provider.

The tax credits allocated to the person concerned are, based on the information available to Revenue, correct.

If the person concerned wants to verify the correct tax has been deducted for any year, he can request a review of his overall tax position at the year end. The fastest and most efficient method to request a review is for the person concerned to register for Revenue's online service myAccount and to request the review online, on receipt of his P60, for the year in question.

Brexit Negotiations

154. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance if he has raised the issue at EU level of an EU reform fund being established to help countries and regions most exposed to Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49018/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Government's Brexit priorities are clear. They are to protect the peace process, ensuring no hard border, maintenance of the Common Travel Area, securing an effective transitional arrangement leading to the closest possible trading relationship with UK, and working for the future of our Union.

As set out in the Government's position paper of 2 May 2017, to mitigate the economic implications associated with Brexit, the Government is taking a five pronged approach.

- To continue to prudently manage our economy and the public finances;
- To negotiate effectively, as part of the EU 27, which includes aiming for the closest possible future relationship between the EU and the UK;
- To continue supporting business and the economy through Government measures, programmes and strategies;
- To explore existing and possible future EU measures that could potentially assist Ireland in mitigating the effects of the UK's withdrawal, while also making a strong case at EU level that Ireland may require further support on the basis that Brexit represents a serious disturbance

to the Irish economy;

- and to maximise fully any economic opportunities arising from the UK's decision to leave the EU.

The Government has already taken important steps to prepare our economy, including significant measures announced as part of Budget 2018, the Action Plan for Jobs 2017, and our Trade and Investment Strategy. Building on the suite of measures contained in Budget 2017, Budget 2018 announced a series of Brexit measures to further prepare Ireland's economy for the significant challenges ahead. These measures include: a doubling of additional Brexit-related staff in state agencies; supports for capital investment in the food industry; €25m in loan schemes for the agri-food sector; and a new €300m low-cost Brexit loan scheme for business which will be supported by the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Commission and the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI).

The issue of investment funding, in the context of the Brexit challenges facing the Irish economy, is the subject of ongoing discussions with the European Investment Bank (EIB). Also, there is ongoing engagement with the Commission on State Aid rules issues - the recent publication by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Building Stronger Business, refers.

The Government will continue to engage with EU partners and EU institutions to ensure that Ireland's concerns and priorities continue to be understood, with recognition of our unique circumstances and specific issues.

Insurance Costs

155. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Finance the measures that have been taken over the past 18 months to reduce the exorbitant cost of insurance on private and commercial vehicles; the further steps planned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49027/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Deputy should note at the outset that in my role as Minister for Finance I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I nor the Central Bank 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 the risks they are willing to accept.

However, it is acknowledged that pricing in the motor insurance sector for private and commercial vehicles has been subject to a lot of volatility in recent years, from a point where some premiums appeared to be priced at an unsustainably low level to the more recent experience of large increases.

Indeed, the problem of rising motor insurance premiums was the main impetus for the establishment of the Cost of Insurance Working Group in July 2016. Its Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance was published in January 2017. The Report makes 33 recommendations with 71 associated actions to be carried out in agreed timeframes, which are set out in an Action Plan.

These recommendations were formulated to address the issue of increasing motor insurance costs, whilst taking account of the need to ensure a financially stable insurance sector. This stability aspect is important, as we do not want to find ourselves in a situation again where particular firms drive prices down to a level that is unsustainable and which ultimately results in insolvency.

Work is ongoing on the implementation of the recommendations by the relevant Government Departments and Agencies and there is a commitment within the Report that the Working Group will prepare quarterly updates on its progress. The third such update was published on the Department's website on 23 October 2017 and shows the progress to date on the overall implementation of the recommendations.

32 actions were due for completion in the first three quarters of the year in total and 29 of those actions have been completed to date. Substantial work has also been undertaken in respect of the nine action points categorised as "ongoing". The fourth quarterly update should be published early in the New Year and will focus on the 14 actions which are due for completion in the final quarter of 2017.

I believe that the ongoing implementation of the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance, in addition to the implementation of the Working Group's forthcoming report on employer and public liability insurance, will make a difference to the pricing of insurance premiums over the next 12 or so months. I also believe that the Setanta judgment, by finding that MIBI is not liable to meet third party claims, removes a major uncertainty from industry, which I would expect to be reflected in pricing in the short to medium term.

Finally, it should be noted that the most recent CSO data (for October) indicates that private motor insurance premiums have reduced by 15.2% from the peak in July 2016. While the CSO statistics indicate a greater degree of stability on an overall basis, these figures represent a broad average and therefore there are many people who may still be seeing increases. However, I am hopeful that this greater stability in pricing will be maintained and that premiums should continue to fall from the very high level of last year.

Departmental Communications

156. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the domain names registered to or owned by his Department or through a third party company. [49062/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In response to the Deputy's question, the domain names registered to or owned by my Department or through a third party are listed as follows:

- <http://finance.gov.ie>
- <http://databank.finance.gov.ie>
- <http://taxpolicy.gov.ie>
- <http://banking.finance.gov.ie>
- <http://sepa.gov.ie>
- <http://budget.gov.ie>
- <https://www.switchyourbank.ie>
- <http://bankaround.ie>

Please note that the domains listed relate to active websites. This list does not include domains registered to or owned by the Bodies under the Aegis of my Department.

I would like to advise the Deputy that ICT services and IT Infrastructure services for the

Department of Finance are provided by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) under the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. On behalf of my Department, the OGCIO implements a multi-layered approach to managing and protecting departmental ICT systems, applications, infrastructures and services.

Tax Code

157. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance the annualised interest rate applied on late payment and filing of P30 returns; the equivalent rate of interest applied in the UK and in other EU and OECD countries, in tabular form. [49094/17]

158. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance the annualised interest rate applied on late payment and filing of VAT returns; the equivalent rate of interest applied in the UK and in other EU and OECD countries, in tabular form. [49095/17]

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

I am advised by Revenue that statutory interest charges are designed to compensate the Exchequer for loss of revenue through late payment of tax, to encourage timely payments in future and to ensure equity for those taxpayers who pay on time.

The current annualised rate of statutory interest charged in respect of late P30 (PAYE/PRSI/USC/LPT) and VAT payments is 10%. This equates to a daily rate of 0.0274%. The 10% rate came into effect on 1 July 2009 as provided for by the Finance Act 2009. Prior to 1 July 2009 the rate was 12% per annum, which equated to a daily rate of 0.0322%.

For the Deputy's additional information, the current rate of statutory interest charged in respect of late payment of Income Tax, Corporation Tax, Capital Gains Tax, Capital Acquisition Tax, Local Property Tax and Stamp Duty liabilities is 8% per annum (0.0219% per day).

It is not possible to provide an EU or OECD tabular breakdown in the manner requested by the Deputy because the systems operating across the various jurisdictions are not directly comparable. For example, some jurisdictions apply surcharges and penalties in addition to interest charges while others apply different rates for different taxes and for different periods of default.

In regard to the United Kingdom, the statutory interest rate in respect of late payments of tax is 3% Additional surcharges are also applied on a scaled basis depending on the level and frequency of default.

Parliamentary Questions Costs

159. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the average costs associated with processing and answering written and oral parliamentary questions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49124/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Servicing the democratic process through answering Parliamentary Questions (PQs) is a core responsibility of all Department of Finance staff.

The time spent responding to a question, and the number of staff involved in preparing the response, varies significantly depending on the complexity and importance of the topic, wheth-

er the response is to be written or oral, and whether information required for the response is readily available.

Accordingly, my officials have not estimated an average cost for the process of responding to PQs.

Paradise Papers.

160. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to deal with those revealed to be involved in the Paradise Papers, particularly with regard to construction companies which continue to trade; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49150/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am informed by Revenue that it is aware of, and actively examining, the information and allegations currently being published by various media outlets that originate from the “Paradise” papers. If further information and allegations become available from the same source over the coming days, Revenue will likewise examine any such further information or allegations that emerge.

Until all relevant information and allegations have emerged it is not possible for Revenue to formulate and decide its overall response to the information and allegations contained in the Paradise papers.

Revenue is determined that any tax evasion identified in relation to Irish taxpayers will be thoroughly investigated. Where tax evasion is uncovered Revenue will seek to have the maximum sanctions applied up to and including criminal prosecutions.

If instances of aggressive tax avoidance emerge, all such instances will be rigorously investigated and challenged by Revenue. Where anti-avoidance legislation can be applied to recover tax avoided through the use of unacceptable tax avoidance practices and schemes, Revenue will seek to apply such legislation with a view to recovering any Irish tax avoided together with all associated interest and tax avoidance surcharges.

Revenue’s work in the area of identifying offshore tax evasion has been, and continues to be, a priority. The international environment has changed significantly in the years since Revenue started to investigate offshore bank accounts and other offshore assets. Tax authorities worldwide now cooperate on a much wider and more intensive basis in investigating those who hide their profits or gains offshore than they did in the past. Initiatives such as FATCA (an Inter-Governmental agreement to share financial account information with the United States), DAC (EU Directives on Administrative Cooperation), and CRS (the OECD’s Common Reporting Standard) are all now helping to ensure that tax administrations have greater access to information in respect of offshore assets and income of their residents. Revenue will make full use of information received from other jurisdictions under these new initiatives on offshore assets to identify and pursue those who have attempted to use offshore accounts, structures or assets to evade or avoid their tax obligations.

In the context of these new information sharing initiatives now becoming available, the Government introduced specific measures in the Finance Act 2016 to ensure that, as and from May 2017, tax defaulters whose default relates to offshore matters are unable to avail of the benefits of the voluntary disclosure regime. Anyone who did not come forward by 4 May 2017 to regularise his or her tax affairs now faces the prospect of substantially higher penalties, publication in the Quarterly List of Tax Defaulters and possible criminal prosecution.

Revenue will also work in close cooperation with other tax administrations, in the frame-

work of the OECD's Joint International Taskforce on Shared Intelligence and Cooperation, in addressing issues raised by the "Paradise" papers, and will, as appropriate share information with these other tax administrations under existing legal frameworks.

In the context of the construction sector, I am advised by Revenue that it has run a national programme to monitor risks and compliance levels in this sector since 2015 and this will continue to be a priority in 2018. Revenue's interventions in the construction sector, as in all other sectors, are risk focussed and driven by the taxpayer's compliance behaviour, data Revenue has on its records and a variety of data from third parties, including the new international initiatives referred to above, and publicly available sources. In 2016, for example, compliance interventions in the construction sector yielded an additional €54.73 million in tax, interest and penalties.

Tax Reliefs Application

161. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance if a tax relief for student fees paid outside the EU for one year of study exists in the case of a person who has lived and worked in Ireland in the years preceding their study, with particular reference to a student awarded a place in a university (details supplied) due to academic excellence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49182/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Section 473A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 provides for tax relief in respect of qualifying fees paid by an individual in respect of an approved course at an approved college subject to the terms and conditions set out in the section. Tax relief is available where a student attending an approved college carries out an undergraduate course of at least two academic years' duration or a postgraduate course of not less than one and not more than four academic years' duration.

An approved college outside the EU is a university or similar institution of higher education which (i) is maintained or assisted by recurrent grants from public funds of that country, or (ii) is a duly accredited university or institution of higher education in the country in which it is situated.

I am advised by Revenue that the university referred to by the Deputy qualifies as an approved college.

Help-To-Buy Scheme Administration

162. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will respond to a matter raised in correspondence (details supplied) concerning the help-to-buy scheme. [49267/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Help-to-Buy (HTB) incentive is intended to assist first-time purchasers to secure a deposit for a mortgage. In the absence of the measure, many such purchasers would have difficulty securing the required deposit under the Central Bank macro-prudential rules. The incentive is provided for in s. 477C of the Taxes consolidation Act 1997 which states:

'first-time purchaser' means an individual who, at the time of a claim, has not, either individually or jointly with any other person, previously purchased or previously built, directly or indirectly, on his or her own behalf a dwelling;

This definition reflects that used in the Central Bank macro-prudential rules.

In the case of non-first-time purchasers, I accept that there will be instances where there is little equity or negative equity in a previously purchased property.

However, of its nature, the Help-to-Buy incentive is a limited and targeted measure intended to complement the macro-prudential rules. I would also note that, in their recent review of the scheme, Indecon Economic Consultants found that the measure has been implemented in an efficient manner and targets supports for first-time buyers to help them fund the deposit on a house.

I do not propose that the scheme should be extended to non-first-time purchasers.

Tax Reliefs Data

163. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons claiming tax relief on third level tuition fees; the cost of the relief for each complete tax year since 2010, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49313/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the Cost of Tax Expenditures table is available on the Revenue Statistics webpage at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/tax-expenditures/costs-expenditures.aspx>.

This table sets out data on a wide range of reliefs, credits and allowances, including the number of taxpayer units benefiting from relief in respect of qualifying third level education fees, as well as the estimated total cost to the Exchequer, for the years 2004-2015, the latest year for which data are available.

The table, taken from the data in the Cost of Tax Expenditures table, outlines the number of claims and the cost to the Exchequer for this relief annually from 2010:

Year	No. of Claims	Cost of Claims (€m)
2015	23,900	12.9
2014	24,000	12.7
2013	23,600	12.5
2012	25,300	13.4
2011	27,600	14.5
2010	31,700	19.4

Help-To-Buy Scheme Data

164. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Finance the number of applications that have been received under the help-to-buy scheme to date in 2017; the number of these applications that have been processed; the amount of funding spent on this to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49317/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Help to Buy incentive aims to both assist those first-time buyers struggling to save for the deposit required to purchase a home, as well as incentivising additional building and the provision of extra housing stock.

To avail of the incentive involves two stages. Stage 1 is the Application Stage, wherein prospective applicants can query whether they qualify for the incentive. They can also get clarity on the maximum amount of rebate they could potentially benefit from, based on their tax paid

in a four-year period. Stage 2 is the Claims Stage, wherein applicants that decide to proceed with purchasing or building a qualifying property must provide documentary evidence of the relevant property transaction or their mortgage draw down.

As of 31 October 2017, Revenue has received 11,367 applications to Stage 1 of the Help to Buy incentive. Of these, 4,487 Stage 2 claims have been created to date. 3,882 of these have been approved, at a total estimated cost to the Exchequer to date in the order of €55.5 million of which €15.8 million is in respect of retrospective claims (for the period 19 July to 31 December 2016).

The Deputy may wish to know that Revenue regularly publishes statistics on the Help to Buy incentive (including the estimated cost of the incentive) at <http://www.revenue.ie/en/about/statistics/htb-incentive-stats.html>.

Tax Code

165. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the position in circumstances when the payment of inheritance tax becomes due by a person living here who is benefiting from an inheritance in respect of the estate of a person in the UK; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that in some cases the tax falls due before the deceased's estate has been administered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49364/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that inheritance tax may be payable by a person who is resident or ordinarily resident in the State where the person (i.e. the beneficiary) receives an inheritance from the estate of a deceased person living in the UK. Double taxation can potentially arise because Irish inheritance tax is based on the country of residence of the beneficiary while UK inheritance tax is based on the country of domicile of the deceased person. A double taxation treaty between both countries provides for tax relief where a particular asset, such as property, that is included in an inheritance is taxed in both countries. The relief operates by granting a credit against any Irish tax due in the amount of UK tax paid respect of the asset in question.

The date on which inheritance tax falls due is determined by the 'valuation date' on which the market value of the assets and property included in an inheritance is established. Where this date is between 1 January and 31 August, inheritance tax must be paid by 31 October in the same year. Where this date is between 1 September and 31 December, inheritance must be paid by 31 October in the following year.

Section 30 of the Capital Acquisitions Tax Consolidation Act 2003 contains the rules for determining the valuation date. The valuation date depends on the particular circumstances of a case and is not a fixed date in relation to all inheritances. It can be the date on which the assets and property included in an inheritance are given to a beneficiary or such earlier date on which the executors of the will become entitled to retain the assets or property for the benefit of a beneficiary. Generally the executors are entitled to retain the property for the benefit of the beneficiary on the date on which probate or administration is granted. Where there is delay in completing the administration of the estate after that date it may happen that inheritance tax falls due for payment before that administration is complete.

The establishment of the valuation date depends on the particular facts and circumstances of an inheritance and the administration of a deceased person's estate. If a beneficiary who is resident in the State is uncertain about the appropriate valuation date to use in relation to the payment of a potential inheritance tax liability, the beneficiary may wish to contact his or her

local tax office. On receipt of full details in relation to the case, a determination of the valuation date can then be provided by Revenue.

Tax Avoidance

166. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the details of his planned anti-avoidance measures to deal with the avoidance of stamp duty on the purchase of commercial property through buying shares in a company or investment fund which holds the commercial property and other measures which may be used to avoid or reduce the 6% stamp duty charge on commercial property; if these anti-avoidance measures will be back dated to budget day; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49378/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Deputy will appreciate that this is a complex area which I will be seeking to address during the forthcoming stages of Finance Bill 2017.

Real Estate Investment Trusts

167. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if costs (details supplied) are deductible for REITs when computing their annual property income in view of the fact that one of the qualifying criteria of a REIT is that it must make a distribution of not less than 85% of its annual property income; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49379/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Finance Act of 2013 introduced the regime for the operation of Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) in Ireland, found in Part 25A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997. The regime provides for a collective investment vehicle for persons wishing to invest in property. REITs must be widely held, as it is a requirement that the REIT not be a “close company”, that is, a REIT cannot be under the control of 5 or fewer participators.

The function of the REIT framework is not to provide an overall tax exemption, but rather to facilitate collective investment in rental property by removing a double layer of taxation which would otherwise apply on property investment via a corporate vehicle.

In general, the trading profits of companies in Ireland are subject to corporation tax at 12.5% while rental profits of companies are subject to corporation tax at 25%. Rental profits arising in a REIT are exempt from Corporation Tax, provided the REIT distributes at least 85% of its annual rental profits. Profits from any other activities within a REIT are subject to corporation tax in the normal way.

I am advised by Revenue that while a REIT must distribute 85% of its annual rental profits, the Companies Acts set out the amount of profits that a REIT has available for distribution.

In accordance with the Companies Acts, and taking a REIT which only has rental profit for simplicity: the profits available for distribution by the REIT would be the rental income of the REIT less all expenses of the REIT (including but not limited to local property tax (LPT), remuneration including bonuses and asset manager fees). It is important to note that a REIT does not get a tax deduction for LPT. In calculating the amount of a dividend a REIT is able to pay, the LPT gets deducted along with other expenses paid. This in turn reduces the amount of dividends a REIT can pay. The expenses come out of the profits, therefore, the profits available for distribution are the profits after deducting all expenses incurred. The investors are

then taxed on the profits as distributed.

eGovernment Services

168. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the unit within his Department that is responsible for implementing the eGovernment strategy 2017 to 2020. [48749/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO), part of my Department, has the overarching brief to strategically leverage ICT within the Public Service to improve outcomes for citizens and businesses. As part of this brief, the OGCIO works with other Departments and the EU to produce policies, strategies and systems that provide cross-cutting improvements to how public administration is carried out via the use of ICT. As an example, the OGCIO played the primary administrative role in formulating the Public Service ICT strategy, which Government published in January 2015. Regarding the strategy your question refers to, the OGCIO also had the primary role in formulating the eGovernment Strategy 2017 to 2020.

In regards to the implementation of Public Service-wide ICT strategies, it should be noted that each Department is individually responsible and accountable for how it uses ICT in the carrying out of its administrative functions, although the OGCIO does have oversight of the more strategic projects. The eGovernment Strategy sets out a broad set of visioning principles that generally fall to all Departments to implement and adhere to. The Strategy sets out a number of complementary actions, which fall to different, or multiple, Departments to carry forward. For example, the sections regarding eHealth, eID, backend reform, business and location identifiers, the development of ICT skills and capacity, etc., rest with different implementing Departments. To this end, the eGovernment Strategy sets out a common vision, where its implementation is collectively and individually progressed as appropriate.

Pension Provisions

169. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the estimated number of persons in the single pension scheme for public servants; the number under each Department for the latest available date; if all aspects of the scheme are now in place; his plans to review the contributions to the scheme and the actuarial position in view of, among other factors, the finding by the Public Service Pay Commission that the value provided by public service employers to single scheme members is on a par with private sector direct contribution, DC, schemes; and when benefit statements will be provided to scheme members. [48971/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Since its commencement on 1 January 2013, the Single Scheme has been the default pension scheme for new-recruit personnel across all sectors of the Irish public service, including civil servants.

My Department undertakes an annual census of Single Scheme members across the public service at the end of each year. The last annual census undertaken was for the year ended 31 December 2016 and this noted some 64,000 persons were enrolled as members of the Single Scheme at that time. This number includes significant numbers of temporary staff, not all of whom would have remained in post subsequent to 31 December 2016. A breakdown of total membership advised by relevant authorities to my Department at 31 December 2016 is outlined in the table.

The Single Scheme is administered principally at workplace level by each individual public service body (termed a relevant authority) to which the Scheme applies. The discharging of key member-facing responsibilities, including the issue of annual benefit statements, rests with each relevant authority under the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012

The Scheme is of course subject to ongoing monitoring by my Department, as is the operation of the 2012 Act more generally. Recognising the complexities involved in this career-average Scheme, a Single Scheme Administration Project unit was established within my Department in 2016. A range of actions are in train to support more effective operation of the Scheme by all relevant authorities.

In relation to actuarial considerations, Section 41 of the 2012 Act provides that the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform can initiate an actuarial review of the Scheme. I have no immediate plans for the carrying out of such a review, bearing in mind in particular that the Single Scheme is in place for less than five years, which is a relatively short time in pension terms.

Following an analysis in early 2017 of overall public service pension entitlements by the Public Service Pay Commission, and in recognition of the more moderately scaled career-average based pension benefits in prospect for Single Scheme members, the Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020 proposed that the Additional Superannuation Contribution (ASC) to be applied in place of the Pension-Related Deduction (PRD) for public servants, should be set at a lower level for Single Scheme members. The Public Service Pay & Pensions Bill 2017 sets out the lower percentage rates of ASC that will apply to members of the Single Scheme from 1 January 2019 compared to members of other public service pension schemes, with a further reduction for these members provided for under this Bill from 1 January 2020.

Single Public Service Pension Scheme

Organisation	Notified Members @ 31 Dec 2016
Adelaide and Meath Hospital, Dublin, & National Children's Hospital	1,547
An Bord Bia	28
An Bord Pleanála	10
An Ceoláras Náisiúnta	4
An Chomhairle Ealaíon	5
An Garda Síochána	892
An Taoiseach	35
Athlone Institute of Technology	55
Ballinamore Community School	1
Ballyhaunis Community School	1
Ballymakenny College	2
Beaumont Hospital Board	1,010
Bord Iascaigh Mhara	12
Broadcasting Authority of Ireland	7
Brothers of Charity Services Clare	162
Brothers of Charity Services Galway	339
Brothers of Charity Services Limerick	207
Brothers of Charity Services Roscommon	100
Brothers of Charity Services South East	197

Organisation	Notified Members @ 31 Dec 2016
Brothers of Charity Southern Services	289
Caritas Convalescent Centre Limited	3
Carlow County Council	25
Carriglea Cáirde Services	50
Cashel Community School	1
Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board	202
Cavan County Council	61
Central Remedial Clinic (CRC)	92
Central Statistics Office	290
Cheeverstown House Limited	157
Chester Beatty Library	6
Chief State Solicitor's Office	60
Child and Family Agency	666
Children's University Hospital	355
Citizens Information Board	4
City of Dublin Education and Training Board	335
Clare County Council	88
Commission for Aviation Regulation	4
Commission for Communications Regulation	33
Commission for Energy Regulation	41
Commissioners for Public Works in Ireland	202
Competition and Consumer Protection Commission	25
Coombe Lying-In Hospital	256
COPE Foundation	439
Cork City Council	113
Cork County Council	237
Cork Education and Training Board	511
Cork Institute of Technology	122
County Leitrim Vocational Education Committee	34
County Sligo Vocational Education Committee	118
County Westmeath Vocational Education Committee	92
Courts Service	182
Crawford Art Gallery Cork Limited	4
Credit Union Restructuring Board (ReBo)	8
Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul Service for Persons with a Mental Handicap Ltd (Dublin)	331

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Organisation	Notified Members @ 31 Dec 2016
Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul Service for Persons with a Mental Handicap Ltd (Limerick)	145
Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul Services (Roscrea)	107
Digital Hub Development Agency	4
Donegal County Council	99
Donegal Education and Training Board	147
Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board	709
Dublin City Council	446
Dublin City University	563
Dublin Dental Hospital Board	104
Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies	17
Dublin Institute of Technology	247
Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology	43
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council	56
Dundalk Institute of Technology	59
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly	7
Economic and Social Research Institute	37
Education Research Centre	13
Enterprise Ireland	98
Environmental Protection Agency	58
Fáilte Ireland	16
Financial Services Ombudsman's Bureau	10
Fingal County Council	124
Food Safety Authority of Ireland	13
Gaisce	9
Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board	167
Galway City Council	45
Galway County Council	98
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology	50
Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission	14
Grangegorman Development Agency	5
Health and Safety Authority	2
Health and Social Care Professionals Council	24
Health Information and Quality Authority	63
Health Research Board	5
Health Service Executive - all areas	15,874
Higher Education Authority	14
Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency	16

Organisation	Notified Members @ 31 Dec 2016
Housing Finance Agency	3
Human Rights Commission	30
Incorporated Orthopaedic Hospital of Ireland	85
Industrial Development Authority Ireland (IDA)	51
Inland Fisheries Ireland	75
Institute of Public Administration	10
Institute of Technology Blanchardstown	46
Institute of Technology Carlow	89
Institute of Technology Sligo	79
Institute of Technology Tallaght	49
Institute of Technology Tralee	56
Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority	5
Irish Blood Transfusion Service	126
Irish Fiscal Advisory Council	3
Irish Medicines Board	100
Irish Museum of Modern Art Company	2
Irish Prison Service	85
Kerry County Council	89
Kerry Education and Training Board	138
Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board	376
Kildare County Council	137
Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board	207
Kilkenny County Council	67
Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board	154
Laois County Council	80
Law Reform Commission	10
Legal Aid Board	142
Leitrim County Council	33
Leopardstown Park Hospital Board	71
Letterkenny Institute of Technology	66
Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board	321
Limerick County Council	184
Limerick Institute of Technology	70
Local Government Management Agency	3
Longford and Westmeath Education and Training Board	10
Longford County Council	36

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Organisation	Notified Members @ 31 Dec 2016
Louth and Meath Education and Training Board	464
Louth County Council	54
Marine Institute	52
Mary Immaculate College	75
Marymount University Hospital	8
Mater Misericordiae University Hospital	1,061
Mayo County Council	63
Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board	128
Meath County Council	95
Mental Health Commission	15
Mercy University Hospital, Cork Limited	451
Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine	211
Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs	65
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs	56
Minister for Communications, Climate Action & Environment	67
Minister for Defence	1,474
Minister for Education and Skills	10,736
Minister for Finance	85
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade	223
Minister for Health	75
Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government	53
Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation	78
Minister for Justice and Equality	252
Minister for Social Protection	757
Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport	70
Monaghan County Council	48
Muiriosa Foundation	272
National Cancer Registry Board	10
National College of Art and Design	24
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment	5
National Council for Special Education	2
National Disability Authority	6
National Gallery of Ireland	16
National Library of Ireland	10
National Lottery Regulator's Office	5
National Maternity Hospital	278
National Museum of Ireland	15
National Oil Reserves Agency (NORA)	2

Organisation	Notified Members @ 31 Dec 2016
National Paediatric Hospital Development Board	2
National Rehabilitation Hospital	126
National Roads Authority (NRA)	9
National Shared Services Office	320
National Transport Authority	6
National Treatment Purchase Fund Board	4
National University of Ireland, Dublin	6
National University of Ireland, Galway	629
National University of Ireland, Maynooth	278
Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland	13
Offaly County Council	30
Office of Government Procurement	61
Office of the Attorney General	30
Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General	51
Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions	25
Office of the Revenue Commissioners	1,024
Oireachtas	180
Ombudsman	31
Ombudsman for Children	5
Ordnance Survey Ireland	5
Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin	507
Our Lady's Hospice Limited	135
Peamount Hospital Incorporated	148
Personal Injuries Assessment Board	18
Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council	4
Presidents Establishment	2
Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB)	7
Property Registration Authority	30
Public Appointments Service	72
Public Expenditure & Reform	80
Qualifications and Quality Assurance Authority of Ireland	5
Railway Safety Commission	7
Road Safety Authority	16
Roscommon County Council	30
Rotunda Hospital, Dublin	249
Royal Irish Academy	21
Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital	75
Science Foundation Ireland	11
Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority	9
Sligo County Council	40

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Organisation	Notified Members @ 31 Dec 2016
Solas	2
South Dublin County Council	177
South Infirmery — Victoria Hospital Limited	164
South Tipperary County Council	135
Southern and Eastern Regional Assembly	1
Sports Ireland	6
St. Angela's College, Sligo	65
St. James's Hospital Board	1,262
St. John of God Hospital Limited and St. John of God Community Service	758
St. John's Hospital, Limerick	100
St. Mark's Community School	1
St. Michael's Hospital, Dun Laoghaire	107
St. Michael's House	333
St. Patrick's Centre (Kilkenny) Ltd.	155
St. Vincent's Hospital Fairview	49
St. Vincent's University Hospital	927
State Examinations Commission	37
State Laboratory	17
Stewarts Care Limited	171
Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland	13
Teaching Council	7
Teagasc — The Agriculture and Food Development Authority	307
The Cappagh National Orthopaedic Hospital	138
The Children's Sunshine Home	13
The Health Insurance Authority	1
The Medical Council	42
The National Standards Authority of Ireland	11
The Pensions Authority	20
The Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland	18
The Royal Hospital Donnybrook	52
Tipperary Education and Training Board	101
Tipperary North Riding Vocational Education Committee	146
Údarás na Gaeltachta	3
University College Cork	838
University College Dublin	1,314
University of Dublin Trinity College	1,253
University of Limerick	453
Valuation Office	21
Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board	204

Organisation	Notified Members @ 31 Dec 2016
Waterford County Council	80
Waterford Institute of Technology	110
Western Development Commission	4
Westmeath County Council	57
Wexford County Council	105
Wicklow County Council	60
Totals	64,146

Superannuation Schemes

170. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of both civil and public servants who retired and-or received their relevant Civil Service or public sector pension in 2015 and 2016; the number in both categories who were granted added years; the average salary for both categories on retirement; the estimated annual and long-term cost of these added years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48711/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): There are various arrangements in operation throughout the Civil and Public Service which can provide in certain circumstances for added notional years of reckonable service when calculating superannuation benefits.

- Professional Added Years Schemes: These schemes apply to certain professional, technical and specialist posts in both the Civil and Public Service. Subject to certain conditions, they provide for the granting of added years in cases where the minimum essential requirements of a competition are such that they would prohibit a candidate from entering the civil/public service in sufficient time to acquire maximum service and, by extension, the candidate would be unable to accrue maximum superannuation benefits.

- Ill-Health/Death in Service: Added years may be granted in the Civil and Public Service in cases of retirement on the grounds of ill-health or where a Survivor's pension is being awarded in circumstances where the civil or public servant dies while still in service.

- Section 6 of the Superannuation Act 1909 and Sections 6 and 7 of the Superannuation and Pensions Act 1963 set out rules governing the early retirement of Civil Servants as a result of abolition of office or for the purpose of facilitating improvements in order to effect greater efficiency and economy in the organisation of a Department. Section 6 of the 1963 Act provides for the granting of added years. (These provisions may apply to Secretaries General at the end of their contracts; similar provisions apply to City & County Managers under the Local Government Superannuation Scheme. These arrangements were restricted by the Government in 2011.). In the wider Public Service these provisions serve as guidelines in dealing with similar cases.

- Chief Executive Officers of Non-Commercial State Sponsored Bodies may, in certain circumstances and subject to certain conditions, be granted added years at the end of their contract.

As regards the detailed information sought, it should be noted that, once a pension is calculated and comes into payment, a breakdown of the various service components upon which that pension is based is not retained centrally nor readily available. It would take an inordinate amount of official time and effort to obtain the information as it would necessitate examination of the files of all retirees in the period concerned.

Garda Station Refurbishment

171. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the OPW will fully fund the upgrading project for Ballinasloe Garda station; if so, the amount of funding being committed to this project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48715/17]

172. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the start date for the upgrading project for the Ballinasloe Garda station; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48716/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I propose to take Questions Nos. 171 and 172 together.

It is expected that tender evaluation for the works for Ballinasloe Garda Station will be completed in the near future, following which a contract should be placed by the end of the year. Once the contract is placed, details in relation to the contract amount and start date will be available.

Brexit Issues

173. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the preparations made in his Department in the event of no agreement being reached between the United Kingdom and the European Union on the terms of the UK's exit from the EU; if such preparations involve the drawing up of detailed and specific contingency plans in the event of a hard Brexit and a trade regime based on WTO tariffs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48782/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware, the Government is adopting a whole-of-Government approach to Brexit which is being led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs & Trade. Work at Cabinet level is being prepared through a range of cross-Departmental coordination structures. These represent a frequent and active channel through which all relevant Departments are providing their research, analysis and overall policy input to the Government's wider response to Brexit, including its priorities for the ongoing Article 50 negotiations between the EU and the UK.

As the outcome of the negotiations is not yet known, an important focus of the planning and preparation being undertaken through these structures is on deepening the Government's analysis and understanding of the exact consequences of a range of different possible scenarios. This represents an intensification of efforts to build on the Government's contingency planning.

The Department of Public Expenditure has responsibility for a number of EU issues which will be impacted by Brexit, most notably our EU-funded cross-border programmes with Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and also issues relating to public procurement. Through its Brexit Unit it is actively contributing to the contingency planning for a range of scenarios that is underway led by the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade.

Departmental Staff Training

174. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the cost of providing external coaching and-or training services for staff development in his Depart-

ment over the past five years and to date in 2017, by cost per year, in tabular form; the company that delivered the training courses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48811/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the table and includes expenditure on learning and development initiatives covering general training programmes and continuous professional development undertaken by my Department.

The Civil Service Renewal Plan is committed, inter alia, to ensuring through appropriate training and life-long learning and development that the Civil Service has the necessary expertise to advise on and implement public policy in a complex and changing world. My Department's commitment to learning and development supports the Plan by ensuring its staff are equipped with the necessary skills, competence and knowledge to meet its strategic business priorities while providing opportunities for all staff to develop and reach their full potential.

Year	Provider	Total Cost per Year
2012	BMF Business Services	€40,968.48
	Chartered Accountants of Ireland	
	Common Purpose	
	Europäische Akademie	
	Geary Institute	
	IBEC	
	Institute for Fiscal Studies	
	IPA	
	New Horizons	
	Thomson Reuters Year	

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Year	Provider	Total Cost per Year
2013	Academy of EU Law	€62,594.31
	Carr Communications Limited	
	Chartered Accountants of Ireland	
	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development	
	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy	
	CLT Ireland	
	Common Purpose	
	IBEC	
	IIEA	
	IPA	
	Irish Taxation Institute	
	IRN	
	Law Society	
	Legal-Island	
	NUI Maynooth	
	OLAS	
	On Your Feet	
	Public Relations Institute of Ireland	
	PWC	
	SureSkills Limited	
	The Communications Clinic	
Thomson Reuters		
Trigraph		
UCD		
2014	Andec	€59,541.28
	Carr Communications Limited	
	Chartered Accountants of Ireland	
	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development	
	Common Purpose	
	Gaelchultur	
	High Performance Training	
	IPA	
	Irish Directors of Ireland	
	Irish Hospice Foundation	
	Law Society	
	Legal-Island	
	Perform Force	
	Public Affairs Ireland	
	Public Relations Institute of Ireland	
	PWC	
	The Communications Clinic	
	The Mediators Institute Association for Members	
UCD		

Year	Provider	Total Cost per Year
2015	Alliance Francaise de Dublin	€167,826.31
	Allied Coaches	
	Beacon HRM	
	BT Ireland Limited	
	Carr Communications Limited	
	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development	
	Group Analytic Practice	
	IIEA	
	IMI	
	Institute of Project Management	
	IPA	
	Irish Times Training	
	Legal-Island	
	Public Affairs Ireland	
	Public Relations Institute of Ireland	
	Royal Irish Academy	
	Seamus O'Dwyer	
	SOLAS	
	SureSkills Limited	
	The Communications Clinic	
Trigraph		

Questions - Written Answers

Year	Provider	Total Cost per Year
2016	Alliance Francaise de Dublin	€305,065.93
	Beacon HRM	
	BT Ireland Limited	
	Byrne Wallace Solicitors	
	Carr Communications Limited	
	Chamber of Commerce	
	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development	
	DCU	
	IBEC	
	IMI	
	IPA	
	Irish Centre for Business	
	IRN	
	John O'Dowd	
	Legal-Island	
	PMI	
	Public Affairs Ireland	
	Public Relations Institute of Ireland	
	Resilience International	
	Seamus O'Dwyer	
	Sile O'Donnell	
	SureSkills Limited	
	The Communications Clinic	
	Trigraph	
UCD		

Year	Provider	Total Cost per Year
2017	ACCA	€144,777.69
	AllOne Limited	
	Arcline Limited	
	Beacon HRM	
	BMF Business Services	
	BT Ireland Limited	
	Byrne Wallace Solicitors	
	Carr Communications Limited	
	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development	
	Equita	
	Gaelchultur	
	IITD	
	Institute and Faculty of Actuaries	
	Institute of Directors of Ireland	
	IPA	
	IRN	
	Legal-Island	
	LIA	
	PMI	
	Public Affairs Ireland	
	Public Relations Institute of Ireland	
	Roffey Park	
	Shannon Consulting	
SOLAS		
SureSkills Limited		
The Leuven Institute for Ireland		
Think People Limited		

Departmental Contracts

175. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the names of the companies renting a fixing and-or space on telecommunications and-or communications masts from his Department; the income received for each of the past five years for same, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48845/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The Commissioners of Public Works (OPW) have issued licences to install telecommunications equipment on masts at Garda Stations and OPW owned buildings (including rooftops of Government Departments) to the following companies, all of which are licensed by ComReg to provide services in Ireland.

- Three Ireland (Hutchison) Ltd.
- Three Ireland Services (Hutchison) Ltd. (formerly O2 Ireland Ltd)
- Vodafone Ireland Ltd.

- Meteor Mobile Communications Ltd. (now known as Eir)

- Tetra Ireland Ltd - These licences are for the provision of digital radio services to An Garda Síochána and other emergency services and as a result of this a licence fee is not payable.

The following table shows the gross income (excluding VAT) received from each of the above-mentioned companies by the State under licences granted by the Commissions of Public Works in respect of mobile telecommunications equipment for each of the 5 years from 2012 – 2016.

Mobile Phone Operator	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Three Ireland (Hutchison) Limited	€0.74m	€0.71m	€0.71m	€0.71m	€1.23m
Three Ireland Services (Hutchison) Limited (formerly Telefónica O2 Limited)	€1.7m	€2.13m	€2.1m	€1.22m	€2.1m
Meteor Mobile Communications Limited	€0.42m	€0.89m	€0.45m	€0.61m	€0.58m
Vodafone Ireland Limited	€0.86m	€1.7m	€1.17m	€0.58m	€1.08m

Departmental Contracts

176. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the income received by his Department from the renting to companies of space to use and-or take fixings from telecommunications and-or communications masts on site or on the roof of his Department, in each of the past five years, by location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48883/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The Commissioners of Public Works (OPW) have issued licences to install telecommunications equipment on masts at Garda Stations and OPW owned buildings (including rooftops of Government Departments) to the following companies, all of which are licensed by ComReg to provide services in Ireland.

- Three Ireland (Hutchison) Ltd.
- Three Ireland Services (Hutchison) Ltd. (formerly O2 Ireland Ltd)
- Vodafone Ireland Ltd.
- Meteor Mobile Communications Ltd. (now known as Eir)
- Tetra Ireland Ltd

The licences issues to Tetra Ireland Ltd are for the provision of digital radio services to An Garda Síochána and other emergency services and as a result of this a licence fee is not payable. A licence fee is payable for all other licences issued. All licence fees are payable to OPW.

The following table shows the gross income (excluding VAT) received by the State under licences granted by the Commissioners of Public Works in respect of mobile telecommunication equipment on property owned by the Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland for each of the 5 years from 2012 – 2016.

Income from Telecommunication Mast Licences

Location	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Abbeyfeale GS	€12,836	€44,433	€22,251	€15,652	€23,687
Anglesea St GS	€20,085	€22,804	€22,804	€17,367	€32,015
Arklow GS	€9,211	€39,082	€21,850	€12,121	€20,725
Ashbourne GS	€25,643	€30,957	€33,487	€21,504	€39,743
Balbriggan GS	€46,517	€118,710	€68,657	€54,270	€89,640
Ballingarry South GS	€7,085	€8,856	€8,856	€5,314	€8,856
Ballybunion GS	€10,585	€24,966	€16,292	€9,002	€16,026
Ballycastle GS	€30,873	€16,026	€16,026	€12,484	€23,196
Ballycroy GS	€7,170	€8,963	€8,963	€5,378	€8,963
Ballydesmond GS	€3,500	€8,750	€8,750	€5,250	€8,750
Ballyfermot GS	€17,100	€76,454	€38,783	€14,259	€37,775
Ballyhale GS	€14,506	€16,278	€16,278	€11,595	€15,941
Ballyheigue GS	€15,322	€33,279	€24,707	€17,200	€31,615
Ballyvaughan GS	€7,554	€9,443	€9,443	€5,666	€9,443
Bandon GS	€19,731	€32,554	€27,176	€21,813	€28,394
Belmullet GS	€7,170	€11,054			
Bishopstown GS	€7,193	€14,385	€7,193	€9,590	€9,590
Blacklion GS	€20,204	€19,484	€29,779	€12,801	€23,026
Blackrock (Dn) GS	€17,100	€21,375	€21,375	€12,825	€21,375
Blanchardstown GS	€60,076	€81,893	€73,134	€55,229	€88,617
Blessington GS	€19,718	€26,888	€21,510	€19,718	€30,473
Boyle GS	€29,077	€41,265	€32,489	€30,902	€41,162

Questions - Written Answers

Location	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Bridewell GS	€47,418	€64,686	€51,568	€42,699	€55,040
Bruff GS	€22,567	€23,160	€23,160	€13,361	€30,048
Bunclody GS	€7,085	€8,856	€8,856	€5,314	€8,856
Buttevant GS	€13,060	€17,221	€16,026	€9,685	€16,026
Cabinteely GS	€47,725	€65,030	€51,875	€40,865	€55,091
Cabra GS	€64,742	€82,316	€73,503	€55,178	€79,841
Caherciveen GS	€0	€15,844	€7,313	€3,035	€7,085
Campile GS	€7,085	€8,856	€8,856	€5,314	€8,856
Carick-macross GS	€7,384	€9,230	€9,230	€5,538	€9,230
Carlingford GS	€26,828	€33,850	€28,600	€19,440	€37,196
Carlow GS	€19,887	€20,916	€20,916	€8,423	€20,725
Castlebleney GS	€21,858	€23,629	€23,629	€18,040	€30,366
Castlecomer GS	€10,785	€9,244	€9,244	€865	€9,100
Castledermot GS	€8,330	€7,140	€7,140	€152	€7,000
Castleisland GS	€7,085	€30,316	€16,902	€9,371	€16,026
Castletown-bere GS	€13,060	€17,149	€15,964	€9,112	€17,798
Cavan GS	€25,439	€34,656	€29,089	€25,319	€37,176
Charleville GS	€14,900	€16,671	€16,671	€5,970	€22,039
Clogherhead GS	€14,340	€16,133	€16,133	€12,548	€23,303
Clonakilty GS	€19,463	€50,548	€28,793	€22,509	€37,196
Clonbullogue GS	€30,873	€16,026	€16,026	€12,484	€23,196
Clondalkin GS	€16,600	€20,750	€20,750	€12,450	€20,750
Clones GS	€19,633	€26,781	€21,404	€19,654	€30,366
Clonroche GS	€7,085	€8,856	€8,856	€5,314	€8,856
Clontarf GS	€30,581	€41,771	€38,719	€21,840	€37,550
Clontribet GS	€7,170	€8,963	€8,963	€5,378	€8,963
Collooney GS	€7,085	€8,856	€8,856	€5,314	€8,856
Coolock GS	€29,875	€102,051	€51,315	€36,980	€54,851

Location	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Courtown GS	€15,617	€16,169	€16,169	€5,351	€16,026
Croom GS	€15,426	€16,673	€18,799	€13,108	€17,009
Crumlin GS	€19,800	€73,835	€43,154	€24,130	€41,150
Dalkey GS	€16,800	€21,000	€21,000	€12,600	€21,000
Dingle GS	€7,085	€8,856	€8,856	€5,314	€8,856
Donnybrook GS	€16,400	€20,500	€20,500	€12,300	€20,500
Donoughmore GS	€8,322	€10,403	€10,403	€6,242	€22,950
Drumcollogher GS	€11,970	€17,228	€16,048	€9,949	€16,048
Dun Laoghaire GS	€17,100	€21,375	€21,375	€12,825	€21,375
Dunboyne GS	€26,173	€35,467	€28,476	€22,314	€30,168
Duncannon GS	€19,973	€27,122	€21,744	€18,811	€19,611
Dundalk GS	€18,311	€20,614	€20,614	€16,008	€29,714
Dundrum GS	€16,800	€16,800			
Dunfanaghy GS	€12,918	€8,856	€24,023	€8,424	€17,624
Dungarvan GS	€9,322	€9,322	€9,322	€9,322	€9,322
Dunshaughlin GS	€9,945	€9,945	€9,945	€7,100	€9,322
Easkey GS	€14,255	€16,090	€16,090	€10,800	€16,026
Emyvale GS	€7,085	€8,856	€8,856	€5,314	€10,628
Enfield GS	€7,170	€8,963	€27,005		
Ennis GS	€16,480	€25,843	€18,852	€16,438	€23,554
Enniscorthy GS	€9,322	€11,653	€11,653	€6,992	€11,653
Enniskerry GS	€30,212	€28,108	€30,541	€18,808	€34,475
Eyrecourt GS	€7,000	€8,750	€8,750	€5,250	€8,750
Falcarragh GS	€7,170	€8,963	€8,963	€5,378	€15,543
Fitzgibbon St GS	€49,600	€120,829	€75,864	€60,292	€94,750
Foynes GS	€15,583	€16,140	€16,140	€6,309	€17,798
Galway Mill ST GS	€9,987	€12,484	€12,484	€7,490	€12,484
Garristown GS	€16,600	€20,750	€20,750	€12,450	€20,750

Questions - Written Answers

Location	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Glenbeigh GS	€14,340	€16,133	€16,133	€12,548	€23,303
Glenties GS	€19,946	€23,026	€23,026	€17,345	€30,196
Goresbridge GS	€7,085	€8,856	€8,856	€5,314	€8,856
Gorey GS	€14,559	€22,210	€22,210	€14,952	€21,612
Gort GS	€9,211	€11,514	€11,514	€6,908	€11,514
Granard GS	€9,211	€11,514	€11,514	€6,908	€11,514
Greystones GS	€18,311	€20,614	€20,614	€16,008	€29,714
Gurrabraher GS	€26,238	€63,427	€38,878	€31,548	€48,871
Hackballscross GS	€21,870	€7,140	€7,140	€7,140	€7,140
Henry St GS	€9,211	€11,514	€11,514		
Holycross GS	€18,296	€31,439	€24,371	€12,701	€21,641
Howth GS	€47,218	€64,436	€51,318	€42,549	€54,790
Irishtown GS	€16,600	€20,750	€20,750	€12,450	€20,750
Kells GS	€14,314	€51,216	€26,547	€20,191	€27,133
Kenmare GS	€9,211	€11,514	€11,514	€6,908	€11,514
Kevin St GS	€18,600	€23,250	€23,250	€13,950	€27,900
Kilcullen GS	€7,170	€7,170	€7,170	€7,170	€1,793
Kildare GS	€11,122	€13,903	€13,903	€8,342	€13,903
Kildorrery GS	€7,085	€10,923			
Kildysart GS	€7,085	€8,856	€8,856	€5,314	€8,856
Kilgarvan GS	€14,586	€16,358	€16,358	€5,289	€17,798
Kill of the Grange GS	€16,600	€20,750	€20,750	€12,450	€20,750
Killaloe GS	€20,427	€50,247	€30,560	€24,698	€38,785
Killarney GS	€9,100	€11,375	€11,375	€6,825	€11,375
Killimor GS	€12,463	€19,611	€14,234	€12,484	€16,026
Killorglin GS	€14,890	€18,936	€7,421	€6,252	€7,085
Kilmainham GS	€51,558	€56,058	€56,058	€29,797	€71,700
Kilmallock GS	€6,908				
Kilmore Quay GS	€19,951	€44,678	€29,676	€23,660	€37,961
Kilronan GS	€7,085	€10,923			
Kinsale GS	€18,422	€51,818	€30,525	€20,029	€45,029
Letterkenny GS	€25,987	€20,614	€38,912	€17,360	€38,925

Location	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Lismore GS	€9,211	€11,513	€11,513	€6,908	€11,513
Listowel GS	€14,170	€14,170	€17,906	€12,110	€15,941
Loughrea GS	€21,505	€30,267	€23,276	€14,591	€25,278
Lucan GS	€62,279	€78,679	€66,379	€59,573	€86,100
Malahide GS	€19,300	€24,125	€24,125	€14,475	€24,125
Manorhamilton GS	€19,718	€26,888	€21,510	€19,718	€30,473
Midleton GS	€14,255	€39,679	€23,496	€15,473	€30,281
Milford GS	€14,085	€23,163	€23,163	€19,350	€20,221
Mitchelstown GS	€16,203	€25,497	€18,505	€16,230	€20,836
Monaghan GS	€25,948	€66,291	€37,922	€25,915	€49,086
Monasterevin GS	€27,547	€35,021	€29,318	€20,725	€37,971
Mountjoy GS	€47,475	€119,951	€69,215	€54,280	€89,151
Moville GS	€8,325	€10,406	€10,406	€6,244	€10,406
Mullingar GS	€9,211	€11,514	€11,514	€6,908	€11,514
Naas GS	€18,843	€21,173	€21,173	€6,935	€20,753
Nenagh GS	€9,211	€11,514	€11,514	€6,908	€11,514
Omeath GS	€21,663	€23,456	€23,456	€12,504	€30,303
Oughterard GS	€14,417	€16,189	€23,521	€4,159	€15,856
Pallaskenry GS	€7,085	€8,856	€8,856	€5,314	€8,856
Patrickswell GS	€7,085	€8,856	€8,856	€5,314	€10,628
Pearse St GS	€16,800	€21,000	€21,000	€12,600	€21,000
Phoenix Park GS	€63,419	€80,640	€79,183	€46,684	€69,429
Portlaoise GS	€9,821	€12,276	€12,276	€7,366	€12,276
Raheny GS	€29,746	€96,278	€52,250	€39,376	€54,695
Rathduff GS	€7,085	€8,856	€8,856	€5,314	€10,628
Rathfarnham GS	€16,400	€69,585	€38,904	€21,580	€36,900
Rathkeale GS	€14,758	€16,551	€16,551	€6,015	€16,133
Rathmines GS	€47,569	€64,194	€56,386	€38,574	€46,625
Rathmore GS	€19,633	€42,881	€28,835	€31,923	€30,020
Riverstown GS	€7,085	€8,856	€8,856	€5,314	€8,856
Ronanstown GS	€17,300	€21,625	€21,625	€12,975	€21,625

Questions - Written Answers

Location	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Roscarberry GS	€15,438	€16,198	€16,198	€17,436	€8,515
Roscommon GS	€16,492	€18,823	€18,823	€14,162	€25,993
Roxboro GS	€7,982	€9,978	€9,978	€5,987	€9,978
Salthill GS	€9,599	€11,999	€11,999	€7,199	€11,999
Santry GS	€33,000	€37,150	€37,150	€28,850	€53,550
Schull GS	€7,085	€8,856	€8,856	€5,314	€8,856
Shankill GS	€16,600	€20,750	€20,750	€12,450	€20,750
Shannon GS	€19,985	€22,288	€24,981	€9,765	€21,113
Sixmi-lebridge GS	€20,315	€24,498	€23,303	€16,918	€30,473
Skibbereen GS	€7,085	€32,225	€16,236	€8,229	€15,856
Slane GS	€21,578	€23,350	€23,350	€12,440	€30,196
Sligo GS	€9,211	€11,514	€11,514	€6,908	€11,514
Sneem GS	€14,595	€16,367	€16,367	€11,641	€16,026
Stepaside GS	€47,322	€123,992	€69,395	€60,029	€89,446
Store St GS	€17,100	€21,375	€21,375	€12,825	€28,350
Summerhill GS	€19,722	€26,807	€21,493	€12,355	€22,941
Sundrive Rd GS	€16,600	€20,750	€20,750	€12,450	€20,750
Swanlinbar GS	€7,085	€8,856	€8,856	€5,314	€8,856
Swinford GS	€7,170	€25,072	€16,398	€9,341	€16,133
Swords GS	€16,600	€20,750	€20,750	€12,450	€20,750
Tallaght GS	€50,297	€54,397	€54,397	€40,853	€64,233
Templemore GS	€18,181	€23,750	€23,750	€18,324	€23,454
Terenure GS	€29,682	€47,064	€33,782	€30,009	€38,209
Thomastown GS	€8,498	€7,284	€7,284	€681	€7,170
Thurles GS	€18,743	€21,046	€21,046	€14,939	€20,614
Tinahely GS	€31,204	€40,922	€33,507	€24,376	€42,740
Tipperary Town GS	€5,975	€8,292	€7,108	€3,558	€7,170
Tralee GS	€9,211	€11,514	€11,514	€6,908	€11,514
Tramore GS	€18,533	€20,836	€20,836	€16,230	€30,158
Tullow GS	€7,085	€8,856	€8,856	€5,314	€8,856
Waterford GS	€36,766	€46,642	€40,232	€27,392	€51,074
Waterville GS	€24,524	€30,317	€23,334	€18,674	€25,522
Wexford GS	€7,000	€8,750	€8,750	€5,250	€8,750

Location	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Whitehall GS	€33,500	€83,940	€54,975	€42,453	€71,100
Wicklow GS	€7,085	€3,543	€8,851		
Woodford GS	€21,425	€16,026	€16,026	€12,277	€23,196
Youghal GS	€15,186	€19,806	€18,622	€10,707	€18,684
Agriculture House, Kildare Street	€29,892	€69,570	€45,647	€66,152	€28,965
Aras M Dhiarmada, Store Street	€13,900	€13,900	€13,900	€13,900	€12,850
Ardee House, Ardee Road	€24,176	€26,622	€23,902	€30,686	€26,700
National Archives, Bishop Street	€28,800	€13,200	€41,735	€28,523	€27,165
Institute of Advanced Studies, Burlington Road	€9,375	€29,694	€23,967	€21,866	€26,000
Con Colbert House East, Inchicore	€38,819	€41,478	€38,304	€32,735	€36,246
Dublin Castle		€30,374	€15,187	€26,897	€26,310
Dunsink Observatory, Finglas	€14,592	€10,586			
Hawkins House, Hawkins Street	€13,200	€13,200	€13,200	€13,200	€26,400
Limerick Social Welfare Office Dominic St	€13,200	€13,200	€13,200	€13,200	€13,969
Met Office, Glasnevin	€25,900	€25,900	€25,900	€25,900	€24,475
Ratra House, Phoenix Park	€11,250	€15,750	€13,500	€8,710	€13,500
Pearse Museum and Park, Rathfarnham	€55,611	€30,630	€21,255	€24,380	€24,380
Aras Uí Dhálaigh, Inn's Quay	€27,251	€27,251	€30,204	€19,879	€26,000

Location	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Lansdowne House, Lansdowne Road	€63,519	€85,131	€69,708	€65,660	€92,120
Tom Johnson House, Beggars Bush	€24,435	€35,670	€24,435	€28,180	€150,784
Farmleigh Estate	€34,375	€46,875	€37,500	€34,375	€53,125

Departmental Communications

177. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the domain names registered to or owned by his Department or through a third party company. [48943/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform manages the central Government domain name servers. Management is through a self service web portal allowing each public service body to manage their own domains. The Department owns and operates the gov.ie domain. Central Government Departments register and operate subdomains which allow for entries such as per.gov.ie. Control of each subdomain is delegated to the responsible public service body.

The following list includes the domains and subdomains under the direct control of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

- adgcs.ie
- amsd.per.gov.ie
- bpi.gov.ie
- bpi.per.gov.ie
- budget.gov.ie
- ccu.gov.ie
- ciocouncil.gov.ie
- circulars.gov.ie
- cloud.gov.ie
- cloudapps.gov.ie
- cloudhostedapps.gov.ie
- cloudtestapps.gov.ie
- cloudtesthostedapps.gov.ie
- cmo.gov.ie
- confidentialrecipient.gov.ie

- constructionprocurement.gov.ie
- constructionprocurement.gov.ie
- cseas.per.gov.ie
- csmobility.gov.ie
- cspensions.gov.ie
- csvision.per.gov.ie
- databank.finance.gov.ie
- databank.per.gov.ie
- deathevents.gov.ie
- e.gov.ie
- ecohesion.gov.ie
- egovstrategy.gov.ie
- epmds.gov.ie
- eprobation.gov.ie
- etendering.ie
- etenders.gov.ie
- eufunds.gov.ie
- eusf2014.gov.ie
- eustructuralfunds.gov.ie
- finance.gov.ie
- foi.gov.ie
- govacc.per.gov.ie
- governmentprocurement.ie
- governmentpurchasing.ie
- hr.per.gov.ie
- hrms.gov.ie
- ictprocurement.gov.ie
- ictstrategy.per.gov.ie
- igees.gov.ie
- implementationbody.gov.ie
- irelandstat.gov.ie

- irishgovernmenttenders.ie
- irishpublictenders.ie
- itservices.gov.ie
- leads.gov.ie
- nssso.gov.ie
- nssso.per.gov.ie
- nuadha.ie
- ogcio.ie
- ogp.gov.ie
- onegov.ie
- orp.ie
- paycommission.gov.ie
- peerreview.gov.ie
- peoplepoint.gov.ie
- peoplepoint.ie
- peoplepointproject.gov.ie
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Parliamentary Questions Costs

178. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the average costs associated with processing and answering written and oral parliamentary questions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49129/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The processing of Parliamentary Questions is undertaken as part of the normal day to day work of individual sections within Departments and no staff in my Department are assigned full time to dealing with Parliamentary Questions.

Parliamentary Questions are coordinated by the Corporate Office and are dealt with, as the need arises, by the staff in the sections dealing with the particular issue(s) raised in the relevant Parliamentary Question. The number and level of staff and the time spent on an individual answer depends on the issue raised, the form in which the information exists in the Department and the form of the proposed response, i.e. whether oral or written.

The cost of answering a Parliamentary Question and indeed the time taken to answer all questions will vary considerably according to the nature of the question asked. This would inevitably result in significant differences in costs within and across Departments.

My Department has greatly improved the administration of Parliamentary Questions with the introduction of an ePQ system, as part of the Build-to-Share initiative under the ICT Strategy for the Public Service.

Finally, the Deputy may wish to be aware that since the establishment of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in 2011, my predecessor and I have responded to 8,587 Parliamentary Questions.

Pension Provisions

179. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the reason for the delay in publishing regulations regarding the augmentation of single scheme benefits for public servants in the post 2013 single public sector pension scheme, in view of the fact that this delay prevents public servants from making additional voluntary contributions to the single public sector pension scheme and thus prevents them from making adequate provision for their retirement.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49277/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Single Public Service Pension Scheme (Single Scheme) was introduced for new entrants to the public service from 1 January 2013. There is no specific provision in the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012 which established the Single Scheme, to provide for the augmentation of pension benefits by individual members of the Single Scheme. Notwithstanding this, a commitment has been given that a facility for the purchase and transfer of additional pension benefits by Single Scheme members would be provided by way of Regulations under the Single Scheme Act.

Appropriate Regulations are being drafted and these will set out the rules of the new scheme. Consistent with the structure of the Single Scheme, it is intended that the Regulations will allow Single Scheme members to purchase additional pension and lump sum referable amounts to augment pension benefits accrued under the Scheme. The Regulations are also expected to provide for the transfer of pension entitlements accrued in certain other Revenue approved pension schemes to the Single Scheme. The pricing of purchased benefits will be based on the actuarially calculated cost of paying out those benefits at retirement and will operate on a cost neutral basis to the Exchequer.

The draft scheme is currently subject to detailed legal and other considerations and the intention is to bring forward Regulations on the new scheme as soon as these considerations are complete.

I should also highlight that it is open to any member of the Single Scheme to consider other pension investment products that are available in the market in order to enhance their pension provision. That is a matter for individual public servants.

Flood Prevention Measures

180. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when funding will be available for flood defence measures for south Louth and Drogheda to upgrade coastal flood defence measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49405/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The core strategy for addressing areas at potentially significant risk from flooding is the Office of Public Works (OPW) Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme. The Programme, which is being undertaken by engineering consultants on behalf of the OPW working in partnership with the local authorities, involves the production of predictive flood mapping for each location, the development of preliminary flood risk management options and the production of Flood Risk Management Plans.

Seven Areas for Further Assessment (AFAs) have been identified in County Louth as follows: Baltray, Annagassan, Ardee, Dundalk & Blackrock South, Carlingford & Greenore, Termonfeckin and Drogheda. The feasible measures both structural and non-structural identified for these AFAs are contained in the final plans for the East and North Western – Neagh Bann CFRAM studies.

These final Plans are currently undergoing an independent review of the strategic level environmental assessments by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Once this independent review of all Plans is completed and observations addressed, I would hope by the end of this year to seek the approval from the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform for the 29 Flood Risk Management Plans developed under the CFRAM process. Thereafter, I would hope to announce the proposed structural measures contained within those

Plans that will, over the coming years, be taken to detailed design to protect those communities at assessed risk.

Louth County Council has undertaken a number of flood relief works with funding approved by the OPW's Minor Flood Mitigation Works & Coastal Protection Scheme. These include flood relief projects at Rampark, Lordship and Baltray. The coastal flood relief scheme at Bellurgan is expected to be completed in the second quarter 2018.

Ministerial Responsibilities

181. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to the former Taoiseach's statement in September 2016, the detail of the 11 areas of responsibility of Minister of State, Deputy John Halligan; if responsibilities have been added or removed in the interim; and if he is satisfied at the way in which duties under each of the 11 areas have been carried out. [48751/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): John Halligan T.D. was appointed as Minister of State with responsibility for Training, Skills, Innovation and Research and Development on the 14th June, 2017.

A delegation order was made on the 18th July 2017 and is available at www.irishstatutebook.ie website. Minister of State Halligan's responsibilities remain the same as was delegated in the delegation order made on the 12th July 2016, however the title of his portfolio has changed to Minister of State for Training, Skills, Innovation and Research.

I am satisfied with the manner in which the portfolio of duties in respect of Training, Skills, Innovation and Research and Development is progressing.

Workplace Relations Commission

182. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on a matter regarding a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49060/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Discussions on this matter are ongoing under the auspices of the WRC and it is not appropriate to comment further at this time.

Island Communities

183. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to reinstate the island allowance for teachers to encourage suitably qualified persons to take such positions on the islands in view of the extra cost of living on the islands; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49382/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Following a review of the staffing allocation for Small Primary Schools, one of the measures announced in Budget 2017 provides for one teacher island schools. Where the school is the only primary school on an island, the school will be able to appoint a second teacher to the school. This will be effective

from September 2017 and will be set out in the staffing schedule circular for the 2017/18 school year which will be available on my Department's website in the coming weeks.

The Department's Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022, which was launched on 28 October 2016, aims to ensure the availability of a high quality and relevant Irish-medium educational experience in Gaeltacht schools and in this way to support the use of Irish as the main language of families and of Gaeltacht communities. Under the terms of the Policy, additional teaching and/or other resources, including dedicated continuing professional development (CPD), will be made available to schools whose applications to participate in the Gaeltacht Schools' recognition process are approved. It is envisaged that the allocation of resources will be on a staged incremental basis over a five-year period in accordance with the language criteria set out in the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022. A dedicated Gaeltacht Education Unit has been established within the Department to oversee and support the implementation of the Policy. Funding of €2.5m has been provided for in Budget 2017 and Budget 2018 to allow for the commencement of the phased Implementation of the policy.

School Placement

184. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the options available to parents to secure a school placement in cases in which a child is not offered a place in a school of their choice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48717/17]

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

This selection process and the enrolment policy on which it is based must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants. However, this may result in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice. As the Deputy will appreciate, my Department's main responsibility is to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking places.

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

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

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

185. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the construction of a unit for children with autism at a school (details supplied); the reason work on this development has stalled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48722/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The school referred to by

the Deputy was approved a devolved grant under my Department's Additional Accommodation Scheme 2012 to provide a 1 Classroom ASD Unit & 1 SET Classroom.

Building work commenced in mid-2015 but due to difficulties with the appointed contractor works did not progress in a timely manner which resulted in the termination of the contract in May 2017.

Approval was given to the school authority in August 2017 to re-tender for the works that remain outstanding and a tender report is awaited. As soon as this is received and considered, my Department's Planning and Building Unit will be in contact with the school authority with a view to having the works completed as quickly as possible.

Special Educational Needs Staff

186. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has given consideration to granting administrative status to a person (details supplied) in a special school; if he will request the NCSE to review the staffing ratio applied to the school in view of the number of children attending the school who have complex needs; if he has examined correspondence sent by a person outlining their concerns; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48724/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Since 2012 special schools are staffed based on their actual current pupil profiles and the disability category of each pupil, as opposed to primarily by school designation, in accordance with Department Circular 0042/2011.

Currently the awarding of Administrative Principal in special schools is governed by the Report of the Special Education Review Committee 1993 (SERC Report). Under the SERC report, Administrative Principal is warranted in special schools at the point at which the 6th teacher (i.e. 5th assistant teacher is about to be appointed).

I am aware of the correspondence received from the school to which the Deputy refers and my Department, in conjunction with the NCSE, have considered the staffing position of the school, taking into consideration the complex needs of the students enrolled, particularly those with chronic medical conditions and severe challenging behavior.

A letter will issue to the school in the coming days, in response to the correspondence received.

Institutes of Technology

187. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the working group established to examine the future of the Mayo campus of GMIT. [48733/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department, the HEA and GMIT Governing Body are fully committed to the continuance of the GMIT Castlebar campus.

Myself and the then Taoiseach established a working group in March 2017 to formulate a plan to develop a sustainable future for the Mayo Campus in Castlebar. Membership of the GMIT Working Group comprised representatives of GMIT, my Department and the HEA.

In the course of its work and guided by the agreed terms of reference, the Working Group has engaged with all relevant stakeholders to allow for a full consideration of all the issues and the options available to address the issues affecting the sustainability and viability of the Mayo Campus.

The GMIT Working Group has now completed its work and has submitted its final report to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for approval. It is expected that the HEA will submit the report to my Department shortly. The report will then be considered by my Department and arrangements will be made for its publication

Third Level Fees

188. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will review the criteria and number of years residency required for students to access the payment of fees when entering third level courses in view of the fact that many young persons are returning home having been abroad during the recession; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48752/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The position is that to qualify for funding towards tuition fees, students must be first-time undergraduates, hold *inter alia* EU/EEA/Swiss nationality in their own right, and have been ordinarily resident in an EU/EEA/Swiss state for at least three of the five years preceding their entry to an approved third level course. These rules apply to all students from all EU/EEA/Swiss states.

Where students do not qualify for free fees funding they must pay the appropriate fee - either EU or Non-EU, as determined by each higher education institution. These institutions are autonomous bodies and the level of fee payable by students who do not meet the requirements of the free fees scheme is a matter for the relevant institution to determine.

Due to concerns in relation to the fact that in some cases the higher Non-EU fee was being charged to students who hold EU/EEA/Swiss nationality but did not meet the residency clause for free fees, my Department requested that the higher education institutions charge the more moderate EU fees to such students who have completed at least five academic years of study (primary or post-primary level) in Ireland/EU/EEA/Switzerland and commence their first undergraduate course of study in an approved institution here. This position took effect from the academic year, 2014/15. In this way, such students, while still not eligible for tuition fees funding under the Free Fees Initiative, could avail of the more moderate EU rate of tuition fees.

Tax relief is available on these fees and students can apply to the Student Assistant Fund for financial support if needed.

There are currently no plans within my Department to amend this criteria.

Brexit Issues

189. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the preparations made in his Department in the event of no agreement being reached between the United Kingdom and the European Union on the terms of the UK's exit from the EU; if such preparations involve the drawing up of detailed and specific contingency plans in the event of a hard Brexit and a trade regime based on WTO tariffs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48775/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Minister for Foreign

Affairs and Trade has responsibility for coordinating the whole-of-Government response to Brexit. In this capacity, he is working closely with colleagues across Government to address the many challenges resulting from Brexit. This cooperation also involves the relevant State Agencies.

Work at Cabinet level is being supported by cross-Departmental coordination structures through which all relevant Departments are providing their research, analysis and overall policy input to the Government's wider response to Brexit, including its priorities for the ongoing Article 50 negotiations between the EU and the UK.

As the outcome of the negotiations is not yet known, an important focus of the planning and preparation being undertaken through these structures is on deepening the Government's analysis and understanding of the exact consequences of a range of different possible scenarios, including a hard Brexit. This represents an intensification of efforts to build on the Government's contingency planning framework, to which my own Department contributed fully on the preparation of the education components.

Our work has been facilitated by the International Unit of my Department which, under the leadership of a Deputy Secretary General, has been given overall responsibility for co-ordinating our response to Brexit. In discharging its Brexit-related functions, the International Unit participates in the Inter-Departmental Senior Officials Group which oversees the coordination of the Government's response to the outcome of the UK referendum, and supports the Cabinet Committee on the European Union including Brexit. This is further underpinned by the Unit's active engagement with other Departments in Brexit Workgroups on Brexit Coordination; the Economy and Sectoral Issues; the Common Travel Area; and the Island of Ireland Working Group.

The Unit also chairs the Education and Research Subgroup under the Economy and Sectoral Issues strand of co-ordination. The Subgroup includes relevant areas within the Department and relevant Agencies of the Department and other Departments/Agencies. Meetings of the Education and Research Subgroup of the Economy and Trade Group took place on 28 October 2016, 15 February; 24 May and 9 October 2017 and most recently focused on stakeholder consultations input and research collaboration.

My Department also works closely with the Higher Education Authority in Brexit planning for the higher education sector. The HEA has published a Brexit issues paper and has held meetings with the HEIs to discuss ongoing planning and issues with them as the process develops. We will continue to engage in this important aspect of planning and research work.

It is my priority to continue to engage actively on a number of fronts in dealing with the impact of Brexit on the Education sector. Consultation has been fundamental to my Department's preparations for Brexit. We have consulted extensively with our stakeholders. Between December 2016 and January 2017 both I and Minister of State Halligan have led consultations with stakeholders from right across the higher education, further education and training; and primary and post-primary education sectors. More recently, on 3 July 2017, the Tánaiste, and Minister for Enterprise and Innovation Frances Fitzgerald TD, and I co-hosted a joint stakeholder dialogue on enterprise skills needs and Brexit. The outputs from these events have been made publicly available. A further joint stakeholder dialogue on research and innovation with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation is due to take place on 5th December 2017.

All risks and challenges are being factored in to my Department's overall approach to future discussions and negotiations and our input to Government's preparations for EU-UK negotiations including the finalisation of our sectoral response plan. Both I and my Department will

continue to consult with the sector interests as necessary through the period ahead.

I have attached particular importance to engagement at political and institutional level on our Brexit agenda. I have met counterparts Peter Weir and Simon Hamilton of the NI Executive, and the UK's Secretary of State for Education, Justine Greening. Meetings were also held with the former Minister of State for Exiting the EU, David Jones, the UK's Opposition Spokesperson on Brexit, Keir Starmer, as well as members of the All Party Parliamentary Group on the Irish in Britain. Meetings have also taken place with Ministers from other EU Member States and with representatives of the EU Commission including Commissioner Navracsics.

All of this work is ongoing and must also respond to the emerging developments in the Brexit negotiations. My Department will work to ensure appropriate timely inputs to the current negotiations including the work of the Barnier taskforce. To that end we will keep under review the need for research and analysis of specific areas or issues that can inform these inputs.

There may also be opportunities to increase the numbers of international students choosing Ireland in the wake of Brexit and this is factored into the implementation work underway led by my Department, working with the sector, in the delivery of the actions in the International Education Strategy 2016-2020.

I will keep under review the necessity for further allocations of funds as circumstances develop.

Schools Refurbishment

190. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to arrange for a technical engineer from his Department to visit a school (details supplied) with a view to allocating the necessary funding to allow repair work to be carried out; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48789/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department has been in contact with the principal of the school in question and the school will be submitting an Emergency Works application to the Department in respect of this issue.

Schools Building Projects Status

191. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress that has been made on the provision of a permanent building for a college (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48794/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I can confirm to you Deputy that a project for the school in question was included in the Department's 6 Year Capital Programme announced in November 2015.

A suitable site in Local Authority ownership has been identified and the acquisition of the site has been devolved to the local Education and Training Board (ETB) for completion.

The building project for this school is also in the process of being devolved for delivery to the local Education and Training Board (ETB).

The first step in this process is the execution of a Service Level Agreement between my Department and the ETB and this is being arranged. Thereafter, the ETB will procure a Design

Team for the project to design the buildings, obtain the necessary statutory planning permissions and move the project onward to construction in due course. As the project is at an early stage in the delivery process, it is not possible at this time to give a date for their completion.

Schools Building Projects Status

192. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress that has been made on the provision of a new school building (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48795/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The delivery of the school project referred to by the Deputy has been devolved to Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB). A Stage 1 (preliminary design) submission has recently been received from LCETB and this will be considered at a meeting scheduled to take place shortly. If the submission is found to be in order the project will be allowed to proceed to the next stage (Stage 2a - developed design).

School Excellence Fund

193. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason no DEIS schools in County Donegal were included as part of the new school excellence fund launched recently; the criteria used to determine which DEIS school would receive initial funding; when he plans to roll out funding to include schools in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48797/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The development of the School Excellence Fund is at an early pilot stage and its rollout is being managed on a phased basis. Currently, there are 10 school clusters about to commence work in this early pilot phase, the majority of them located in urban areas designated as disadvantaged. When fully established, it is anticipated that the cohort of schools involved in the School Excellence Fund will meet criteria such as geographical spread, a variety of school size and type, a cross-sectoral dimension, potential to engage in innovative practice in teaching and learning, and demonstrated capacity to engage in DEIS action planning for improvement. There is no reason why DEIS schools in Donegal that meet criteria such as those outlined would not be included in further phases of the initiative, should they express an interest in participating.

Planning for the involvement of the next cohort of schools will begin in 2018. It is envisaged that further phases of the initiative will be rolled out in 2018 and 2019, subject to learning from the initial pilot phase.

Departmental Staff Training

194. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost of providing external coaching and-or training services for staff development in his Department over the past five years and to date in 2017, by cost per year, in tabular form; the company that delivered the training courses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48804/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The following tabular statement contains the information in relation to coaching and mentoring provided to officials at my Department as requested by the Deputy.

Expenditure 2012 – 2017: Coaching and Mentoring

Year	Expenditure €	Provider
2017	€3,120	Real Potential Ltd.
2016	0	n/a
2015	0	n/a
2014	0	n/a
2013	0	n/a
2012	€600	BROSNAN COMMUNICA-TIONS
	€2124.70	MAYBE INTERNATION-AL
	€800	Melissa Darmody

School Placement

195. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there will be enough primary school places specifically for junior infants in Balbriggan, County Dublin, for September 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48825/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy may be aware, in order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas. My Department uses a Geographical Information System (GIS) to identify where the pressure for school places across the country will arise. The GIS uses data from a range of sources, including the Central Statistics Office, Ordnance Survey Ireland, the Department of Social Protection and my Department's own databases. With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises at primary and post primary level to determine where additional school accommodation is needed.

Where demographic data indicates that additional provision is required, the delivery of such additional provision is dependent on the particular circumstances of each case and may, depending on the circumstances, be provided through either one, or a combination of, the following:

- Utilising existing unused capacity within a school or schools
- Extending the capacity of a school or schools
- Provision of a new school or schools

As with other school planning areas nationwide, the demographic data for the Balbriggan school planning area is being reviewed by my Department to take account of updated child benefit data and updated enrolment data. It is anticipated that these exercises will be concluded shortly.

Departmental Operations

196. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the names of the companies renting a fixing and-or space on telecommunications and-or communications masts from his Department; the income received for each of the past five years for same, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48838/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department is compiling the information required and will revert to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Schools Building Projects Status

197. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the tender for construction of a school (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48853/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The project at the school referred to by the Deputy has been tendered and a preferred bidder was selected; however, before the project proceeded to site the preferred bidder withdrew his tender.

The Design Team are currently examining the second-lowest tender and subject to no issues arising it is envisaged that the project will commence on site early in 2018.

State Examinations

198. **Deputy Seán Barrett** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has given consideration to introducing compulsory oral testing for junior certificate students who study a foreign language (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48864/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The new Junior Cycle specifications for Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) and Gaeilge (for both Gaeilge as Language 1 and Language 2) were introduced in September 2017 for incoming first year students. The specifications provide for the sustained development of students' oral language competence (spoken production and spoken interaction) throughout the three years of junior cycle.

The assessment of student' oral language skills at Junior Cycle is incorporated into the two Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs) in both Modern Foreign Languages and Gaeilge. This is reflective of the emphasis placed on the development of students' oral language competence in the specifications. Both CBAs provide opportunities to assess students' oral production and spoken interaction skills.

In the MFL specification, the first CBA, completed during their second year, involves students demonstrating their oral skills through a production or interaction. The second CBA, completed during students' third year of junior cycle, is the creation of a Language Portfolio. Throughout their junior cycle studies, students engage with and reflect on their language learning and develop and document their sociocultural awareness. The students choose three pieces of work from their compilation to submit for assessment.

For Gaeilge, CBA 1, carried out in second year, requires the completion of a portfolio in which one piece of text will be a sound/video piece. CBA 2, carried out in third year, is based entirely on students' oral language competence, including spoken interaction.

With these changes, the assessment of oral language skills in Junior Cycle Modern Foreign Languages and Gaeilge will no longer be optional.

Departmental Contracts Data

199. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the income received by his Department from the renting to companies of space to use and-or take fixings from telecommunications and-or communications masts on site or on the roof of his Department, in each of the past five years, by location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48876/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): For the Deputy's information, the Office of Public Works (OPW) acts as an agent for Government Departments and accordingly, the Department of Education and Skills does not own its office properties.

The Department understands that space has not been rented to companies for telecoms or communication masts on the Department's offices.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

200. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if progress has been made to increase the number of second level places for students with special needs in south County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48904/17]

201. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the recommendation from his Department for students with special needs finishing primary school who cannot secure a suitable place in second level; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48905/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 200 and 201 together.

My Department provides for a range of placement options and supports for schools, which have enrolled students with special educational needs, in order to ensure that wherever a child is enrolled, s/he will have access to an appropriate education.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) which is a separate independent statutory body, plans and co-ordinates the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs in conjunction with schools and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

The NCSE, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), is responsible for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports as required, which includes the establishment of special classes in mainstream primary and post primary schools. The NCSE is aware of emerging need from year to year, including the need for school placements in Co. Kildare, and where special provision is required it is planned and established to meet that need.

The NCSE has advised that the SENO and Senior SENO for the Kildare area have met with parents of the students who are due to leave the primary school referred to by the Deputy, in June 2018, to discuss their concerns and provide information relating to their transition to post primary education. The NCSE have also advised that they have assured parents that they are aware of their child's departure from primary school and are planning accordingly.

The enrolment of a child in a school is a matter, in the first instance, for the parents of the child and the Board of Management of a school. My Department and the NCSE has no role in relation to processing applications for enrolment to schools.

Accordingly, the NCSE has advised the parents involved, to seek to enrol their child, by applying in writing, to the school/s of their choice as early as possible.

It is the responsibility of the managerial authorities of all schools to implement an enrolment policy in accordance with the Education Act, 1998. The criteria to be applied by schools in such circumstances are a matter for the schools themselves. This selection process and the enrolment policy on which it is based must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants. Under section 15 (2) (d) of the Education Act 1998, each school is legally obliged to publish its enrolment policy.

Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, provides parents with an appeal process where a board of management of a school or a person acting on behalf of the Board refuses enrolment to a student. Where a school refuses to enrol a student, the school is obliged to inform parents of their right under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 to appeal that decision to either the relevant Educational Training Board or to the Secretary General of my Department.

The NCSE will continue to work with schools, parents, NEPS, health professionals and other staff who are involved in the provision of services in that area for children with special educational needs, to ensure that each child has a post primary placement appropriate to their needs for the 2018/19 school year.

My Department continues to work with the NCSE to ensure that there is appropriate planning in place to ensure that all children who require special class placements and special school places can access such placements in schools within their communities.

Schools Building Projects Status

202. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of works at a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48907/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department issued comments on the stage 2b submission to the Design Team on 25 October 2017 and requested confirmations from the Design Team that it carries out one final review of all of its tender documentation to ensure compliance with DoES requirements. The Design Team has been requested to submit written confirmation from each Design Team member including the PSDP that they have completed this review and are satisfied that the Tender Documents are complete, correct and in compliance with DoES and Building Control (Amendment) Regulations (BC(A) R) tender documentation requirements.

Upon receipt of these confirmations, my Department will then revert to the Design Team with regard to further progression of the project.

Schools Amalgamation

203. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the amalgamation of schools (details supplied); the expenditure to date on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48908/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that I understand the amalgamation process involving the schools, referred to, will be finalised with the delivery of the major school building project.

In that regard, the project concerned is currently at Stage 2(a) of the architectural planning process. Following a successful completion of this stage, the project will proceed to Stage 2(b), Detailed Design, which includes the application for planning permission and other statutory approvals and the preparation of tender documents.

To date the figure paid by my Department in Design Team Fees on this project is €159,199.35 inclusive of VAT.

Education Schemes

204. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the education services provided for children in the emergency response and orientation centre in Ballaghaderreen; if such services involve integrating children in the centre into local schools and with local children; the supports provided when displaced children are enrolled in schools under his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48910/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) my Department has committed to providing an interim education and orientation programme for families accommodated in IRPP Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROCs) established by the Department of Justice and Equality, including the centre opened in Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon earlier this year.

My Department has mandated the Education and Training Board (ETB) sector to manage education provision for residents of the EROCs. In the case of the Ballaghaderreen EROC, Galway Roscommon ETB provides:

- A transitional primary school programme on-site which introduces children and their families to the Irish education system whilst fostering social and personal development and cultural integration;

- A transitional post primary education programme, delivered on-site which includes English language tuition is provided for this age-group.

These transitional programmes are based around the anticipated resettlement timescale of 3-4 months indicated by the Department of Justice and Equality. Where families continue to reside in the EROC beyond this period, arrangements can be made, in consultation with Tusla's Educational Welfare Service, for the transition of school-age children to mainstream education in local schools. Otherwise these children will begin to attend mainstream school in the location where their family has been resettled.

The objective of my Department is that all children would have access to the mainstream education system at the earliest possible opportunity. In the case of children resident in EROC accommodation, this objective must take account of both school readiness of children and the availability of school places. With regard to the latter, it may be noted that the location of EROCs, including the centre in Ballaghaderreen, is determined by the Department of Justice and Equality based on the availability of suitable premises.

Efforts have been made by GRETB to engage with local schools as appropriate, while overall integration with the local community for families in the EROC is overseen by the local Interagency Committee.

In terms of additional supports for schools, both primary and post-primary schools may avail of additional language supports provided for students who do not speak English as their

first language. English as an Additional Language (EAL) resources are designed to allow individual students to participate in mainstream education on a par with their peers. These and other learning supports are provided on the basis of identified educational need.

All children who present with special educational needs, including those participating in the IRPP, are assessed by the relevant health and education professionals, and are linked with the relevant education provision most suited to their needs. These supports include learning support, access to special classes in mainstream schools or access, if necessary, to special schools.

Overall education provision to persons in the Irish Refugee Protection Programme is overseen by my Department in collaboration with relevant ETBs and the educational Welfare Service of Tusla. Provision in individual centres, as well as the overall programme is kept under constant review with the overall objective of ensuring the best possible educational outcomes for participating families.

Student Grant Scheme Administration

205. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has been briefed by Student Universal Support Ireland, SUSI, on proposals for its future use of the public services card in its work; and if his attention has been drawn to the scope of the proposals. [48951/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In line with the 2013 Government decision, S180/20/10/1789, the Public Services Card (PSC) infrastructure is the Government's standard identity verification scheme, which is to be used for access to all public services, where appropriate. As such, the widespread adoption of the PSC infrastructure, including its online counterpart MyGovID, to underpin access to public services by citizens is critical to the successful delivery of the eGovernment strategy.

MyGovID will be used by SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland) as the user authentication mechanism, to provide access to the online student grants system. Student grant applicants will also have to be SAFE (Standard Authentication Framework Environment) registered in order to make an application.

Student Universal Support Ireland

206. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to an anomaly in the SUSI grant scheme whereby it does not allow for a change of personal circumstances for the duration of a course of study (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48957/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): For student grant purposes, students are categorised according to their circumstances either as students dependent on parents or a legal guardian, or as independent mature students.

For a dependent student, the reckonable income for grant purposes includes both his/her own income and that of his/her parents/legal guardians.

A student may be assessed as an independent mature student if he or she has attained the age of 23 on the 1st January of the year of first entry to an approved course, or of re-entry following a break in studies of at least three years, and is not ordinarily resident with his/her parents from the previous October. Otherwise he or she would continue to be assessed on the basis of

parental income.

An applicant's class is defined at his/her first point of entry to an approved higher or further education course and this will continue to apply for the duration of his/her studies.

While it is not possible to appeal an applicant's class during the course of his/her studies, an applicant may be assessed or re-assessed by the awarding authority in the event of a change of circumstances relating to the following:

- Permanent change in reckonable income;
- Number of dependent children residing in the household;
- Commencement of an approved course;
- Normal residence;
- Nationality or immigration status;
- Change of course or institution.

If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant on the grounds of his/her initial classification as an independent or dependent student, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI. Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down in writing by SUSI and remains of the view that the scheme has not been interpreted correctly in his/her case, an appeal, outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board at www.studentgrantappeals.ie within the required timeframe.

Schools Building Projects Status

207. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the construction of a new school building for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48966/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department issued comments on the stage 2b submission to the Design Team on 25 October 2017 and requested confirmations from the Design Team that it carry out one final review of all of its tender documentation to ensure compliance with DoES requirements. The Design Team has been requested to submit written confirmation from each Design Team member including the PSDP that they have completed this review and are satisfied that the Tender Documents are complete, correct and in compliance with DoES and Building Control (Amendment) Regulations (BC(A) R) tender documentation requirements.

Upon receipt of these confirmations, my Department will then revert to the Design Team with regard to further progression of the project.

Special Educational Needs Staff

208. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a school (details supplied) will receive administrative status; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49019/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Since 2012 special schools are staffed based on their actual current pupil profiles and the disability category of each pupil, as opposed to primarily by school designation, in accordance with Department Circular 0042/2011.

Currently the awarding of Administrative Principal in special schools is governed by the Report of the Special Education Review Committee 1993 (SERC Report). Under the SERC report, Administrative Principal is warranted in special schools at the point at which the 6th teacher (i.e. 5th assistant teacher is about to be appointed).

I am aware of the correspondence received from the school to which the Deputy refers and my Department, in conjunction with the NCSE, have considered the staffing position of the school, taking into consideration the complex needs of the students enrolled, particularly those with chronic medical conditions and severe challenging behaviour.

A letter will issue to the school in the coming days, in response to the correspondence received.

Schools Building Projects Data

209. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the details of all post primary schools on the capital investment plan 1 January 2016 to 2021 for counties Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Tipperary and Waterford, in tabular form; and the date listed. [49040/17]

210. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the details of all primary schools in the capital investment plan 1 January 2016 to 2021 in counties Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Tipperary and Waterford, in tabular form; and the date listed. [49041/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take questions Nos. 209 and 210 together.

I wish to advise the Deputy that details of the major school building projects in Counties Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Tipperary and Waterford that are included on the Capital Programme are outlined in the table for the Deputy's information.

Information on all projects included on the 6 year Construction Programme are available on my Department's website www.education.ie.

County	Roll Number	School Name & Address	School Type	Year on Programme
Galway	12954F	SN Bhríde Lackagh, Tur-loughmore	Primary	2016
Galway	17444H	SN Seosamh Naofa, Carrabane, Athenry	Primary	2016
Galway	17807R	SN Cathair Geal	Primary	2016
Galway	18746F	SN Muine Mhea, Monivea, Athenry	Primary	2016

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County	Roll Number	School Name & Address	School Type	Year on Programme
Galway	20042E	Scoil an Chroí Naofa, Ballinasloe	Primary	2016
Galway	20061I	Gaelscoil Iarfhhlatha, Community Centre, Sr an Easbaig, Tuam	Primary	2016
Galway	68285C	Our Lady's College, Presentation Road	Post Primary	2016
Galway	17280D	SN Baile Atha Na Riogh, Athenry	Primary	2017
Galway	20070J	Rosedale Special School, Renmore	Special School	2017
Galway	20211B	Claregalway ETNS	Primary	2017
Galway	20330J	St Oliver's Special School, Tuam	Special School	2017
Galway	16071M	Scoil Chroí Naofa, Athenry	Primary	2018
Galway	18112K	Scoil Naomh Eanna, Bullaun, Loughrea	Primary	2018
Galway	20237T	Gaelscoil Riada, Raithin, Baile Átha an Rí	Primary	2018
Galway	62870G	Presentation College, Athenry	Post Primary	2018
Galway	63130R	Colaiste Chroí Mhuire Gan Smál, Spiddal	Post Primary	2018
Galway	71250A	Coláiste Cholm-cille, Inverin	Post Primary	2018
Galway	71270G	Gairmscoil Mhuire, Athenry	Post Primary	2018
Galway	76102K	Coláiste an Eachraidh, Baile Átha an Rí	Post Primary	2018
Galway	04506F	Scoil Iosaif Naofa, Oranmore	Primary	2019-2021

County	Roll Number	School Name & Address	School Type	Year on Programme
Galway	13365O	Scoil Mhuire, Oranmore	Primary	2019-2021
Galway	14590D	St Annin's, Rosscahill	Primary	2019-2021
Galway	19401W 19468I	Scoil Caitriona Senior and Junior Schools, Renmore	Primary	2019-2021
Galway	19529C	Scoil Mhuire, Moycullen	Primary	2019-2021
Galway	20328W	St Teresa's Special School, Ballinasloe	Special School	2019-2021
Galway	20410H	Knocknacarra Educate Together NS	Primary	2019-2021
Galway	20462D	Galway Steiner NS, Knocknacarra	Primary	2019-2021
Galway	20465J	Gort NS, Gort	Primary	2019-2021
Galway	62960H	St Joseph's College, Nun's Island	Post Primary	2019-2021
Galway	63040Q	Presentation College, Headford	Post Primary	2019-2021
Mayo	64660F	Sancta Maria College, Louisburg	Primary	2016
Mayo	07054L	Scoil Naomh Bríd, Culleens	Primary	2017
Mayo	19375B	St Brid's Special National School, Castlebar	Special School	2017
Mayo	64590K	St. Joseph's Secondary School, Castlebar	Post Primary	2017
Mayo	76334I	St. Joseph's Community College, Charlestown	Post Primary	2017
Mayo	08302J	Holy Trinity NS, Westport	Primary	2018

Mayo	64520M	St. Marys Secondary School, Ballina	Post Primary	2018
Mayo	20275E	Scoil Iosa, Ballina	Primary	2019-2021
Roscommon	20126K	Gaelscoil de Hide, Cnoc na Cruibe	Primary	2019-2021
Tipperary	10120P	Sn Mhuire na Trocaire, Cahir	Primary	2017
Tipperary	20007C	Gaelscoil Chluain Meala, Baile Gaelach	Primary	2017
Tipperary	20085W	Gaelscoil Charraig Na Siuire	Primary	2018
Tipperary	16979S 17731K	St Colm-cille's NS & St Joseph's NS, Templemore	Primary	2019-2021
Tipperary	76069P	Colaiste Phobail Ros Cré	Post Primary	2019-2021
Waterford	19108B	St Martin's Special School, Ballytruckle	Special School	2016
Waterford	20116H	Glor Na Mara, Tramore	Primary	2017
Waterford	65010R	Newtown School, Waterford City	Post Primary	2017
Waterford	91509E	Blackwater Community School, Lismore	Post Primary	2017
Waterford	64940L	Waterpark College, Waterford City	Post Primary	2017

Further Education and Training Colleges

211. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the details of all alternative further educations facilities in the capital investment plan 1 January 2016 to 2021 in counties Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Tipperary and Waterford in tabular form; and the date listed. [49042/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): Further Education and Training (FET) provides learners with key intermediate level skills, enhancing the productivity and adaptability of the Irish workforce. It is delivered in a range of settings throughout the country, with FET providers firmly embedded in local communities.

A priority for my Department, is to improve the quality of the settings in which FET is delivered, in order to better respond to the needs of learners and employers. It is intended that an enhanced capital programme will be rolled out for the FET sector from 2020.

The total planned allocation for Further Education and Training purposes in the Capital Investment plan 2016 to 2021 is outlined as follows:

SUB-HEAD	2016 (€m)	2017 (€m)	2018 (€m)	2019 (€m)	2020 (€m)	2021 (€m)
B.5 - Further Education	3.000	3.000	6.000	13.000	18.000	28.000

In the immediate term, the upgrade of apprenticeship equipment, including to meet the requirements of new syllabi, is a priority. There is also investment required in equipment to deliver the wide range of new apprenticeships being developed and rolled out through the national calls from the Apprenticeship Council.

While the SOLAS capital allocation to Education and Training Boards (ETBs) is not available by county as requested, I attach a breakdown of the capital allocation to each of the ETBs in the counties requested.

-	2016	2017
	Funds Disbursed	Funds to be Disbursed
ETB	€	€
Galway, Roscommon (GRETB)	245,817	251,091
Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim (MS-LETB)	453,934	268,635
Tipperary (TETB)	0	0
Waterford, Wexford (WWETB)	359,810	208,168

Please note, up until recently Tipperary ETB had no training centre, which is why there has been no further education capital expenditure in the years listed. Tipperary have recently leased a unit in Thurles as a dedicated Further Education and Training Centre for the County and it is expected costs will be incurred in future years. Solas is engaging with individual ETBs to identify the necessary capital requirements for the remaining term of the investment plan.

Schools Administration

212. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the course of action taken if practices of a school board of management contradict his Department directives to all schools and circulars from his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49044/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1998, the Board of Management is the body charged with the direct governance of a school. In general, the Board has the responsibility to ensure that the school operates efficiently and effectively.

Boards of Management are required to comply with the provisions of the Education Act

1998 and the terms of Circulars issued by my Department. The Boards of Management of all primary schools are also required to comply with the provisions of my Department's "Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2015-2019" booklet.

In general, where a person has any concerns in relation to issues in a school, these should, in the first instance, be brought to the attention of the Board of Management of the school and/or the Patron of the school concerned. It may also be appropriate to bring the matter to the attention of the Department.

Teaching Council of Ireland

213. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason the request by the Teaching Council for professional release time from full-time work for the chairperson of the Teaching Council, requested of his Department on 23 June 2017, has not been sanctioned; when a decision will be issued and communicated to the Teaching Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49056/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Teaching Council's request for release time for the chairperson remains under consideration in my Department. It is intended that a decision in the matter will be made shortly.

Residential Institutions Statutory Fund

214. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the fact that some applicants for the redress scheme governed by Caranua have had children born after the cessation of the Education (Former Residents of Certain Institutions for Children) Finance Board and therefore could not benefit from said fund; if he has given consideration to allowing applications on behalf of these children in the Department's review of the applications procedure for Caranua; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49058/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Act 2012 provides that only those former residents who received awards from the Residential Institutions Redress Board or equivalent Court awards or settlements are eligible to apply to Caranua. The decision to confine eligibility to former residents was taken having regard to the maximum funds available of €110 million and a potential pool of some 15,000 applicants. As the Deputy will be aware there is a review of eligibility to apply to Caranua underway at present. Any proposal to change the eligibility criteria would require legislation.

School Transport Eligibility

215. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will review the case of a person (details supplied); if his Department will sanction the necessary funds for an increase in vehicle size that would allow Bus Éireann to facilitate the additional concessionary pupils; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49059/17]

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 over 113,000 children, including almost 11,000 children with special educational needs, are being transported in over 4,500 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually.

Under the terms the Post Primary School Transport Scheme children are eligible for transport where they reside not less than 4.8 kilometres from and are attending their nearest education centre as determined by the Department/Bus Éireann.

Bus Éireann has advised that the child in question is not eligible for school transport as he is not attending his nearest post primary school.

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only which is subject to a number of terms and conditions including the availability of spare seats on an existing service and payment of the annual charge. Under the terms of the School Transport Schemes additional vehicles will not be introduced, nor will larger vehicles or extra trips using existing vehicles be provided to cater for children travelling on a concessionary basis.

The terms of the School Transport Schemes are applied equitably on a national basis.

Departmental Communications

216. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the domain names registered to or owned by his Department or through a third party company. [49069/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The domain names registered to or owned by the department or through a third party include the following:

esinet.ie;

education.ie;

studentgrantappeals.ie;

esf.ie;

egf.ie;

regionalskills.ie;

schooltransportappeals.ie;

scoilnet.ie;

pdsttechnologyineducation.ie;

skillnets.ie;

energyineducation.ie;

siolta.ie;

schoolself-evaluation.ie;

school-self-evaluation.ie;

school-self-evaluation.com;

esbs.ie; And

nationalskillscouncil.ie

Parliamentary Questions Costs

217. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the average costs associated with processing and answering written and oral parliamentary questions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49122/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): While a considerable amount of time is spent answering Parliamentary Questions, it is not possible to quantify the costs involved. Officials are assigned to deal with Parliamentary Questions as part of their duties. They are answered by officials who deal with the particular issue(s) raised in Parliamentary Questions. Cost associated with processing individual answers depend on the complexity of the issue raised and whether priority, oral or written. In 2016 my Department responded to 3,434 Parliamentary Questions and to date in 2017 my Department has responded to 3,801 Parliamentary Questions.

Schools Property

218. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of school buildings owned by an organisation (details supplied) or other patron bodies that are vacant and no longer in use as schools in the Dublin city and county area; the number of buildings at different locations involved or which are the subject of negotiation for hand over to the State under the Residential Institutions Redress Act 2002; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49147/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The buildings referred to by the Deputy are in private ownership. Where a school relocates or closes, and where my Department does not have any future educational need for the building, the future use of the old building is in general a matter for the property owner. Such buildings may be used for community or other purposes.

There are currently no school buildings in the specified area that are involved in or subject to negotiations for handover to my Department under the Residential Redress Act 2002.

Residential Institutions Redress Scheme

219. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the Residential Institutions Redress Act 2002 of school buildings in Dublin city and county handed over under this scheme to date; the value attributed to these buildings; his plans for future use or development or sale of these buildings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49148/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I presume the Deputy is referring to contributions being made by religious congregations under the 2002 Indemnity Agreement. Under that Agreement the 18 participating religious congregations are contributing €128m in cash, counselling services and property. The cash contributions of €54.42m under the Agreement have been received while counselling services to the value of €10 have also been

provided in accordance with the Agreement.

Under the Agreement my Department agreed in principle with CORI that a total of 64 properties would be accepted subject to good and marketable title and agreed valuations. This number has reduced to 61 as the Department has accepted and received a cash sum in lieu of three properties where good and marketable title could not be established. 55 properties have been fully transferred and there are no outstanding issues. While physical transfers of 5 of the remaining properties have taken place and all 5 are in use or available for use, the legal requirements under the Indemnity Agreement are being pursued to finalise the transfer process. One of the properties has been rejected by the State and, in accordance with the terms of the Agreement, the congregation concerned has been requested to offer an acceptable alternative property or cash in lieu.

I understand that one functioning educational property in Dublin city and county transferred under the terms of the 2002 Agreement. The property in question is Presentation Community College, Dublin 6W which now operates under the auspices of the City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETb). The value attributed to the property under the Agreement was €4,500,000. The school is a fully functioning co-educational post-primary school.

No educational properties in Dublin city and county are left to transfer under the 2002 Indemnity Agreement.

Pension Provisions

220. **Deputy Maria Bailey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a person who is officially retired from his Department having completed the necessary 40 years' service for pension purposes and has been compelled to retire after 40 years' service is required to sign on for jobseeker's allowance even though the person is not actively seeking work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49156/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Public service employees, including teachers, who are members of an occupational pension scheme and who also have paid full rate Class A PRSI have two sources of payment of their entitlements-

1. An occupational pension paid by their pension scheme administrators which in the case of primary and secondary teachers or certain other non-teaching staff is my Department and,

2. In the period between retirement and reaching state pension age, job-seekers benefits may be payable for some or all of this period by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP). Thereafter on reaching state pension age (currently age 66 years) a state pension may be paid by DEASP.

Each of these sources of payment has separate and distinctive conditions to be satisfied in order for payment to be made.

The public service employer and the employee make significant PRSI contributions during the course of the person's employment which may, on foot of the full-rate PRSI contribution paid, entitle the employee to a range of state benefits and state pension.

On retirement it is incumbent on such a person to apply to DEASP for state benefits to ensure that s/he receives his/her full entitlements. That Department will assess the applicant and decide if job-seekers benefits/state pension is payable.

State pension currently becomes payable on application on reaching age 66. Many public service occupational pension schemes become payable at an earlier date and in the interim period between retirement and state pension age a person such as that referred to by the Deputy, may claim and receive a benefit from DEASP. Responsibility for establishing entitlements from DEASP and satisfying their requirements under the PRSI rules rests with the retiree and these are not matters on which my Department can adjudicate.

Within the occupational pension scheme, such as is operated by my Department, provision exists for a top-up supplementary pension in certain circumstances, which includes where an individual does not qualify for job-seekers benefits under the rules as operate by DEASP. Where however, a person fails to claim one of the state benefits to which s/he is entitled or where the failure to qualify for social welfare benefits rests with the person any state benefit foregone cannot be made good by the occupational pension provider nor can the top up supplementary pension be paid.

Schools Refurbishment

221. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address the need for repairs to a leaking roof that is letting water seep into the controls of an elevator at a school (details supplied) in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49165/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise that my Department has no record of receiving correspondence from the school to which the Deputy refers relating to the repairs in question.

An official from my Department is due to visit the school on the 23rd November 2017 to discuss another matter and will discuss this issue with the Principal.

Defibrillators in Schools Provision

222. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there is a defibrillator in each primary, secondary and higher education institution in the country. [49190/17]

224. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of installing a defibrillator in every primary, secondary and higher education institution in the country. [49192/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take questions Nos. 222 and 224 together.

I wish to advise the Deputy that the decision to install a defibrillator is made at local level and is a matter for the governing authority of each individual school and higher education institution.

My Department does not have information relating to the estimated cost of installing a defibrillator which, I expect, would depend on the variety of defibrillator model installed, together with custom-built storage and associated training requirements. The question of the need for defibrillators to be made available in places, such as schools and higher education institutions, and any training needs arising is primarily a public health matter and would therefore be a matter for the Department of Health.

Defibrillators in Schools Provision

223. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if all teachers in primary, secondary and higher education institutions are mandated to be trained in the use of a defibrillator. [49191/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Under the provisions of the Education Act 1998, the board of management is the body charged with the direct governance of a school. Schools are required to take all reasonable precautions to provide training for teachers to ensure the safety and welfare of their pupils.

In recognition of the responsibility which the Education Act has imposed on Boards of Management and the increasingly complex environment in which they must operate, my Department funds a scheme for the provision of training and development for boards of management to assist them in the discharge of their duties. The training is delivered by the school management bodies.

The issue of training in the use of a defibrillator is a decision for each Board of Management to make in relation to their own school.

The position with regard to the higher education sector is that higher education institutions are autonomous bodies and are responsible for the day-to-day management and operational affairs of the institution. Accordingly my Department has no role in relation to such matters.

Question No. 224 answered with Question No. 222.

School Accommodation

225. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the nature and terms of arrangements or agreements with each of the three schools occupying a site (details supplied). [49215/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy may be aware, my Department recently completed the purchase of the campus to which the Deputy refers. The primary school on the site closed at the end of the 2016/17 academic year and the post-primary school will wind down and close at the end of the 2018/19 academic year. As part of the agreement of sale, it was agreed that the post-primary school will continue to operate until June 2019 to ensure the orderly wind-down of the school and a licence agreement is in place with Notre Dame Schools Trust Limited in this regard.

The campus is also being utilised to facilitate the permanent accommodation for Gaelscoil na Fuinseoige and the temporary accommodation for Ballinteer ETNS, pending resolution of the planning issues at its permanent site. Gaelscoil na Fuinseoige and Ballinteer ETNS are both located on the campus in a shared accommodation arrangement with the post-primary school since September 2017 based on agreed arrangements between the three schools.

Departmental Properties

226. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the timeframe for the release of green space lands owned by his Department at Killelland in Ashbourne. [49245/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Officials from my Department are involved in discussions with officials from Meath County Council in relation to the future development of the site and plans for the Ashbourne area, and this is ongoing at present.

It is not possible at present to provide a definitive timeframe at present until all elements of the proposal are agreed but there has been significant progress in recent months.

School Transport Eligibility

227. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a person (details supplied) will be assisted with transport issues by his Department to attend a course; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49270/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): This is an operational matter for Longford and Westmeath Education and Training Board (LWETB). I have asked LWETB to contact the Deputy directly.

DEIS Administration

228. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans for the further expansion of the DEIS programme in 2018; his further plans to reopen the programme for those schools which did not receive DEIS designation in 2017 but fulfil the criteria as identified in the recently published deprivation report and that require additional resources and supports in their respective schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49293/17]

229. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of schools added to the DEIS designations list 2017 following the verification process engaged in by the respective schools; his views on the verification process (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49294/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 228 and 229 together.

We have, for the first time, introduced an objective, statistics based model for deciding which schools merit inclusion in the DEIS Programme, so that all stakeholders can have confidence that we are targeting extra resources at those schools with the highest concentrated levels of disadvantage.

The key data sources used in the DEIS identification process 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.

A detailed document explaining the methodology used in the Identification process is available on the Department's website at <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Identification-Process.pdf>

Schools were not required to apply for assessment in DEIS as every school was automatically assessed as part of the DEIS Identification process. Therefore no 'appeals' process was required. However, under DEIS Plan 2017, a process to verify the data used was provided for and some schools availed of this verification process. As with the new DEIS Identification process the verification process was also a scientific exercise which involved checking the school data, as used in the Identification process, in terms of the quality and accuracy of the data supplied and the match rate to CSO small area. With regard to the number of schools added as a result of this process I can confirm that one extra school has been included in DEIS. Schools that availed of this process have been notified of the outcome.

Schools included in DEIS with effect from September 2017 are those whose level of disadvantage has been identified as those schools serving the highest concentrations of disadvantage among their pupil cohort. Schools which have not been included at this stage are those which have not been identified as having the highest levels of concentrated disadvantage amongst their pupil cohort, under the new identification model.

It is important to note that this is the first step in a process and the fact that a school has not been included now does not preclude its inclusion at a later date, should the assessment indicate a level of disadvantage that warrants additional supports. I am fully aware that there are further schools whose concentrated level of disadvantage may not be at the highest level, but may nevertheless be at a level which warrants additional supports for pupils under DEIS.

A further process will take account of updated data as it becomes available. Schools are being advised to ensure that their POD/PPOD data is fully correct and up to date, including Eir-code which can now be recorded by schools on both POD and PPOD databases. The HP Index, based on the 2016 National Census data has been published recently.

The plan is for a further assessment of all schools, using these updated datasets. Should this exercise reveal that any school, which did not qualify for DEIS in 2017, meets the criteria applicable to schools with the highest concentration of disadvantage based on the updated information then additional schools may be included subject to available resources.

Student Data

230. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of students attending courses at third level colleges who qualify for tax relief on tuition fees in each year since 2010; the number who paid fees in excess of the student contribution charge; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49311/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy will be aware tax relief is available for third level tuition fees (including Student Contribution) paid by an individual to an approved college in respect of an approved course. Queries in relation to the number of individuals that qualify for that tax relief in any particular policy area are more appropriately directed to the Office of the Revenue Commissioners.

In accessing third level education in this State, students may be liable to pay tuition fees and a student contribution.

The Exchequer meets the cost of tuition fees through the Free Fees Initiative which was introduced in 1995 by the then Government to assist third level undergraduate students in publicly funded higher education institutions. Currently, under the terms of the Initiative, the Exchequer meets the cost of tuition fees in respect of eligible students who are pursuing full-time undergraduate courses of study which are a minimum of two years duration in an approved

higher education institution. The main conditions of the scheme are that students must be first-time undergraduates, hold inter alia EU/EEA/Swiss nationality in their own right, and have been ordinarily resident in an EU/EEA/Swiss state for at least three of the five years preceding their entry to an approved third level course

The student contribution charge currently stands at €3,000 and applies to all full-time students who benefit under the Free Fees Initiative. However, it is important to recognise that the State pays this contribution (or part of it) on behalf of approximately 43% of undergraduate students as they qualify on means-tested grounds for exemption from the contribution under the Student Grants Scheme.

Tax relief provisions are also available so that second and subsequent siblings do not have to bear the full cost of the student contribution. In addition, higher education institutions have provisions in place to allow students to pay the contribution in at least two moieties.

Additionally, some students may also be requested by their respective institutions to pay an additional student levy. The determination of the level and payment of such levies are a matter for the institutions themselves and are not collected centrally by my Department.

Irish Language

231. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to set up an Irish language immersion pilot scheme to teach designated subjects through Irish in primary schools as outlined in the 20 year strategy for the Irish language; the timeframe to implement such a pilot scheme; and if he has given consideration to a pilot (details supplied) of language immersion in County Cork. [49335/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The 20-Year Strategy for Irish emphasises the implementation of partial immersion in all primary schools. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment was asked to advise on partial immersion or Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) as part of its work on the development of a language curriculum at primary level.

A new integrated Primary Language Curriculum for junior infants to second class, incorporating both Irish and English, was introduced from September 2016. This curriculum supports children's language learning in our two languages, Irish and English, through high-quality experiences. The curriculum aims to ensure that children acquire transferrable language skills which will assist them in learning both Irish and English during their primary education and in additional languages when they choose them at second level. Work is currently underway in developing the Primary Language Curriculum for third to sixth class which will be available to schools in autumn 2018.

My Department's current focus is on national delivery of the Primary Language Curriculum. A comprehensive continuing professional development programme is in place to support the implementation of the new Primary Language Curriculum. Teachers, as part of this professional development, receive advice on the use of different approaches to teach Irish and to use Irish as the medium of instruction across other aspects of the curriculum. This is the CLIL approach.

The Department's Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 also supports immersion education and the use of Irish as the language of communication and instruction to assist with the language acquisition of learners of Irish and the language enrichment of native speakers. In April 2017 the Department issued an invitation to all primary and post-primary schools in

Gaeltacht language planning areas to participate in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme. Schools participating in the Scheme are eligible to access extra supports and resources on the implementation of specified language criteria, including total immersion education through Irish on a phased basis.

Minor Works Scheme

232. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address concerns raised in correspondence (details supplied); and the immediate steps he will take to address same. [49373/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The normal practice is for the Minor Works Grant to be announced towards the end of the year if funding permits.

Over the next number of weeks the issue of the Minor Works Grant 2017/2018 will be considered in the context of my Department's overall capital position.

Schools Building Projects Status

233. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of a new school building for a school (details supplied); if his Department is treating this project with the utmost importance and dealing with it as a priority due to the pressures the school is under in its current building; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49374/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The building project for the school to which the Deputy refers is at an advanced stage of architectural planning, Stage 2b – Detailed Design, which includes the applications for Planning Permission, Fire Cert and Disability Access Cert and the preparation of tender documents. All statutory approvals have been obtained.

The Design Team are currently finalising the Stage 2b report. Upon receipt and review of this report my Department will revert to Board of Management with regard to the further progression of the project at that time.

Offshore Islands

234. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason the secondary schools on the islands do not have small school status; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49383/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The criteria used for the allocation of teachers to schools is published annually on the Department's website.

The schools to which the Deputy refers are Education and Training Board (ETB) schools.

The Department provides a staffing allocation to each ETB and the distribution of this staffing allocation including Island School posts and Small School posts is a matter for the Chief Executive of the ETB schemes in question.

Passport Services

235. **Deputy Seán Barrett** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to introduce powers to revoke passports in circumstances in which a person is charged with paedophilia offences here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48691/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): There are provisions in the Passports Act 2008 (“the Act”) which provide a legal basis for the Minister to refuse to issue a passport or to cancel a passport and require its surrender.

As set out in more detail in the reply recently provided by my Department to PQ 39822/17, one of the grounds in the Act for refusal of a passport is where the Minister is notified by the Courts Service of a court order requiring a person to surrender his or her passport and to refrain from applying for a passport.

The Act also provides, at section 18, for the circumstances in which a passport may be cancelled. These include cases where the Minister becomes aware of a fact or circumstance that would have required or permitted refusal of a passport.

Any refusal to issue a passport or decision to cancel and require surrender of a passport must be evidence-based and defensible in the case of legal challenge. The Passport Service does not have any statutory power to impose or monitor travel restrictions on a passport holder.

Brexit Issues

236. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the comments on 12 November 2017 by Michel Barnier regarding preparing for a hard Brexit. [48892/17]

237. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the preparations his Department is making in the event of there being a hard Brexit. [48893/17]

239. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the preparations made in his Department in the event of no agreement being reached between the United Kingdom and the European Union on the terms of the UK’s exit from the EU; if such preparations involve the drawing up of detailed and specific contingency plans in the event of a hard Brexit and a trade regime based on WTO tariffs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48778/17]

241. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the preparations his Department is making in the event of there being a hard Brexit and in particular following Michel Barnier’s comments on doing same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48894/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 236, 237, 239 and 241 together.

As Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade with special responsibility for Brexit, I am working closely with colleagues across Government to address the many challenges resulting from Brexit. This cooperation also involves the relevant State Agencies.

Work at Cabinet level is being prepared through cross-Departmental coordination structures. All relevant Departments are providing research, analysis and overall policy input to

the Government's wider response to Brexit, including its priorities for the ongoing Article 50 negotiations between the EU and the UK.

An important focus of planning and preparation is deepening the Government's analysis and understanding of the exact consequences of a range of different possible scenarios, including one in which no Withdrawal Agreement is concluded. This represents an intensification of the Government's previous contingency planning. All Departments are assessing in a very concrete way the immediate legal or practical consequences of a no-deal Brexit in their areas and what mitigating measures might be possible. It will then be necessary for the Government to consider the situation in the round and discuss whether specific actions are required at that stage.

Aside from its wider co-ordination responsibilities, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has lead responsibility for planning for, preparing positions on, and following the EU-UK negotiations. This requires research on and analysis of very many legal, institutional, and political issues. The eventual outcome of negotiations will of course be decisive in determining the shape and effects of Brexit. Our Permanent Representation in Brussels, and our Embassies in all Member States, send in a constant stream of reports describing and analysing the concerns and priorities of the EU Institutions and our partners.

This work is reflected in the Government's policy positions and public statements, such as the comprehensive document on the Government's approach to the Article 50 negotiations and our response to Brexit which was published on 2 May as well as through in depth analysis such as the series of Department of Finance/ESRI research papers on the implications of Brexit. The Government will continue to consider how best to present further work. We are also communicating through public consultations and stakeholder engagement, such as the All-Island Civic Dialogue and the Brexit Stakeholder Forum.

Furthermore, the Government is already actively responding to the implications of Brexit and putting measures in place to mitigate the adverse effects for Ireland. We have already taken important steps to prepare the economy, including in Action Plan for Jobs 2017 and the Government's Trade and Investment Strategy.

Significant measures were announced in Budget 2018 including a new €300m Brexit Loan Scheme for Businesses and a €25m Brexit Response Loan Scheme for the agri-food sector as well as additional supports for capital investment in food industry and Bord Bia marketing and promotion activities, amounting to over €50m in total. There is also increased funding for Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to support our Brexit related work as well as to support the opening of six new diplomatic missions as part of Global Footprint 2025 to help our exporters find new markets and diversity their exports.

Clearly, a disorderly exit would be very damaging, particularly for Ireland, and Michel Barnier's recent call for EU Member States to plan for such a contingency is fully in line with the Government's approach. And while we are not at the cliff edge yet, our preparations and contingency planning for such an unwelcomed outcome will continue. However, our primary focus remains on making the negotiations a success and working with EU partners and UK to ensure an orderly withdrawal that protects the peace process, maintains the Common Travel Area and agrees a transitional arrangement which leads the way to the closest possible relationship between the EU and the UK.

Syrian Conflict

238. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to make representations to have the 54 Syrian Shia children (details supplied) who were kidnapped following the suicide bomb attack on the bus evacuating them from Foua and Kafraya in April 2017 returned home. [48685/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The attack on a convoy of busses transporting evacuees from the besieged towns of Foua and Kefraya in North West Syria last April, which left over 100 people dead, many of them children, was utterly abhorrent and I condemn it unreservedly. Attacks on civilians in Syria, such as the bombing of this convoy of evacuees, further underline the need for full accountability for these appalling acts. Those responsible for such crimes on all sides must be held accountable. In relation to the allegation of kidnapping raised by the Deputy, it is extremely difficult to get reliable and verified information on the situation in contested areas of Syria. Reliable evidence is essential for follow up and accountability.

Ireland 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. We have consistently called for the referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. Ireland supports the work of 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. Furthermore, in December, Ireland and a group of likeminded countries successfully pressed for the adoption of a resolution by the UN General Assembly to establish an 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. Earlier this year my predecessor as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade announced a contribution of €100,000 to support the work of this mechanism.

Conflict and war have a particularly horrific impact on vulnerable groups such as children, and Ireland is committed to working to ensure that their needs are taken into account in humanitarian response in a meaningful way. Ireland has made a significant contribution to the humanitarian response to the Syrian conflict. Since 2012, Ireland has contributed over €90 million to the humanitarian effort. This includes over €3.4 million in funding to UNICEF for the No Lost Generation Initiative (NLG), which works to protect children, adolescent and youths from the threat of poverty through the provision of education and protection within Syria and neighbouring countries. Through our annual contributions to EU Institutions, Ireland also supports the EU's humanitarian response to the Syria crisis, from which €445 million was contributed in 2016.

Ireland will continue to prioritise the protection of civilians, and particularly the most vulnerable of these, including children, in our response to the Syria crisis.

Question No. 239 answered with Question No. 236.

Departmental Staff Training

240. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the cost of providing external coaching and-or training services for staff development in his Department over the past five years and to date in 2017, by cost per year, in tabular form; the company that delivered the training courses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48807/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department sup-

ports the continuous development of its officers through the implementation of a broad range of professional programmes, focusing on leadership, management, compliance and evaluation with a view to strengthening the management and diplomatic capabilities of its staff.

In addition to intensive language training, my Department provides its officers with a comprehensive pre-posting training programme in advance of taking up duty in missions overseas. My Department participates in the European Diplomatic Programme (EDP) where officers benefit from exchanges with colleagues from other EU Member States. Officers also regularly attend courses delivered by the European External Action Service (EEAS). Since 2016, all newly recruited Third Secretaries and Administrative Officers participate in the Civil Service-wide Graduate Development Programme. Management development programmes are also delivered to support officers in supervisory roles at Executive Officer and Higher Executive Officer level. Officers from across my Department also benefit from support for third-level education under the Refund of Fees Scheme. Training and development programmes are advertised widely across the Department reflecting the commitment to lifelong learning and personal development contained in the Civil Service Renewal Plan.

Language training accounts for approximately one third of my Department's training and development expenditure. In 2016, the Department's training and development total expenditure was €643,623 of which €212,901 was spent on language training. The overall expenditure on Training and Development under Vote 28 for 2012-2017 is contained in the table.

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017 (to date)
€503,045	€513,413	€631,686	€698,427	€643,623	€494,027

The companies which delivered the training courses from 2012 to 2017 are as follows.

2012
PAI PUBLICATIONS LTD,
BMF BUSINESS SERVICES
INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
ORDER OF MALTA
THE IRISH TIMES
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LTD
DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL (FIRE BRIGADE)
INDEPENDENT COLLEGES
TRINITY COLLEGE
IRISH RED CROSS
EMERGENCY CARE PRODUCTS
ALLIANCE FRANCAISE DE LIMERICK LTD
MILLEFEUILLE PROVENCE S.A.R.L.
CIVIL SERVICE LANGUAGE CTR
GAELCHULTUR TEORANTA
GERMAN LANGUAGE CENTRE
CREA LANGUES FRENCH
SANDFORD LANGUAGE INST. LTD.
ALLIANCE FRANCAISE DUBLIN
HIGH PERFORMANCE
PAUL LOFTUS & ASSOCIATES INC

2012
AVONDALE MEDIA SERVICES
PATRICK SUTTON T/A COMMUNICATE
SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL & AFRICAN STUDIES
TIGER CONSULTING
WRIGHT CONSULTANCY
DUBLIN RAPE CRISIS CENTRE
2013
ICS SKILLS TRAINING & CERTIFICATION
PAI PUBLICATIONS LTD,
INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
NIFAST
ORDER OF MALTA
DUBLIN CITYCOUNCIL (FIRE BRIGADE)
HIGH PERFORMANCE
LANGUAGES UNLIMITED SERVICES LTD
ALLIANCE FRANCAISE DUBLIN
CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE FOR IRELAND
SANDFORD LANGUAGE INST. LTD.
TRINITY COLLEGE
INSTITUTO CERVANTES
MILLEFEUILLE PROVENCE S.A.R.L.
SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL & AFRICAN STUDIES
EN FRANCAIS
GERMAN LANGUAGE CENTRE
TIGER CONSULTING
EMCO CUMARSAID TEO
DUBLIN RAPE CRISIS CENTRE
PATRICK SUTTON T/A COMMUNICATE
AVONDALE MEDIA SERVICES
PITMAN TRAINING CENTRE
WRIGHT CONSULTANCY
CLARE MULLIGAN CONSULTING LTD
SHANNON CONSULTING
THE WHEEL
SURESKILLS
BIG WAVE MEDIA TRAINING LTD
EMERGENCY CARE PRODUCTS
THE IRISH TIMES
SANDFORD LANGUAGE INST. LTD.
ALLIANCE FRANCAISE DE LIMERICK LTD
MARIE THERESE SAFFRE
LANGUAGES UNLIMITED SERVICES LTD
CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE FOR IRELAND
ALLIANCE FRANCAISE DE CORK LTD

2013
INSTITUTO CERVANTES
GOETHE INSTITUTE DUBLIN
LANGUAGES UNLIMITED SERVICES LTD
PEAK CONNEXION LTD
TIGER CONSULTING
WRIGHT CONSULTANCY
SHANNON CONSULTING
BIG WAVE MEDIA TRAINING LTD
EMCO CUMARSAID TEO
PITMAN TRAINING CENTRE
CENAD
SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL & AFRICAN STUDIES
KIMMAGE DEVELOPMENT STUDIES CENTRE
NIFAST
EMERGENCY CARE PRODUCTS
UNITAR TRAINING
THE IRISH TIMES
PITMAN TRAINING NAAS
GERMAN LANGUAGE CENTRE
FIRE AND INDUSTRIAL SAFETY TRAINING
BRYAN ANDREWS T/A BA & ASSOCIATES
AVONDALE MEDIA SERVICES
DUBLIN RAPE CRISIS CENTRE
ORDER OF MALTA
LEGAL-ISLAND LTD
CONRADH NA GAELIGE
GAELCHULTUR TEORANTA
ALLIANCE FRANCAISE DUBLIN
SEVEN
MAPLES CONSULTING
THE COMMUNICATIONS CLINIC
LA TOUCHE TRAINING
UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK LANGUAGE CENTRE
OIDEAS GAEL
OLIVE SAFETY SERVICES
USAFETY
LIAM SCOLLAN
2014
IRISH CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN LAW
PAI PUBLICATIONS LTD
INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
NIFAST
DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL (FIRE BRIGADE)
THE WHEEL

2014
SURESKILLS
ORDER OF MALTA
BIG WAVE MEDIA TRAINING LTD
EMERGENCY CARE PRODUCTS
DCM LEARNING
THE IRISH TIMES
SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL & AFRICAN STUDIES
SANDFORD LANGUAGE INST. LTD.
ALLIANCE FRANCAISE DE LIMERICK LTD
MARIE THERESE SAFFRE
LANGUAGES UNLIMITED SERVICES LTD
MILLEFEUILLE PROVENCE S.A.R.L.
CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE FOR IRELAND
ALLIANCE FRANCAISE DE CORK LTD
INSTITUTO CERVANTES
GOETHE INSTITUTE DUBLIN
AVONDALE MEDIA SERVICES
PEAK CONNEXION LTD
PATRICK SUTTON T/A COMMUNICATE
TIGER CONSULTING
WRIGHT CONSULTANCY
SHANNON CONSULTING
INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
BIG WAVE MEDIA TRAINING LTD
SURESKILLS
EMCO CUMARSAID TEO
PITMAN TRAINING CENTRE
DUBLIN RAPE CRISIS CENTRE
CENAD
SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL & AFRICAN STUDIES
SURESKILLS
2015
PAI PUBLICATIONS LTD,
INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
NIFAST
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LTD
ORDER OF MALTA
DUBLIN CITYCOUNCIL (FIRE BRIGADE)
HIGH PERFORMANCE
LAW SOCIETY OF IRELAND
LANGUAGES UNLIMITED SERVICES LTD
ALLIANCE FRANCAISE DUBLIN
CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE FOR IRELAND
SANDFORD LANGUAGE INST. LTD.

2015
MARIE THERESE SAFFRE
TRINITY COLLEGE
INSTITUTO CERVANTES
MILLEFEUILLE PROVENCE S.A.R.L.
SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL & AFRICAN STUDIES
EN FRANCAIS
GERMAN LANGUAGE CENTRE
TIGER CONSULTING
EMCO CUMARSAID TEO
SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL & AFRICAN STUDIES
DUBLIN RAPE CRISIS CENTRE
PATRICK SUTTON T/A COMMUNICATE
AVONDALE MEDIA SERVICES
PITMAN TRAINING CENTRE
WRIGHT CONSULTANCY
CLARE MULLIGAN CONSULTING LTD
PATRICK SUTTON T/A COMMUNICATE
OLIVE SAFETY SERVICES
THE WHEEL
SURESKILLS
ORDER OF MALTA
BIG WAVE MEDIA TRAINING LTD
EMERGENCY CARE PRODUCTS
THE IRISH TIMES
SANDFORD LANGUAGE INST. LTD.
ALLIANCE FRANCAISE DE CORK LTD
ALLIANCE FRANCAISE DE LIMERICK LTD
GOETHE INSTITUTE DUBLIN
MILLEFEUILLE PROVENCE S.A.R.L.
PEAK CONNEXION LTD
PATRICK SUTTON T/A COMMUNICATE
TIGER CONSULTING
WRIGHT CONSULTANCY
SHANNON CONSULTING
INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
SURESKILLS
DUBLIN RAPE CRISIS CENTRE
CENAD
SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL & AFRICAN STUDIES
SURESKILLS
TRINITY COLLEGE
KIMMAGE DEVELOPMENT STUDIES CENTRE
EMERGENCY CARE PRODUCTS
THE IRISH TIMES

2015
ALLIANCE FRANCAISE DUBLIN
LANGUAGES UNLIMITED SERVICES LTD
GERMAN LANGUAGE CENTRE
GOETHE INSTITUTE DUBLIN
OIDEAS GAEL
MILLEFEUILLE PROVENCE S.A.R.L.
FIRE AND INDUSTRIAL SAFETY TRAINING
BRYAN ANDREWS T/A BA & ASSOCIATES
EMERGENCY CARE PRODUCTS
IRISH HOSPICE FOUNDATION
2016
IRISH CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN LAW
PAI PUBLICATIONS LTD
INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
NIFAST
ORDER OF MALTA
DUBLIN CITYCOUNCIL (FIRE BRIGADE)
HIGH PERFORMANCE
LANGUAGES UNLIMITED SERVICES LTD
ALLIANCE FRANCAISE DUBLIN
CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE FOR IRELAND
SANDFORD LANGUAGE INST. LTD.
MARIE THERESE SAFFRE
TRINITY COLLEGE
INSTITUTO CERVANTES
MILLEFEUILLE PROVENCE S.A.R.L.
SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL & AFRICAN STUDIES
EN FRANCAIS
GERMAN LANGUAGE CENTRE
TIGER CONSULTING
DUBLIN RAPE CRISIS CENTRE
PATRICK SUTTON T/A COMMUNICATE
TIGER CONSULTING
AVONDALE MEDIA SERVICES
PITMAN TRAINING CENTRE
WRIGHT CONSULTANCY
CLARE MULLIGAN CONSULTING LTD
OLIVE SAFETY SERVICES
EMCO CUMARSAID TEO
SHANNON CONSULTING
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LTD
THE WHEEL
SURESKILLS
BIG WAVE MEDIA TRAINING LTD

2016
THE IRISH TIMES
ALLIANCE FRANCAISE DE LIMERICK LTD
LANGUAGES UNLIMITED SERVICES LTD
MILLEFEUILLE PROVENCE S.A.R.L.
GOETHE INSTITUTE DUBLIN
ALLIANCE FRANCAISE DE LIMERICK LTD
KIMMAGE DEVELOPMENT STUDIES CENTRE
GERMAN LANGUAGE CENTRE
OIDEAS GAEL
DUBLIN RAPE CRISIS CENTRE
IRISH HOSPICE FOUNDATION
LEGAL-ISLAND LTD
GAECHULTUR TEORANTA
ALLIANCE FRANCAISE DUBLIN
GOETHE INSTITUTE DUBLIN
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EMCO CUMARSAID TEO
IRISH HOSPICE FOUNDATION
SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL & AFRICAN STUDIES
PATRICK SUTTON T/A COMMUNICATE
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DUBLIN RAPE CRISIS CENTRE
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Question No. 241 answered with Question No. 236.

Departmental Communications

242. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the domain names registered to or owned by his Department or through a third party company. [48944/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department operates more than 80 websites in total, comprising those that relate to our activities here in Ireland as well as those of Ireland's diplomatic missions abroad.

From January 2017 to date, these websites have together received in excess of 37 million page views. Users include Irish citizens seeking to access services such as Passport Tracking, Travel Advice and Online Passport Renewals, as well as other international users seeking information about various Ireland-related matters.

Against this background, and from the checking that proved possible to conduct in the time available, I can confirm that my Department currently holds ownership rights to the web domain names listed as follows.

Our primary domain name structure is dfa.ie. The need arises for us to retain ownership of

the other domain names as listed below since these were previously used by the Department and Ireland's diplomatic missions abroad prior to the creation of the centralized dfa.ie structure. While a small proportion of the other domain names in question continue to be in active use, the majority re-direct users to dfa.ie as appropriate.

We are also retaining ownership of most of these other domain names over the longer term so as to help prevent any confusion arising for users of our websites at home or abroad and to guard on an ongoing basis against the danger of so-called 'cyber-squatting' – that is, acquiring of domain names by third parties for unauthorized commercial or other negative purposes.

My Department will keep our policy in this area under ongoing review.

List of Registered Domains:

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	dfa.ie
	foreign-affairs.ie
	foreignaffairs.ie
	foreignaffairsandtrade.ie
	gnothaieachtracha.ie
	gnothaieachtrachaagustradala.ie
	dfat.ie
	dfanet.ie
	irishcertificateofheritage.ie
	certificateofirishness.ie
	foreignaffairs.gov.ie
	iveagh.irlgov.ie
	passport-office.ie
	gnothai-eachtracha.ie
	consulate.ie
	embassy.ie
	consalacht.ie
	ambasaid.ie
	iveagh.ie
	irish-passport.ie
	irishpassportcard.com
	Passport.irish
	Passports.irish
	gnothai-eactracha.net
	uibheacha.ie
	global.irish
	irishabroadgrants.ie
	globalirishforum.ie
	globalirisheconomicforum.ie
	certificateofirishancestry.com
	Heritage-certificate.ie
	Heritagecertificate.ie
	Certificateofirishheritage.ie
	Heritagecertificate.com

Questions - Written Answers

	certificateofireishancestry.ie
Irish Aid	irishaid.ie
	climatelearningplatform.org
	ourworldirishaidawards.ie
	irishaidfellowships.ie
	africaday.ie
Ireland's Diplomatic Missions Abroad	embassyofireland.ae
	embassyofireland.org.ng
	embassyofireland.org.et
	embassyofireland.org.tr
	irishembassy.org.tr
	irlandabuyukelciligi.org.tr
	nsmc.info
	embassyofireland.gr
	irishembassy.gr
	embassyofireland.cn
	irishembassy.cn
	irlv.cn
	embassyofireland.de
	irishembassy.de
	botschaft-irland.de
	embassyofireland.ch
	irishembassy.ch
	embassyofireland.org.br
	embaixada-irlanda.org.br
	irishembassy.org.br
	embassyofireland.sk
	irishembassy.sk
	irskaambasada.sk
	embassyofireland.be
	irishembassy.be
	ambassadevanierland.be
	ambassadeirlande.be
	botschaft-irland.be
	embassyofireland.ro
	irishembassy.ro
	embassyofireland.hu
	irnagykovetseg.hu
	irishembassy.hu
	embassyofireland.org.ar
	irishembassy.org.ar
	irlanda.org.ar
	embassyofireland.org.eg

	irishembassy.org.eg
	embassyofireland.au.com
	irishembassy.au.com
	consulateofirelandatlanta.com
	consulateofirelandatlanta.org
	consulategeneralofirelandboston.org
	consulateofirelandboston.org
	irishconsulateboston.org
	irishconsulate.org
	consulateofirelandnewyork.org
	irishconsulatenewyork.org
	irishconsulatenewyork.us
	consulateofirelandnewyork.us
	consulateofirelandnewyork.com
	irishconsulatenetwork.com
	consulateofirelandsanfrancisco.org
	consulateofirelandsanfrancisco.us
	irishconsulatesanfrancisco.org
	irishconsulatesanfrancisco.us
	irishconsulatesydney.net
	consulateofirelandsydney.net
	embassyofireland.dk
	irishembassy.dk
	irlandsambassade.dk
	embassyofireland.or.tz
	irishembassy.or.tz
	irishconsulatescotland.co.uk
	embassyofireland.vn
	irishembassy.vn
	embassyofireland.fi
	irishembassy.fi
	embassyofirelandholysee.it
	irishembassyholysee.it
	embassyirelandholysee.it
	consulateofireland.hk
	embassyofireland.ug
	irishembassy.ug
	embassyofireland.my
	irishembassy.my
	kedutaanireland.my
	embassyofireland.com.my
	embassyofireland.net.my
	embassyofireland.org.my
	irishembassy.com.my
	irishembassy.net.my

Questions - Written Answers

	irishembassy.org.my
	kedutaanireland.com.my
	kedutaanireland.net.my
	kedutaanireland.org.my
	Ireland-embassy.com.my
	embassyofireland.mw
	embassyofireland.pt
	irishembassy.pt
	embaixada-irlanda.pt
	embassyofireland.si
	irishembassy.si
	embassyofireland.co.uk
	embassyofireland.co.zm
	irishembassy.co.zm
	embassyofireland.lu
	irishembassy.lu
	botschaft-irland.lu
	ambassade-irlande.lu
	embassyofireland.es
	irishembassy.es
	irlanda.es
	embajadairlanda.es
	embassyofireland.org.mz
	hibernia.org.mz
	embaixadairlanda.org.mz
	irishembassy.org.mz
	embassyofirelandmozambique.ie
	embassyofireland.org.ls
	irishembassy.org.ls
	irishembassy.com.mx
	embajadadeirlanda.com.mx
	embassyofireland.ru
	posolstvoirlandii.ru
	embassyofireland.in
	irelandinindia.com
	irishembassy.in
	ireland.co.nz
	embassyofireland.com.cy
	irishembassy.com.cy
	embassyofireland.no
	irishembassy.no
	irlandsambassade.no
	embassyofireland.ca
	irishembassyottawa.ca
	ambassadeirlande.ca

	embassyofireland.fr
	ambassade-irlande.fr
	irishembassy.fr
	irelandrepbrussels.be
	irelandrepbrussels.eu
	irishmissiongeneva.ch
	irelandunnewyork.org
	embassyofireland.cz
	irishembassy.cz
	embassyofireland.org.za
	irishembassy.org.za
	embassyireland.org.za
	irishrep.ps
	embassyofireland.lv
	irishembassy.lv
	irijasvestnieciba.lv
	embassyofireland.org.sa
	irishembassy.org.sa
	embassyofireland.it
	irishembassy.it
	ambasciata-irlanda.it
	embassyofireland.or.kr
	irishembassy.or.kr
	irelandhouse-korea.com
	irishconsulateshanghai.cn
	consulateofirelandshanghai.cn
	aierlanlingshiguan.cn
	embassyofireland.sg
	embassyofireland.bg
	irishembassy.bg
	irishembassybulgaria.bg
	embassyofireland.se
	irishembassy.se
	irlandsambassad.se
	embassyofireland.ee
	embassyofireland.ir
	irishembassy.ir
	embassyofireland.co.il
	embassyofireland.org.il
	irishembassy.co.il
	irishembassy.org.il
	irelandinthailand.com
	embassyofireland.nl
	irishembassy.nl
	ambassadevanierland.nl

	embassyofireland.jp
	irishembassy.jp
	irelandinjapan.jp
	embassyofireland.org.mt
	irishembassy.org.mt
	embassyofireland.at
	botschaftvonirland.at
	irelandOSCE.at
	embassyofireland.lt
	irishembassy.lt
	airijosambasada.lt
	embassyofireland.pl
	irishembassy.pl
	irlandia.pl
	embassyofireland.net
	irishembassy.biz
	embassyofireland.org
	embassyofireland.us
	irishembassy.us
	irishembassy.info

Public Services Card

243. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans for incorporating the use of the public services card within his Department; the services that it will be used for; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48945/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Since 29 March 2016, my Department has required all first-time passport applicants aged eighteen and above who are resident in Ireland to hold a valid Public Services Card (PSC). This requirement also applies to the small number of adult passport applicants whose last passport was issued before 1 January 2005 and has since been reported as lost, stolen or damaged.

The Government decided on 17 July this year that the PSC would be required for all passport applications made in the State by the end of 2018. The PSC and the relevant issuing process, which is managed by the Department of Social Protection, is secure and robust and gives a high degree of assurance regarding the identity of the holder.

My Department will ensure that any changes to the passport application process are communicated to the public well in advance and will work with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Department of Social Protection on the practicalities involved.

Parliamentary Questions Costs

244. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the average costs associated with processing and answering written and oral parliamentary questions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49125/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Parliamentary Questions, priority, oral and written, are dealt with by the staff of the Divisions within my Department with responsibility for the issues raised in individual Questions as part of their typical day to day work. The number and level of staff, and the time allocated to preparing individual replies depends on the complexity and urgency of the issues raised, the ease of access to the required information, and the degree of cross-Divisional coordination required in preparing the reply. The cost of answering Parliamentary Questions can vary considerably, therefore, and it would be challenging to isolate the administrative costs associated with the processing of individual Questions. My Department has developed an electronic system to expedite the processing of Parliamentary Questions which has greatly improved the administration process and has reduced the time and cost involved in replying to Parliamentary Questions generally.

Brexit Negotiations

245. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the measures he is planning to ensure no emergence of regulatory divergence from those rules of the Internal Market and the customs union which are necessary for meaningful North-South co-operation, the all-island economy and protection of the Good Friday Agreement. [49074/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Government's clear position is that we need to avoid any risks presented by regulatory divergence so as to ensure that North South cooperation, which is facilitated and supported by a shared EU regulatory framework on this island, can continue unimpeded after the UK leaves the EU. Therefore, the Government will continue to advocate that the best solution for Northern Ireland is for the UK to remain effectively in a Customs Union and Single Market arrangement.

If the UK continues to rule out this option, it must present alternative workable solutions that will ensure there is no hard border nor any border infrastructure on the island of Ireland. Avoiding regulatory divergence will be an important element in this regard. North/South co-operation is a central part of the Good Friday Agreement. The EU Commission Taskforce has recognised the central importance of North South Cooperation and states that it should be protected across all relevant sectors.

Officials have been carrying out detailed work over the last few weeks to map out areas of cooperation that operate on a North South basis on the island of Ireland and which rely on EU law and policies. There is still more work to be done in this area, but it has underlined the need to avoid risks presented by any regulatory divergence from the rules of the EU Single Market and Customs Union. North South cooperation has made an important contribution, through the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement, to the improvement of people's lives on this island. We want to ensure that this cooperation can continue in a meaningful way.

The UK has a responsibility to ensure that it does not hinder or impede the continuation and development of North South cooperation by its withdrawal from the EU.

Ireland is working closely with the Commission Task Force to advance progress on Irish issues in the negotiations with the UK. The EU is united in the negotiations and fully behind the excellent work being done by its Chief Negotiator, Michel Barnier, and his team.

Brexit Negotiations

246. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views

on the working paper in relation to the dialogue on Ireland and Northern Ireland. [49075/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am not going to comment on the detail of internal EU working documents tabled in Brussels. However, both the EU and Ireland have been clear about the current state of play on negotiations on the priority exit issues, including the Irish issues.

There is nothing new emerging about EU positions on Ireland and Northern Ireland; the principles set out in the EU Guidelines for the negotiations and subsequent papers strongly acknowledge Ireland's concerns and priorities.

The Government has also been consistent in what we require.

At this point in the negotiations, it is entirely appropriate that the EU would seek further clarity on UK positions and call on the UK to provide strong political assurances and tangible commitments ahead of any decision on whether sufficient progress has been achieved on the Irish specific issues that recognise the unique situation on the island of Ireland, and that flexible and imaginative solutions will be required.

Ireland is working closely with the Commission Task Force to advance progress on Irish issues in the negotiations with the UK. The EU is united in the negotiations and fully behind the excellent work being done by its Chief Negotiator, Michel Barnier, and his team.

Foreign Conflicts

247. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on the ongoing conflict in Yemen; the efforts being made at national, EU and international level to find a peaceful resolution to this conflict; the efforts that are being made to ensure vital aid shipments are allowed into the country, in view of the fact that millions of persons are on the brink of starvation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49246/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am extremely concerned about the current situation in Yemen, in particular as the humanitarian crisis continues to deteriorate. The war has entered into its third year, the political process has stalled, and the fighting is having devastating consequences for civilians, with credible allegations of violations of international humanitarian law. Yemen is also facing the world's fastest-growing cholera epidemic.

When EU Foreign Ministers last discussed the situation in Yemen in April, they called on the parties to start negotiating a peace agreement, and committed to increasing its engagement with Yemen once a political solution to the conflict is agreed. The EU is the largest humanitarian donor to Yemen and has provided over €170 million in aid since the conflict began, to which Ireland contributes via the EU Development Budget. In addition, Ireland has also contributed over €10 million in humanitarian assistance from our own aid programme, since the start of the conflict in 2015.

Ireland takes the issue of humanitarian access extremely seriously. The closure of land, air and sea ports this month, following a missile attack on Riyadh, was an alarming development, especially given the impact on humanitarian aid. When my officials last met with officials from the Saudi Embassy in Dublin earlier this month, they condemned the attack on Riyadh, which endangered the lives of civilians. They also relayed my request that all parties to the conflict do everything possible to facilitate the delivery of aid. There have also been EU contacts with Saudi Arabia on this issue.

I note the announcement by Saudi Arabia that it intends to allow the reopening of some ports and border crossings. This must proceed urgently. Yemen has no resilience to the suspension of humanitarian assistance, as locally held supplies are extremely limited. I will continue to monitor the situation closely, and I take this opportunity to reiterate my call on all parties to the conflict to allow unrestricted humanitarian access to those in need.

The conflict in Yemen has led to grave concerns about human rights, and Ireland has worked in the UN system to address this. At the Human Rights Council in September 2017, I decided that Ireland should join a small core group of countries that drove forward the adoption of a Resolution on Yemen. This Resolution establishes a group of international experts, who will establish the facts in relation to violations of human rights and humanitarian law on the ground. This group will report back to the Human Rights Council, as an important step towards accountability in Yemen.

The only way to bring about a long-term sustainable improvement in the situation for the Yemeni people is through a negotiated end to this conflict. Ireland fully supports the efforts of UN Special Envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed and his team, who are working towards a peace agreement. Ireland will continue to take every appropriate opportunity to press for a negotiated settlement, respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, and improved humanitarian access.

Humanitarian Aid

248. Deputy Darragh O'Brien asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on the situation of the Rohingya people; the efforts being made at national, EU and international level to protect the Rohingya people; the specific steps Ireland has taken or will take in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49247/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I continue to have deep concerns about the violence in Rakhine State and I have condemned the excessive actions of the Myanmar security forces on numerous occasions since 25 August.

A devastating humanitarian crisis has developed as a result of these actions, and over 600,000 people, most of whom are members of the Rohingya community, have fled to Bangladesh where they are facing extremely challenging circumstances.

As humanitarian aid and media access to Rakhine State remains severely limited, it has been difficult to obtain comprehensive reports of the situation facing the Rohingya people and other communities remaining in Rakhine State. However the UN has reported that many thousands of people remain displaced there and in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. There are other reports, notably from a range of UN representatives outlining details of serious human rights violations in the area.

The wide-ranging efforts being made at national, EU and the wider international levels to address this issue have been outlined in my recent responses to questions in this House, most recently on 16 November.

At a political level, Ireland, and the EU, continue to address this crisis in line with the Conclusions setting out the EU's position on the situation in Myanmar which were adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council on 16 October. Ireland fully endorses this position.

This week, Minister of State Ciarán Cannon T.D. directly conveyed Ireland's concerns about the situation in Rakhine State to Myanmar's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs' U

Kyaw Tin in a bilateral meeting in Nay Pyi Taw. He raised concerns about the reports of human rights violations and the need to restore humanitarian access to Rakhine State.

He urged the Government of Myanmar to allow the safe, voluntary and sustainable return of the people that have fled their homes and he welcomed Myanmar's engagement with the Government of Bangladesh to address this issue.

Minister Cannon urged the Government of Myanmar to implement the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State in full. In doing so, he emphasised the need to put the conditions in place to enable those returning to Rakhine State to be reintegrated and to ensure their livelihoods.

On behalf of the EU, High Representative Mogherini, along with a representative group of EU Foreign Ministers met with Myanmar's State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi on 20 November to discuss the situation in Rakhine State. After the meeting, the High Representative issued a statement on behalf of the EU, Norway and Switzerland, which emphasised that the humanitarian and human rights situation in Rakhine State remains extremely serious and called on the Government to ensure accountability for those responsible for committing atrocities. Prior to this meeting, HRVP Mogherini visited the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh.

Minister of State Cannon visited Myanmar to participate in a meeting of Asian and European foreign ministers in the ASEM format, which in addition to allowing broader discussions, offered an opportunity for European ministers to express their concern on the situation in Rakhine state. The Minister of State is also meeting with UN and Non Governmental Organisations to learn at first hand of the work they are doing and the challenges they face.

My Department will continue to engage at a national level, through our EU membership and with the broader international community to press for a positive and long-term solution to the situation in Rakhine State, including for the Rohingya community, and for the significant number of refugees who are now situated in Bangladesh.

Foreign Conflicts

249. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on the current situation in Zimbabwe; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49248/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The situation in Zimbabwe continues to evolve, and my Department is monitoring the situation closely in cooperation with our EU partners and the EU Delegation in Harare. As things unfold, I urge the authorities to respect the fundamental rights of all citizens, and underline the need for all stakeholders to exercise restraint and ensure a peaceful resolution to this situation.

Over the weekend, there were very large, but peaceful, public demonstrations in Harare and Bulawayo, with the participation of perhaps 100,000 people, urging President Mugabe to step down. This was followed on Sunday by a special session of the Central Committee of the ruling ZANU-PF party, which formally removed President Mugabe from the position of party president and First Secretary. The party set a deadline of noon on Monday for his resignation as head of state of Zimbabwe. That deadline has now been missed. Signals are that an impeachment process will now begin. President Mugabe, for his part, has indicated that he will address a ZANU-PF party conference next month.

I strongly urge all relevant players to work towards an early and peaceful resolution to this situation, with a view to facilitating the return to civilian government. All those with influence in Zimbabwe should respect democratic and constitutional processes, as well as the rule of law.

My Department's primary concern is the safety and security of Irish citizens in Zimbabwe. The Irish Embassy in South Africa, which is accredited to Zimbabwe, is monitoring the situation closely, and is in close contact with the Irish Honorary Consul, the Irish Community in Zimbabwe and our EU partners on the ground.

The travel advice on my Department's website has been updated to encourage all Irish citizens in the country to remain indoors, to exercise caution, to avoid areas when demonstrations may take place, and to monitor the Department's travel advice regularly. The Irish Embassy in Pretoria is also providing updates on twitter and its website, and is in regular contact with the Irish Honorary Consul and the EU Delegation in Harare. It will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Irish Prisoners Abroad

250. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of a case (details supplied) and the level of engagement with the person concerned by the consular services. [49266/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is continuing to do everything it can to support and assist this citizen. However, the Irish Government is limited in what it can do in the case of an Irish citizen who is involved in a criminal case overseas. The Irish Government cannot intervene in a matter that is before the courts in another jurisdiction, just as no foreign Government can interfere in our judicial system.

Nonetheless, both I and my officials have been working very hard on this citizen's behalf. We have made repeated representations to the authorities in Manila stressing the humanitarian concerns in this case and requesting that the pending appeal against this man's conviction be expedited.

The Irish Government made a direct request to the Administrator of the Supreme Court to ask that this Appeal be expedited on humanitarian grounds. In April of this year, the Administrator of the Supreme Court acknowledged the Irish Government's concerns and interest in the matter and instructed that the papers related to the Appeal should be elevated to the Supreme Court for consideration.

In July 2017 attorneys acting on behalf of this citizen advised that all relevant papers had been filed in relation to the appeal. The matter is now with the Supreme Court for resolution.

Last September while I was attending the UN General Assembly session in New York I personally raised the case directly with the Philippines Foreign Minister, Mr Alan Cayetano. I underlined the Irish Government's concerns about this situation and asked for Foreign Minister Cayetano's assistance, specifically in relation to our request that the Supreme Court consider the appeal urgently. Minister Cayetano agreed to follow up on the matter on his return to Manila.

Most recently this month I followed up with a letter to Foreign Minister, Mr. Cayetano reiterating my serious concerns about this case and in view of the compelling humanitarian consideration in this case.

The Irish Ambassador to The Philippines has also, on my instruction, raised the case again at senior official level in recent weeks with the Philippines Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Property Registration

251. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 469 of 7 November 2017, the status of the query in view of the fact it has not been resolved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48731/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Property Registration Authority that the case (Ref: Number S2017LR010904X) referred to by the Deputy is being dealt with and has been referred to an Examiner of Titles for review. I am advised by the Authority that a decision in this case is being finalised and it is expected that a reply will issue to the applicant on 23 November 2017.

Rights of People with Disabilities

252. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the legislation that may need to be passed, as indicated by An Taoiseach recently, before the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities will be implemented, in view of the commitment made 12 months ago in Dáil Éireann; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48756/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy Finian McGrath): Ireland signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007 and since then, successive Governments have emphasised Ireland's strong commitment to proceed to ratification as quickly as possible, taking into account the need to ensure all necessary legislative and administrative requirements under the Convention are met. This Government remains committed to ratification of the Convention.

It is essential that the State is in a position to meet the obligations that it assumes under the terms of an international agreement from the moment of its entry into force for Ireland. Before the State can ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, enactment of new legislation and amendment of existing legislation is required to ensure obligations will be met upon entry into force for Ireland. Ratification of a Convention before we have amended domestic legislation that contradicts it makes no sense and does nothing to ensure compliance or to protect the people for whose benefit the Convention exists. The previous Government published a Roadmap in October 2015, which sets out the legislative measures needed to meet those requirements, along with declarations and reservations to be entered by Ireland on ratification.

Considerable progress has already been made to overcome the remaining legislative barriers to Ireland's ratification of the Convention. The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 was signed into law on 30 December 2015 and is a comprehensive reform of the law on decision-making capacity. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 has reformed Section 5 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993 to facilitate the full participation in family life of persons with intellectual disabilities and the full expression of their human rights.

The Disability (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2016 was published immediately prior to Christmas and completed Second Stage in February 2017. The primary purpose of the Bill is to address the remaining legislative barriers to Ireland's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Work is ongoing on all the other issues set out

in the previous Government's Roadmap for Ratification published in October 2015 and these will be progressed as Committee Stage amendments. The Bill will be progressed to enactment at an early date to facilitate ratification of the UN Convention as soon as possible.

The precise timing of ratification now depends on how long it will take for this Bill to progress through the enactment process and on issues in relation to commencement both of deprivation of liberty provisions, which will be included in the Bill at Committee Stage, and of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015.

I would like to take this opportunity to assure the Deputy that ratification of the UNCRPD remains a very high priority for me as Minister.

Commissions of Inquiry

253. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if officials in his Department were asked for or gave permission to the legal team for the former Garda Commissioner in respect of its legal strategy at the O'Higgins commission of inquiry. [48889/17]

256. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if officials within his Department were contacted in relation to the cross-examination of a person (details supplied) at the O'Higgins commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48762/17]

257. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when his Department first became aware that the former Garda Commissioner had instructed her legal team in the O'Higgins commission to call evidence from two senior Garda officers with a view to establishing that a person (details supplied) was motivated by malice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48763/17]

258. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when his Department first learned that the former Garda Commissioner's legal team was not going to call evidence in the O'Higgins commission from two senior Garda officers in relation to a meeting they had with a person (details supplied) in 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48764/17]

259. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the involvement his Department had in deciding the witnesses that would be called to give evidence in the O'Higgins commission by the legal team for the former Garda Commissioner; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48765/17]

260. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent of communication between his Department and the legal team for the Garda and the Garda Commissioner in the O'Higgins commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48766/17]

261. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when his attention was drawn to the fact that the former Garda Commissioner had instructed her legal team to attack the motivation and integrity of a person (details supplied) at the O'Higgins commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48767/17]

262. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if officials within his Department took issue with or disapproved of the instruction of the former Garda Commissioner to her legal team to attack the motivation and integrity of a person (details supplied) at the O'Higgins commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48768/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 253 and 256 to 262, inclusive, together.

I have clearly stated in response to previous Parliamentary Questions on this matter that my Department did not have any input into the instructions provided by the Garda Commissioner to her legal team at the O'Higgins Commission of Investigation. It should be obvious to the House that it would have been wholly inappropriate for my predecessor or my Department to seek to influence in any way the Garda Commissioner's instructions or to have direct contact with her legal team.

In particular there is no question of my Department having any say in what witnesses would be called before the Commission of Investigation. Consequently there can be no question of my Department being asked to, or offering, advice or approval for the Commissioner's approach to the Commission of Investigation.

I can assure Deputies, that there is no question of my Department having had prior knowledge of any legal strategy adopted by the Garda Commissioner at the Commission of Investigation.

My Department has clarified that my predecessor was made aware in May 2015, after the event, of an issue having been raised at the Commission of Investigation. However, as also previously stated, neither my predecessor nor my Department was aware of certain issues which arose at the Commission of Investigation until the matter entered the public domain almost a year later.

I should mention that in May 2016 the Garda Commissioner wrote to the Department referring to the public concerns arising from the media reports in question. The Commissioner requested that matters arising from the O'Higgins Commission of Investigation pertaining to a 2008 meeting in Mullingar be referred to the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC) for investigation. On 16 June 2016 the former Minister referred the matter to GSOC for investigation under Section 102(5) of the Garda Síochána Act (as amended). GSOC's investigation into this matter is on-going.

My Department has, today, written to the Disclosures Tribunal in relation to the manner in which, in May 2015, my Department was made aware that an issue had been raised at the O'Higgins Commission of Investigation. It will be for the Tribunal to decide on what action, if any, it should take in relation to the matter and, as a result, I do not propose to comment further on it.

Rights of People with Disabilities

254. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the reasons for the delays to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48687/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy Finian McGrath): Ireland signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007 and since then, successive Governments have emphasised Ireland's strong commitment to proceed to ratification as quickly as possible, taking into account the need to ensure all necessary legislative and administrative requirements under the Convention are met. This Government remains committed to ratification of the Convention.

It is essential that the State is in a position to meet the obligations that it assumes under the

terms of an international agreement from the moment of its entry into force for Ireland. Before the State can ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, enactment of new legislation and amendment of existing legislation is required to ensure obligations will be met upon entry into force for Ireland. Ratification of a Convention before we have amended domestic legislation that contradicts it makes no sense and does nothing to ensure compliance or to protect the people for whose benefit the Convention exists. The previous Government published a Roadmap in October 2015, which sets out the legislative measures needed to meet those requirements, along with declarations and reservations to be entered by Ireland on ratification.

Considerable progress has already been made to overcome the remaining legislative barriers to Ireland's ratification of the Convention. The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 was signed into law on 30 December 2015 and is a comprehensive reform of the law on decision-making capacity. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 has reformed Section 5 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993 to facilitate the full participation in family life of persons with intellectual disabilities and the full expression of their human rights.

The Disability (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2016 was published immediately prior to Christmas and completed Second Stage in February 2017. The primary purpose of the Bill is to address the remaining legislative barriers to Ireland's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Work is ongoing on all the other issues set out in the previous Government's Roadmap for Ratification published in October 2015 and these will be progressed as Committee Stage amendments. The Bill will be progressed to enactment at an early date to facilitate ratification of the UN Convention as soon as possible.

The precise timing of ratification now depends on how long it will take for this Bill to progress through the enactment process and on issues in relation to commencement both of deprivation of liberty provisions, which will be included in the Bill at Committee Stage, and of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015.

I would like to take this opportunity to assure the Deputy that ratification of the UNCRPD remains a very high priority for me as Minister.

Garda Deployment

255. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 278 of 4 July 2017, his plans to fill the vacant Garda posts in the Edgeworthstown district (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48718/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for the distribution of resources, including personnel, among the various Garda Divisions and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

I am informed by the Commissioner that in regard to the deployment of Garda personnel, a distribution model is used which takes into account all relevant factors including population, crime trends and the policing needs of each individual Garda Division. Where a deficiency in resources is identified the matter is considered fully and addressed accordingly. In addition, as you will appreciate, in order to deliver an effective policing service, it is essential that Garda management have the flexibility to deploy Garda resources to meet operational policing needs

and address critical issues as they arise. For this reason, the number of Garda available in any one Garda Station on a particular day is subject to the operational requirements of the overall Division.

The Edgeworthstown Garda Station forms part of the Granard District in the Roscommon/Longford Division. I have been informed that the number of Gardaí assigned to the Division on the 30 September 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was 305, of which 46 members were assigned to Granard District and 11 to Edgeworthstown Station. There are also 9 Garda Reserves and 28 Civilians attached to the Roscommon/Longford 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, the Armed Response Units, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

I am further informed by the Commissioner that since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, close to 1,400 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, 10 of whom have been assigned to the Roscommon/Longford Division. In addition, another 200 trainee Garda are scheduled to attest next month 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 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 to deter crime. The substantial increase in Garda numbers is tangible progress on achieving this Government's vision of an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians.

I am pleased to say that Budget 2018 will support the continuation of this high level of investment in the Garda workforce and ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. A further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College, an additional 500 civilians will also be recruited to fill critical skills gaps across the organisation and to facilitate the redeployment of Gardaí from administrative and technical duties to front-line operational duties. There are plans to strengthen the Garda Reserve with new Reserves expected to commence training early in 2018.

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 needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Roscommon/Longford Division, in the coming years.

Questions Nos. 256 to 262, inclusive, answered with Question No. 253.

Brexit Issues

263. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the preparations made in his Department in the event of no agreement being reached between the United Kingdom and the European Union on the terms of the UK's exit from the EU; if such preparations involve the drawing up of detailed and specific contingency plans in the event of a hard Brexit and a trade regime based on WTO tariffs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48781/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade with special responsibility for Brexit, Minister Coveney has responsibility

for coordinating the whole-of-Government response to Brexit. In this capacity, he is working closely with his colleagues across Government to address the many challenges resulting from Brexit. This cooperation also involves the relevant State Agencies.

Work at Cabinet level is being prepared through cross-Departmental coordination structures. These represent a frequent and active channel through which all relevant Departments are providing their research, analysis and overall policy input to the Government's wider response to Brexit, including its priorities for the ongoing Article 50 negotiations between the EU and the UK.

As the outcome of the negotiations is not yet known, an important focus of the planning and preparation being undertaken through these structures is on deepening the Government's analysis and understanding of the exact consequences of a range of different possible scenarios. This represents an intensification of efforts to build on the Government's contingency planning.

Within my own Department, analysis and research on the possible impacts of the UK departure from the EU commenced in early 2016. A Working Group of senior officials was established to manage the Department's response and to carry out a risk analysis of the UK's potential departure, taking into account engagement with relevant justice sector agencies and other stakeholders. This work is ongoing and evolving.

Closed-Circuit Television Systems Provision

264. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps being taken to have CCTV cameras erected on motorways in an effort to counter the activities of roaming criminal gangs preying on vulnerable persons and businesses in rural areas, in addition to the community-based CCTV grant aid scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48786/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware that the Programme for a Partnership Government commits to supporting investment in CCTV systems and, in this context, my Department launched the Community-based CCTV Grant-aid Scheme in April 2017, as the vehicle to assist community groups in the establishment of CCTV systems in their local areas.

Under the Scheme, eligible community groups can apply for grant-aid of up to 60% of the total capital cost of a proposed CCTV system, up to a maximum grant of €40,000. Upon approval of the grant, the applicant will receive an up-front payment of 50% of the grant with the balance to be paid when the system is fully operational. Some €1 million was secured in Budget 2017 for the purposes of the Scheme and it is envisaged that a similar amount will be made available in 2018 and 2019.

Unfortunately, the number of applications received to date is well below expectations. Guidance is available to help local groups to apply for this important funding and I am keen to ensure that groups take full advantage of the availability of this funding.

Full details of the Scheme, including guidelines, application forms, code of practice and other relevant documentation are available to download from my Department's website - www.justice.ie.

Departmental Staff Training

265. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of providing external coaching and-or training services for staff development in his Department over the past five years and to date in 2017, by cost per year, in tabular form; the company that delivered the training courses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48810/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My Department is committed to promoting a culture of continuous learning and professional development with a view to enhancing organisational and individual capability. The Department invests in a range of courses and programmes designed to address any gaps in knowledge and expertise. Staff also attend conferences and seminars to ensure that they are keeping up to date with recent developments and improvements related to their specific areas such as European policy, IT, and human resources.

The table details the cost per annum of the delivery of learning and development interventions, including the spend for staff attending courses and seminars on an individual basis, from 2012 to date.

The list of course providers over the requested period is extensive. The attached list details the main providers for the period in question. The courses provided cover a wide range of areas including communication skills, people management, leadership, change management, as well as technical skills such as IT, inspection, audit, accounting, and legal skills.

Breakdown of Expenditure from 2012 to October 2017

Year	Training Courses (this includes cost of all courses delivered specifically for DJE staff and the cost of attendance on outside courses attended by staff)	Seminars and Conferences	Total
	€	€	€
2012	179,744.00	13,456.00	193,200.00
2013	58,217.00	13,183.00	71,400.00
2014	60,230.00	17,191.00	77,421.00
2015	114,588.00	16,289.00	130,877.00
2016	254,592.00	38,343.00	292,935.00
2017 - to Oct	390,530.00	29,043.00	419,573.00

List of main Training Providers from 2012 to Sept 2017

ACCA

Accounting Technicians Ireland

Adaptas Training

Alliance Francaise

All-One Corporate Solutions Ltd

Arcline Ltd

Ashville Media Group Ltd

Beacon Training
Bluewave Technology Limited
Byrne Wallace Law Firm
Carr Communications Ltd
CENAD sprl
Chartered Accountants Ireland,
Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors Ireland
Chris Mee Group
CIPD Ireland
Common Purpose Limited
DCM Learning
DeafHear.ie
Deloitte
Department of Finance
Department of Public Expenditure & Reform
DMS Personnel Consultants (Ireland) Ltd
ERA Academy of European Law
Ernst & Young
Europäische Rechtsakademie
European Academy for Taxes, Economics and Law
European Institute of Communications
European Institute of Public Administration
Evolution, Human Resource & Management Consultancy
Fitzwilliam Institute Group
Gaelchultur
GovNet Communications
HazChem Training Limited
Hibernian Training Courses
IACT
ICS Skills
IIA Training Ltd

Institute of Bankers
Institute of Internal Auditors UK & Ireland
Institute of International & European Affairs
Institute of Public Administration
International Association of Privacy Professionals (IAPP)
IPASS
Irish Centre for European Law
Irish Quality Centre
Irish Times Training (Irish Times Ltd, Itronics Ltd)
La Touche Training
Law Society of Ireland
Leaders UK and Ireland Ltd (Young Programme Events Ltd)
Legal-Island Ltd
Mazars
Mediator's Institute of Ireland
New Horizons Ireland
Olas
Optima Training & Consulting Ltd.,
PDP Training
Perpetual Solutions
Pitman Training
Presidion (Formally SPSS Ireland)
Professional Development Ireland Ltd
Public Affairs Ireland
Riskom International Pty Ltd
Rothwell Performance Consulting
Seneca Healthcare Solutions CiC
Seven Psychology at Work
Shannon Consulting
Sureskills Ltd
The Communications Clinic Ltd

The Dublin Rape Crisis Centre Ltd.

The Dublin Solicitors Bar Association

The Honorable Society of King's Inns

The Sandford Language Institute

Tiger Consulting

Trigraph Professional Training

Trinity College Dublin

UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School

UCD Adult Education Centre

Data Protection

266. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if public and semi-State bodies are obliged to comply with the general data protection regulation which will pass into EU law in May 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48818/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The position is that the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which will come into force in May 2018, applies to both the public and private sectors. However, while an EU Regulation of this kind is normally a directly-applicable legal instrument and does not therefore require any national law to give it effect, the GDPR contains a number of provisions which allow Member States a limited margin of flexibility. An accompanying Directive, which sets data protection standards for the processing of personal data by competent authorities for the purposes of prevention, investigation, detection and prosecution of criminal offences and the execution of criminal penalties will also enter into force in May 2018.

The Government published the General Scheme of the Data Protection Bill in May last. The Bill will give further effect to the GDPR in areas in which flexibility is allowed, transpose the law enforcement Directive into national law and replace the Data Protection Commissioner with a Data Protection Commission.

The Bill is currently being drafted and will be published during the current Dail term with a view to enactment in Spring 2018.

Departmental Contracts

267. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the names of the companies renting a fixing and-or space on telecommunications and-or communications masts from his Department; the income received for each of the past five years for same, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48844/17]

270. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the income received by his Department from the renting to companies of space to use and-or take fixings from telecommunications and-or communications masts on site or on the roof of his Department, in each of the past five years, by location; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[48882/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 267 and 270 together.

I can advise the Deputy that my Department does not receive any income in respect of renting of space or taking fixings from telecoms or communication masts on property occupied by my Department's offices.

Money Laundering

268. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the grounds on which established bank customers in the State can be deemed subject to section 37 of the Criminal Justice Act 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48856/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Banks as designated persons under the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2010 ("the Act") are obliged to conduct ongoing monitoring of their customers and to keep their information/documentation up to date. This is in line with the risk-based approach allowing a designated person to apply appropriate measures. It also recognises that customer profiles change over time, as does the nature of business relationships. It allows designated persons to monitor the business relationship and mitigate the risk of money laundering or terrorist financing.

The criteria by which a bank will make a decision that a customer is subject to Section 37 of the Act are set out in Section 37(10) which define what constitutes a politically exposed person, an immediate family member of a politically exposed person or a close associate of a politically exposed person.

Money Laundering

269. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the grounds on which a bank is obliged to implement the issuing of a request pursuant to section 37 of the Criminal Justice Act 2010; if he is satisfied that these provisions are implemented consistently; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48857/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Section 37(1) of the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2010 obliges a bank to take steps to determine whether a customer resident outside the State is a politically exposed person or a close associate or immediate family member of a politically exposed person ("PEP"); the definition of such a person is set out in Section 37(10). Section 37(3) requires that such steps should be those reasonably warranted by the risk that such a customer is involved in money laundering or terrorist financing.

Section 37(4)(a) obliges a bank, where such a determination has been made, to ensure that approval is obtained from senior management before a business relationship is established with such a person. Section 37(4)(b) obliges a bank in such circumstances to determine the source of wealth and of funds for transactions which the customer seeks to carry out.

Section 37(8) obliges a bank to discontinue the business relationship or refuse to carry out transactions where the customer fails to provide documents or information which are required for the bank to meet its obligations as noted above.

The Central Bank of Ireland is responsible for the monitoring of credit and financial institutions Anti Money Laundering compliance with the Act. In previous inspections of the banking sector, the Central Bank found deficiencies in the measures banks had in relation to PEPs. These deficiencies included the initial screening of customers, timing of senior management approval and the failure to sufficiently identify, verify and document source of wealth and source of funds.

Question No. 270 answered with Question No. 267.

Garda Deployment

271. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of community gardaí deployed at each station in a Garda district (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48929/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for the distribution of resources, including personnel, among the various Garda Divisions and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. 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.

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 to deter crime. The substantial increase in Garda numbers is tangible progress on achieving this Government's vision of an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians.

Since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, close to 1,400 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, 10 of whom have been assigned to the Togher District. In addition, another 200 trainee Garda are scheduled to attest next month 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.

I am pleased to say that Budget 2018 will support the continuation of this high level of investment in the Garda workforce and ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. A further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College, an additional 500 civilians will also be recruited to fill critical skills gaps across the organisation and to facilitate the redeployment of Gardaí from administrative and technical duties to front-line operational duties. There are plans to strengthen the Garda Reserve with new Reserves expected to commence training early in 2018.

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 needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Cork City Division and Togher District, in the coming years.

Community policing is at the heart of An Garda Síochána. It provides a means of recognising that every community – both urban and rural – has its own concerns and expectations.

I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that the Garda National Model of Community

Policing plays a key part in responding to crime by taking into account and responding to local conditions and needs. Clear objectives are set, such as high visibility in the community, ease of contact by members of the public, and enhanced support for crime prevention strategies. Community policing is not, of course, confined to dedicated Community Gardaí, all Gardaí have a role to play in community policing in carrying out their duties. In addition, the National Community Policing Office, attached to the Garda Community Relations Bureau, captures best practice in community policing initiatives and disseminates these practices through its communication network.

The information requested by the Deputy as provided by the Commissioner is set out in the following table.

Strength of Community Gardaí by Station in Togher Garda District 30 September 2017

Station	Total
Bishopstown	1
Carrigaline	1
Crosshaven	0
Douglas	2
Passage West	0
Togher	2
Total	6

Departmental Communications

272. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the domain names registered to or owned by his Department or through a third party company. [48947/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The domain names owned by bodies on my Department's ICT shared service are listed as follows. All of the names were registered through specialist third party providers.

Name
anticorruption.ie
bravery.ie
coroner.ie
coroners.ie
coronersservice.ie
cosc.ie
csit.ie
csvc.ie
dacoi.ie
fightracism.ie
Forensicscience.ie
gardainspectorate.ie
iab.ie
idcmagdalen.ie
integration.ie
internetsafety.ie

irishprobation.com
irishprobation.ie
jsec.ie
jsector.net
lsra.ie
murrayreview.ie
nda.ie
npsra.ie
oberstown.com
ohigginscommission.ie
orac.ie
policingauthority.ie
probation.eu
probation.ie
probationireland.com
probationireland.eu
probationireland.ie
probationservice.ie
protectionappeals.ie
racism.ie
rdccremote.ie
reachproject.eu
reachproject.ie
restorativejustice.ie
stampoutracism.ie
stopracism.ie
travellerinclusion.ie
universalperiodicreview.ie
upr.ie
upireland.ie
victimsofcrime.ie
victimsofcrimeoffice.ie
carthanais.ie
carthanas.ie
ceud.ie
cfpi.ie
charities.ie
charitiesregulator.ie
charitiesregulatortrusteelearning.ie
charitiesregulatoryauthority.ie
charityregulator.ie
civiljusticereview.ie
disclosuretribunal.ie
disclosuretribunal.ie
dojtest.ie

dprotection.ie
genderequality.ie
gsinsp.ie
iclvr.ie
ifco.ie
inspectorofprisons.ie
irishyouthjusticeservice.ie
iyjs.ie
justice.ie
mhcrlb.ie
policereform.ie
psab.ie
RialalaiCarthanas.ie
section42clancy.ie
section42inquiries.ie
section42kelly.ie
section42mulcahy.ie
section42nugent.ie
section42tuohey.ie
stardustreview.ie
trusteelearning.ie
ud2018.ie
universaldesign.ie
youthjustice.ie

Defence of the Dwelling

273. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to amend the law to allow persons to hold products or items in their own homes which could be used for the purposes of self defence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48955/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, the current law in relation to self defence in the home is set out in the Criminal Law (Defence and the Dwelling) Act, 2011. There are currently no plans to amend legislation to provide for persons to hold products or items in their own homes which could be used for the purposes of self defence.

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

274. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the timeframe for Ireland's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the reason for the delay to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48986/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy Finian McGrath): Ireland signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007 and since then, successive Governments have emphasised Ireland's strong commitment to proceed to ratification as quickly as possible, taking into account the need to ensure all necessary legislative and

administrative requirements under the Convention are met. This Government remains committed to ratification of the Convention.

It is essential that the State is in a position to meet the obligations that it assumes under the terms of an international agreement from the moment of its entry into force for Ireland. Before the State can ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, enactment of new legislation and amendment of existing legislation is required to ensure obligations will be met upon entry into force for Ireland. Ratification of a Convention before we have amended domestic legislation that contradicts it makes no sense and does nothing to ensure compliance or to protect the people for whose benefit the Convention exists. The previous Government published a Roadmap in October 2015, which sets out the legislative measures needed to meet those requirements, along with declarations and reservations to be entered by Ireland on ratification.

Considerable progress has already been made to overcome the remaining legislative barriers to Ireland's ratification of the Convention. The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 was signed into law on 30 December 2015 and is a comprehensive reform of the law on decision-making capacity. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 has reformed Section 5 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993 to facilitate the full participation in family life of persons with intellectual disabilities and the full expression of their human rights.

The Disability (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2016 was published immediately prior to Christmas and completed Second Stage in February 2017. The primary purpose of the Bill is to address the remaining legislative barriers to Ireland's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Work is ongoing on all the other issues set out in the previous Government's Roadmap for Ratification published in October 2015 and these will be progressed as Committee Stage amendments. The Bill will be progressed to enactment at an early date to facilitate ratification of the UN Convention as soon as possible.

The precise timing of ratification now depends on how long it will take for this Bill to progress through the enactment process and on issues in relation to commencement both of deprivation of liberty provisions, which will be included in the Bill at Committee Stage, and of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015.

I would like to take this opportunity to assure the Deputy that ratification of the UNCRPD remains a very high priority for me as Minister.

Coroners Service

275. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason local authorities pay for coroners in view of the fact the office of the coroner is under the remit of his Department; and if such costs are reimbursed. [48998/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The first legislation of the new Irish State was the Coroners (Amendment) Act 1927 where the coroner was deemed to be an office to which the Local Authorities (Officers and Employees) Act 1926 applied, though with the Minister for Justice as the relevant Minister.

Essentially, that provision remains and the current legislation, the Coroners Act, 1962, states in section 9 that - "Every coroner shall be paid by the local authority by whom he is appointed such salary as shall from time to time be fixed, with the approval of the Minister, by that local authority.

Domestic Violence

276. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps being taken to provide mandatory training on gender-based and domestic violence for gardaí and other law enforcement officials, social workers, lawyers, prosecutors, judges and other public officials dealing with victims of gender-based, including domestic and sexual, violence as recommended by the committee against torture at its meetings (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49030/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Government recognises the importance of the United Nations Committee against Torture (UNCAT) and the recommendations arising from the engagement process that occurred earlier this year with that committee.

The second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2016-2021 was published in January 2016. The publication of the strategy was welcomed by UNCAT in its concluding observations on the second periodic report of Ireland. The second National Strategy is a whole of Government response to such violence. The strategy's timebound actions are structured around three high level goals, the first of which is concerned with raising awareness, education and training.

There are a number of actions in the strategy relating to training. The UNCAT recommendations contained in its concluding observations underlines the importance of the full implementation of these actions. Action 1.500 commits public sector agencies working in the area of domestic and gender-based violence - An Garda Síochána, the Courts Service, the Probation Service, Tusla and the HSE - to develop and deliver training to staff dealing with domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. Action 1.600 commits Tusla to develop strategic approaches to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence training within Tusla. Under Action 1.700, Cosc - the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence - has liaised with the Committee for Judicial Studies to raise awareness among the judiciary. The previous Chief Justice advised my predecessor that the judiciary are very aware of the needs of victims, and have received training or information in the area of the rights, support and protection of a range of victims of crime, and anticipated further seminars and conferences for the judiciary on these issues. Action 1.800 commits the Law Society, the Bar Council and King's Inns to develop and deliver initial training and developmental training for continual delivery to legal practitioners.

As the Deputy will be aware the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) is independent in the exercise of her statutory functions. I have been informed that since July 2015 all domestic violence files submitted to the DPP by An Garda Síochána have been fully collated to allow for a holistic analysis of offences. This analysis has underpinned training of prosecutors - both decision makers in the DPP's office and lawyers prosecuting cases in the District Court in Dublin. I am also advised that, coinciding with the enactment of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017, presentations were delivered to prosecutors, including State solicitors, by the Head of Prosecutions and the Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions.

The implementation of the actions in the Strategy are subject to formal monitoring twice yearly by a monitoring committee comprising of non-governmental agencies and state organisations.

Residency Permits

277. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when a residency visa will be renewed in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49103/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person referred to by the Deputy arrived in the State on 11 February 2017 and that they were registered on student conditions on 11 May 2017. INIS records show that the person concerned has a current online appointment with Burgh Quay Registration Office for 13 December 2017 and they should attend on this date with all relevant documentation. Regarding documentation to produce, they should be advised to consult with the relevant section on the INIS website *www.INIS.gov.ie*. Further permission to remain in the State will be considered by an Immigration Officer on that date.

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.

Parliamentary Questions Costs

278. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the average costs associated with processing and answering written and oral parliamentary questions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49128/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, accounting to Dáil Éireann by way of Parliamentary Questions (PQs) is an important part of the work of my Department and to date this year 3,000 have been answered.

Questions put to my Department cover the wide range of our responsibilities and those of the agencies under my Department's remit. The PQs asked vary between requests for factual information (from small specific queries to very large amounts of information broken down by e.g. year and category) to questions seeking further insight into my and my Departments thinking or the Government's political thinking on a particular issue or issues.

The work required to answer PQs, written or oral vary greatly from question to question. The work put in by individual civil servants to answering questions, and the day-to-day work that gives a civil servant the knowledge required to answer them, is an integral part of their job and not easily disaggregated.

To provide an estimate of average cost could only be obtained through the expenditure of a disproportionate amount of my Department's time and resources. It is therefore not possible to provide you with the information sought.

Garda Deployment

279. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí attached to the Donegal Garda division as of 1 January 2017 and 1 November 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49210/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for the distribution of resources, including personnel, among the various Garda Divisions and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

I am informed by the Commissioner that the Garda strength of the Donegal Division on 30 September 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was 389. There are also 18 Garda Reserves and 32 civilians attached to the Division. On the 1 January 2017 the strength of the Donegal Division was 381 with 21 Garda reserves and 32 Civilians. When appropriate, the work of local Gardaí is supported by a number of Garda national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Armed Response Units, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

I am further informed by the Commissioner that since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, close to 1,400 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, 24 of whom have been assigned to the Donegal Division. In addition, another 200 trainee Garda are scheduled to attest next month 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 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 to deter crime. The substantial increase in Garda numbers is tangible progress on achieving this Government's vision of an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians.

I am pleased to say that Budget 2018 will support the continuation of this high level of investment in the Garda workforce and ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. A further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College, an additional 500 civilians will also be recruited to fill critical skills gaps across the organisation and to facilitate the redeployment of Gardaí from administrative and technical duties to front-line operational duties. There are plans to strengthen the Garda Reserve with new Reserves expected to commence training early in 2018.

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 needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Donegal Division, in the coming years.

Proposed Legislation

280. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to bring forward the passenger name record Bill 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49211/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): A draft General Scheme of the Criminal Justice (Passenger Name Record) Bill is currently being finalised in consultation with relevant Government Departments with a view to shortly seeking Government approval for formal drafting of the legislation.

Immigration Controls

281. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 62 of 29 June 2016, the steps his Department has taken regarding same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49235/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Since 16th June, 2015, frontline immigration controls have been undertaken in Terminal 1 at Dublin Airport on a 24/7 basis by civilian staff from the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department. In October 2015, INIS civilian staff took over the front-line immigration controls in the Transit Area of Terminal 2. On 2nd October 2017, responsibility for these controls in Terminal 2 was handed over from the Garda National Immigration Bureau to INIS, thus completing the transfer of frontline passport checks at Dublin Airport to civilian staff.

In relation to expanding the civilianisation programme to other ports of entry, my Department will consider deploying civilian officers to other major ports of entry to the State where this makes sense from a cost and efficiency perspective. In circumstances where An Garda Síochána will maintain a presence at our ports to continue their crucial policing role in protecting our borders from a security and enforcement perspective, one of the requirements of further civilianisation at other ports of entry will be to achieve the right balance between Gardaí and civilian staff. In this light, the nature and volume and time distribution of passenger traffic at other ports of entry will be a determining factor in any decision to deploy civilian immigration officers.

Garda Deployment

282. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí assigned to a station (details supplied); his plans to increase the number of gardaí in this station in view of the increasing instances of theft in local shops and anti-social behaviour in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49305/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for the distribution of resources, including personnel, among the various Garda Divisions and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that the number of Gardaí assigned to the Donegal Division on 30 September 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was 389 with 18 Garda Reserves and 32 civilians. When appropriate, the work of local Gardaí is supported by a number of Garda national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Armed Support Unit, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau 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 to 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

This plan is progressing apace. I am informed by the Commissioner, since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, that almost 1,400 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, 24 of whom were assigned to the Donegal Division. I am also informed that a further 200 hundred Garda recruits are scheduled to attest next month 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 needed to allow the deployment of increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division including the Donegal Division in the coming years.

The Deputy will appreciate I have no direct role in Garda strategies to tackle anti-social behaviour and criminal activity. I can, however, assure the Deputy that I am in regular contact with the Commissioner about all aspects of policing and community safety with a view to ensuring that our cities and towns are safe for all.

More generally, there are a range of strong legislative provisions available to An Garda Síochána to combat anti-social behaviour, including provisions under the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Acts, the Criminal Damage Act and the Intoxicating Liquor Acts. The powers available to Gardaí support them in addressing anti-social behaviours, including the prevention of nuisance or annoyance to others and forestalling damage to property or a breach of the peace.

An Garda Síochána remains committed to tackling public disorder and anti-social behaviour by working with communities to reduce this type of behaviour and enhance community safety. The Garda approach includes a strong focus on quality of life issues and collaboration with local authorities, businesses and other stakeholders to help address the causes of anti-social behaviour.

Furthermore, the Garda National Model of Community Policing plays a key part in responding to crime by taking into account and responding to local conditions and needs. Clear objectives are set, such as high visibility in the community, ease of contact by members of the public, and enhanced support for crime prevention strategies. All Gardaí have a role to play in Community Policing in carrying out their duties. In addition, the National Community Policing Office, attached to the Garda Community Relations Bureau, captures best practice in community policing initiatives and disseminates these practices through its communication network.

An Garda Síochána's Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021, published on 9 June 2016, places a strong emphasis on developing and supporting the community policing ethos of the organisation and enhancing the current delivery model so that Gardaí spend more time in the community, gaining public confidence and trust and providing a greater sense of security. It will result in the introduction of multi-skilled Community Policing Teams in every District. Community Policing Teams will be made-up of Gardaí from a number of different units who will work with the local community to prevent and detect crime. Undoubtedly, the ongoing recruitment process will support all Garda activities and will enhance the provision of effective Community Policing throughout the country.

Garda Deployment

283. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí

assigned to the traffic corps as of January in each of the years 2012 to 2017; the number currently assigned to the traffic corps; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49316/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the distribution of resources, including to the Garda Traffic Corps and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. I am assured by the Commissioner that Garda personnel assigned throughout the country, together with the overall policing arrangements and operational strategies are continually monitored and reviewed. Such monitoring ensures that optimum use is made of resources and the best possible policing service is provided to the general public.

I am informed by the Commissioner that the total strength of the Garda Traffic Corps on the 30 September 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was 631. In addition, there is one Chief Superintendent and two Superintendents attached to the DMR Traffic Corps, a Superintendent and traffic inspector attached to each of the five Regions, and one Superintendent attached to the Policing Road Traffic 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 to deter crime. The substantial increase in Garda numbers is tangible progress on achieving this Government's vision of an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians.

Since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, close to 1,400 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. In addition, another 200 trainee Garda are scheduled to attest next month 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.

I am pleased to say that Budget 2018 will support the continuation of this high level of investment in the Garda workforce and ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. A further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College, an additional 500 civilians will also be recruited to fill critical skills gaps across the organisation and to facilitate the redeployment of Gardaí from administrative and technical duties to front-line operational duties. There are plans to strengthen the Garda Reserve with new Reserves expected to commence training early in 2018.

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 needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Traffic Corps Division, in the coming years.

The Commissioner has committed in the Policing Plan for 2017 to increase incrementally the number of personnel dedicated to traffic duties by 10% to support better outcomes in relation to road traffic enforcement and crime prevention.

In this regard the Commissioner has confirmed that a review of the roads policing has been completed and a new role and job description for additional personnel for Road Policing Units has been developed. I am advised that a competition is currently in train to fill these positions.

An Garda Síochána's Modernisation and Renewal Programme (2016-2021) also sets out key strategic objectives for road policing which will inform and guide An Garda Síochána's road policing plans over the next 5 years. Under the Programme, the Commissioner will un-

dertake a number of road safety traffic enforcement initiatives, including expanding the use of technology and increasing checkpoints.

The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table.

Strength of the Traffic Corps 2012-2017	
Date	Total
31 January 2012	931
31 January 2013	867
31 January 2014	802
31 January 2015	730
31 January 2016	688
31 January 2017	669
30 September 2017*	631

* 30 September 2017, the latest date for which figures are available.

Anti-Social Behaviour

284. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the meeting of all interested parties to find effective solutions to the problem of young persons with scramblers and quad bikes has been convened; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49324/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, I have written to the relevant parties, including the Ministers for Transport, Tourism and Sport and Housing, Planning and Local Government, the Garda Commissioner, the Chairman of the Revenue Commissioners and the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, in order to ascertain whether there are additional legislative or other solutions which can assist us in dealing with this issue more comprehensively, by way of a joined-up approach.

Responses have now been received from the majority of bodies. I intend to convene a meeting of all of the interested parties in order to identify additional effective solutions and assign responsibility and timeframes for implementation, as soon as all responses have been received.

Garda Deployment

285. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí assigned to each Garda station in central Dublin in each of the years 2011 to 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form. [49358/17]

287. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of additional gardaí that have been assigned to date in 2017 to the north inner city of Dublin. [49360/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 285 and 287 together.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for the distribution of resources, including personnel, among the various Garda Divisions and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that

the optimum use is made of these resources.

I am informed by the Commissioner that on the 30 September 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, the strength of the D.M.R. North Central Division was 598 and the D.M.R. South Central Division was 605. There are also 37 Garda Reserves and 42 civilians attached to the D.M.R. North Central Division and 38 Reserves and 29 civilians in the D.M.R. South Central 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, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

In addition, as part of the range of measures which have been put in place to tackle organised crime a new Garda Special Crime Task Force (SCTF) has been in operation in the Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR) since July 2016 and is focussing relentlessly on persons involved in organised criminal activities. It operates in cooperation with other agencies including the Revenue Commissioners and Department of Social Protection and has the benefit of the expertise of members of the Criminal Assets Bureau, Garda Divisional Asset Profilers, and the Garda Síochána Analysis Service. I am informed by the Commissioner that the SCTF as of September 2017 there are 5 Sergeants and 45 Gardaí assigned to the SCTF.

Further, the new dedicated Armed Support Unit for the Dublin Metropolitan Region was launched on 14 December 2016, and is now operational on a 24/7 basis. Members of the ARU are highly trained and equipped with a variety of non-lethal and lethal weapons and perform high visibility armed checkpoints and patrols throughout their respective Regions. I am advised that the number of Gardaí assigned to the ASU is deemed to be operationally sensitive and cannot be disclosed for security reasons.

I am further informed by the Commissioner that since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, close to 1,400 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, 121 and 124 of whom were assigned to D.M.R. North Central Division and D.M.R. South Central Division respectively. In addition, another 200 trainee Garda are scheduled to attest next month 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 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 to deter crime. The substantial increase in Garda numbers is tangible progress on achieving this Government's vision of an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians.

I am pleased to say that Budget 2018 will support the continuation of this high level of investment in the Garda workforce and ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. A further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College, an additional 500 civilians will also be recruited to fill critical skills gaps across the organisation and to facilitate the redeployment of Gardaí from administrative and technical duties to front-line operational duties. There are plans to strengthen the Garda Reserve with new Reserves expected to commence training early in 2018.

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 needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the D.M.R. North and South Central Divisions, in the coming years.

Questions - Written Answers

The number of newly attested Gardaí allocated to the D.M.R. North Central and South Central Divisions since the recommencement of recruitment and the number of Gardaí assigned to each Garda station in the D.M.R. North Central and South Central Divisions in each of the years 2011 to 2016 and to date in 2017 is set out as follows.

NEW RECRUITS ASSIGNED TO DMR NORTH CENTRAL AND SOUTH CENTRAL DIVISIONS

	2015	2016	2017
D.M.R NC	22	44	55
D.M.R SC	21	42	61

GARDA STRENGTH OF D.M.R. NORTH CENTRAL DIVISION

DIS-TRICT	STA-TION	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	*2017
BRIDE-WELL	BRIDE-WELL	167	174	168	171	159	158	159
FITZGIB-BON STREET	FITZGIB-BON STREET	113	-	-	-	-	-	-
	MOUNT-JOY	100	207	197	189	187	191	186
	TOTAL	213	207	197	189	187	191	186
STORE STREET	IMMI-GRATION D/DOCKS	6	5	3	3	3	3	3
	STORE STREET	274	268	256	244	241	260	250
	TOTAL	280	273	259	247	244	263	253
D.M.R. NORTH CENTRAL TOTAL		660	654	624	607	590	612	598

*As of 30 September 2017

GARDA STRENGTH OF D.M.R. SOUTH CENTRAL DIVISION

DIS-TRICT	STATION	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	*2017
DONNY-BROOK	DONNY-BROOK	122	119	120	115	108	107	101
	IRISH-TOWN	52	50	49	49	47	50	50
	TOTAL	174	169	169	164	155	157	151
KEVIN STREET	KEVIN STREET	153	143	135	121	117	117	104
	KIL-MAIN-HAM	74	78	79	72	75	73	65
	TOTAL	227	221	214	193	192	190	169

	HAR-COURT TER-RACE	79	-	-	-	-	-	-
PEARSE STREET	PEARSE STREET	255	310	303	285	280	283	285
	TOTAL	334	310	303	285	280	283	285
D.M.R. SOUTH CENTRAL TOTAL		735	700	686	642	627	630	605

*As of 30 September 2017

Garda Transport Data

286. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda vehicles assigned to each Garda station in each of the years 2011 to 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form. [49359/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be appreciate decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda vehicles are a matter for the Garda Commissioner in the light of his identified operational demands and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

I have asked the Garda Commissioner for the specific information requested and when it is to hand I will inform the Deputy accordingly.

Question No. 287 answered with Question No. 285.

Garda Station Closures

288. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when Fitzgibbon Street Garda station will be reopened; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49361/17]

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

The Deputy will be aware that the proposed reopening of Fitzgibbon Street Garda station is a key action recommended in the report on the North East Inner City prepared by Kieran Mulvey for the North East Inner City Ministerial Taskforce

I am advised by the Garda authorities that they are working closely with the OPW to progress the project and that notices for Civil and Structural and Quantity Surveyor services have recently been placed on e-Tenders.

Garda Deployment

289. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the new Garda special crime task force has been established as recommended by the Mulvey report recommendations for the north-east inner city; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49362/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Garda authorities that there was no specific recommendation in the Mulvey Report relating to the establishment of a special crime taskforce as outlined in the Deputy's question. However, I can advise the Deputy that the Garda Commissioner established a new Garda Special Crime Task Force in the Dublin Metropolitan Region in 2016, under the Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau, to augment the response to organised crime at a local level through concentrated policing, and through a multi-agency approach to targeting the proceeds of crime. The Deputy will be aware that it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for the allocation of Garda resources and I, as Minister, have no direct role in such matters.

The Deputy will also be aware that the Garda operational responses to gang-related crime in Dublin are coordinated under Operation Hybrid. As of 31 October 2017, there have been 71 arrests in relation to gang-related killings, with 8 persons charged in connection with those murders and a further 3 persons charged with related offences. In addition, 30 firearms have been seized and over 14,260 lines of enquiry conducted. In excess of 44,490 high visibility checkpoints have been implemented with significant support from Armed Support Units and a significant amount of CCTV footage, mobile phone traffic, and forensic evidence is also being examined. Operation Hybrid is reviewed on a weekly basis to maintain optimal impact.

This comprehensive operation is supported by the enhanced Government investment in Garda resources, including an allocation of almost €100 million for Garda overtime in 2017. We have also invested heavily in the Garda fleet, with over 720 new vehicles coming on stream since the start of 2015 and a provision of €46 million for continuing to purchase new Garda vehicles over the years 2016-2021.

The 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 to deter crime.

Budget 2018 will support the continuation of this high level of investment in the Garda workforce and ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. A further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College, an additional 500 civilians will also be recruited to fill critical skills gaps across the organisation and to facilitate the redeployment of Gardaí from administrative and technical duties to front-line operational duties. There are plans to strengthen the Garda Reserve with new Reserves expected to commence training early in 2018.

Commencement of Legislation

290. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when section 14C of the Criminal Evidence Act 1992, as inserted by section 36 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017, will be commenced. [49375/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Section 14C of the Criminal Evidence Act 1992, as inserted by section 36 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act

2017, requires new rules of court in order to be fully implementable. I understand that such rules are currently being drafted and will then be approved by the relevant Rules of Court Committee. The section will be commenced as soon as possible after the finalisation of these rules.

Leave to Remain

291. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of applications for permission to remain that are held up in his Department awaiting a decision in the *Luximon v. Minister for Justice and Equality* case; the longest case waiting as a result of this outstanding issue; the status of those awaiting for a decision in such cases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49388/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that persons seeking permission to remain in the State may do so for a number of reasons to various Divisions of the INIS under both statutory and non-statutory provisions. As a result, as the Deputy would expect, every case is considered on its own merits in conjunction with the legislation, criteria or guidelines which are directly applicable to the individual case type.

The issues raised in the court case referred to by the Deputy, which is currently before the Supreme Court, has the potential to generate further sets of legal proceedings and, as such, the INIS deemed it prudent to postpone decision making in certain immigration cases until the matters before the Courts have been finalised.

It is not possible to quantify the numbers of such cases as to do so would require the deployment of a disproportionate level of limited resources to the task. However, the Deputy may wish to be aware that the case referred to is due for hearing on 30th November, 2017.

Departmental Funding

292. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she has received a grant application in relation to a project (details supplied); the amount sought; the timeframe for assessing the application; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48692/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The project referred to in the question is being developed and managed by Cork City Council and the Council is responsible for the delivery of the project.

On 27 September 2017, Cork City Council made an application to my Department for a further grant of €10 million to assist in the development of the project. My Department is now assessing this application.

There are complex legal, state aid and match funding issues to be considered in relation to this application and my Department is engaging with the City Council in relation to these.

Departmental Contracts

293. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the way in which her Department arrived at the decision to give a group (details supplied) the sole

power to administer the hunter competence assessment programme; and if she has given consideration to tendering the administration of the contract at stages in view of the fact that the HCAP certification will be mandatory from January 2018. [48693/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I am aware that there is currently one national hunter competency course, the Hunter Competence Assessment Programme (HCAP), which is not administered by my Department. It is administered by the group referred to. However, it is my understanding that there are other organisations which are in the process of developing equivalent certification programmes and I welcome this development.

Hare Coursing Regulation

294. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 139 of 8 November 2017, her views on the statement that there is no requirement for coursing clubs to publicise coursing trials in view of new conditions added to coursing licences effective from 15 November 2017 (details supplied); and if from 15 November all coursing clubs will be obliged from that date to make known to the National Parks and Wildlife Service, NPWS, when and the locations in which trials will be held in order that rangers can attend and observe these to ensure compliance with the law. [48728/17]

295. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 139 of 8 November 2017, if all coursing clubs will be obliged from 15 November 2017 to make known to the National Parks and Wildlife Service, NPWS, when and the locations in which trials will be held in order that rangers can attend and observe these to ensure compliance with the law. [48729/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 294 and 295 together.

I recently issued a revised licence to the Irish Coursing Club on behalf of its affiliated clubs. The licence, which became effective from 13 November 2017, includes new and revised conditions relating to the reporting of coursing trials. There is now a requirement for the Irish Coursing Club to notify my Department of the dates of coursing trial sessions organised by its affiliated clubs. A number of these trials have already been monitored by officials of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department.

Brexit Issues

296. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the preparations made in her Department in the event of no agreement being reached between the United Kingdom and the European Union on the terms of the UK's exit from the EU; if such preparations involve the drawing up of detailed and specific contingency plans in the event of a hard Brexit and a trade regime based on WTO tariffs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48773/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade with special responsibility for Brexit, Minister Coveney has responsibility for co-ordinating the whole-of-Government response to Brexit. In this capacity, he is working closely with his colleagues across Government to address the many challenges resulting from Brexit. This co-operation also involves the relevant State Agencies.

Work at Cabinet level is being prepared through cross-departmental co-ordination structures. These represent a frequent and active channel through which all relevant Departments are providing their research, analysis and overall policy input to the Government's wider response to Brexit, including its priorities for the ongoing Article 50 negotiations between the EU and the UK.

As the outcome of the negotiations is not yet known, an important focus of the planning and preparation being undertaken through these structures is on deepening the Government's analysis and understanding of the exact consequences of a range of different possible scenarios. This represents an intensification of efforts to build on the Government's contingency planning.

In relation to the work undertaken by my Department with regard to Brexit, I would refer the Deputy to my reply to Parliamentary Question 586 of 7 November.

The arrangements described in this reply are kept under constant review and will be enhanced as required in light of the ongoing preparations for Brexit

Departmental Staff Training

297. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the cost of providing external coaching and-or training services for staff development in her Department over the past five years and to date in 2017, by cost per year, in tabular form; the company that delivered the training courses; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48802/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department is collating the information requested by the Deputy and it will be forwarded to the Deputy in line with the timelines set out in Standing Orders.

Departmental Contracts

298. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the names of the companies renting a fixing and-or space on telecommunications and-or communications masts from her Department; the income received for each of the past five years for same, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48836/17]

299. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the income received by her Department from the renting to companies of space to use and-or take fixings from telecommunications and-or communications masts on site or on the roof of her Department, in each of the past five years, by location; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48874/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 298 and 299 together.

There is one company that is renting a fixing of a communication mast on land controlled by my Department. The other types of renting options set out in the Questions are not applicable in my Department. The renting arrangement arises in Glenveagh National Park, Co. Donegal and the company is Tetra Ireland Communications Ltd.

As the return to the questions involves only one renting entity, for commercial reasons, I am not in a position to release into the public domain the annual rent that is payable by Tetra to the

Department.

Departmental Communications

300. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the domain names registered to or owned by her Department or through a third party company. [49068/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I have requested my officials to compile a list of the domain names that are registered to my Department and I will forward the information to the Deputy in accordance with the timelines set out in Standing Orders.

Parliamentary Questions Costs

301. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the average costs associated with processing and answering written and oral parliamentary questions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49120/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The input of departmental officials into the responses to Parliamentary Questions is part of their day to day duties in my Department. It is not possible to provide the Deputy with the information sought as it would be difficult to disaggregate the costs associated with officials answering priority, written and oral Parliamentary Questions and consequently, the specific costs are not monitored.

Commemorative Events

302. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the reason the west of Ireland was not chosen to host the national Famine memorial day 2018 (details supplied); the reason Munster has been chosen; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49198/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As I have detailed in my response to Parliamentary Question No. 139 of 15 November, the decision to hold the National Famine Commemoration for 2018 in University College Cork was taken by the National Famine Commemoration Committee earlier this year in recognition of the University's long tradition of research and study of the Famine, including the publication of the Atlas of the Great Irish Famine and the development of The Great Irish Famine Online to be launched next year. Notwithstanding the particular circumstances applying in 2018, the Committee will continue to have regard to the location of previous events and national impact of the Great Famine in the selection of locations for future commemorations.

Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge

303. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta de bhun ceist pharlaiminteach uimhir 392 an 23 Bealtaine 2017 agus ceist pharlaiminteach uimhir 359 an 20 Meán Fómhair 2017, ós rud é go bhfuil an chéad spriocam a gealladh sáraithe

agus go bhfuil an dara spriocam beagnach buailte linn, cathain a fhoilseofar an plean gníomhaíochta maidir leis an Straitéis 20 Bliain don tréimhse 2017-2022; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [49256/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): Dirím aird an Teachta ar an bhfreagra a thug mé ar Cheist Dála Uimhir 359 an 20 Meán Fómhair 2017 faoin ábhar seo. Mar a thug mé le fios sa bhfreagra sin, ós rud é go bhfuil freagracht thras-Rannach i gceist maidir le cur i bhfeidhm na Straitéise, tá plé ar bun ag mo Roinn leis na páirtithe leasmhara éagsúla maidir le spriocanna sonracha agus tráthchlár ina leith a aontú.

Is é nádúr na hoibre seo go dtógann sé am le nithe a aontú. Ní call a rá go bhfuilim ar an airdeall faoin ngá a chinntiú, oiread agus is féidir, go bhfuil fiúntas leis an gclár bearta a mbeifear ag súil leis a chur i dtoll a chéile mar chuid den phlean críochnúil agus tá gá dá réir a chinntiú go bhfuil téagar agus tairbhe le pé bearta a bheidh sa phlean i ndeireadh thiar thall.

Is féidir a bheith cinnte de go leanfar ag obair i gcomhar leis na páirtithe leasmhara ábhartha i dtreo a bheith in ann an plean a fhoilsiú chomh luath in Éirinn agus is féidir.

Creative Ireland Programme

304. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the criteria used by her for the selection of festivals that were granted State funding under the Creative Ireland budget. [49265/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Creative Ireland Programme is not a funding body and does not administer any specific grant or funding schemes. An enabling budget of €5 m was allocated to implement and promote the Creative Ireland Programme from within the Department in 2017 and to date, a sum of €4m has been expended in this regard.

The opportunity was taken in this initial year of the Programme to engage and collaborate with several key cultural partners at various significant national events and arts festivals in order to promote the objectives and underlying values of this new Programme, and encourage deeper understanding and appreciation of the role of creativity.

Among the considerations used to select key cultural partners was their high-level profile, their prominence as part of the cultural calendar, a definitive creative element to their programme, their track record in delivering an event and their capacity to attract and engage a significant audience. To date a sum of €250,000 has been spent on this element of the Programme.

The overarching aim of this collaborative approach was to promote the Programme as a new major initiative among key groups in the artistic, cultural and creative spheres.

Island Communities

305. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health his plans to reinstate the island allowance for nurses to encourage suitably qualified persons to take such positions on the islands in view of the extra cost of living on the islands; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49382/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In 2012, the Department of Expenditure

and Reform conducted a review of allowances across the public service. Payment of a number of allowances, including the 'Island Inducement Allowance' was ceased with effect from 1 February 2012. This was pending consideration of whether or not the allowances in question would either continue to be paid, be abolished, or be abolished for "new entrants" only. Following completion of the review process including consideration of the business cases made, the 'Island Inducement Allowance' was confirmed as one of a number of allowances abolished for 'new entrants' in September 2012.

During discussions earlier this year with the INMO and SIPTU consideration was given to reinstating the Island Inducement allowance for new entrant nurses however it was decided that this allowance would not be reinstated. This remains the case.

Hospital Services

306. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons who requested admission to acute hospital care but returned home due to the fact that the Community Hospital of the Assumption, Thurles, County Tipperary, is unable to admit them, in each week for the past six months, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48695/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): 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.

Home Help Service Provision

307. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if additional home help services for a person (details supplied) will be sanctioned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48699/17]

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.

Hospital Waiting Lists

308. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal will receive an appointment for the pain clinic at Letterkenny University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48701/17]

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

309. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the waiting times for the respiratory outpatient clinic (details supplied) in Letterkenny University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48702/17]

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.

Medical Card Reviews

310. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal will receive a decision regarding a review of their medical card application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48703/17]

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 Waiting Lists

311. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal will be called for an orthopaedic procedure in Letterkenny University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48704/17]

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

312. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his views on correspondence (details supplied) to improve and streamline the process for persons with a disability to access certain supports and services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48713/17]

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 a Partnership Government*, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

Disability is the responsibility of every Government Department and Minister. The National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017 - 2021, which comes under the remit of the Department of Justice and Equality, is a whole of Government approach to improving the lives of people with disabilities in both a practical sense and also in creating the best possible opportunities for people with disabilities to fulfil their potential. The Strategy sets out key actions under each theme and objective, which indicate the Government Department responsible and the time-frame for delivery. Where an action has a cross-sectoral or cross-departmental aspect, the lead department and other departments which have shared responsibilities are also identified.

With regard to the provision of health and personal social services for people with disabilities, which falls under the remit of the Department of Health, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is implementing a programme of reform of disability services, known as *Transforming Lives*. This reform programme is about moving away from institutional models of care and service delivery to community-based, person-centred models of service where people with a disability can live valued and inclusive lives within their own community. The programme is governed by a National Steering Group and is driven by six National Cross-Sector Working Groups.

The HSE funds a range of community services and supports to enable each individual with a disability to achieve their full potential and maximise independence. Services are provided in a variety of community and residential settings in partnership with service users, their families and carers and a range of statutory, non-statutory, voluntary and community service providers. In their National Service Plan for 2017, funding of €1.69 billion was allocated to the HSE for disability services. The allocation for disability services for 2018 will be over €1.76 billion. The HSE is currently in the process of finalising its National Service Plan for 2018, in consultation with officials from my Department.

If the individual concerned requires access to any particular health and personal social service, the Deputy might consider contacting my office with the details and I will arrange to have the matter followed up directly with the HSE.

Psychological Services

313. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding child

psychology services in south Tipperary; the number of approved psychology posts; the number of posts filled; the number of posts vacant; the number of children on the waiting list; and the length of time they have been waiting. [48719/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Public Sector Pensions

314. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if a former HSE employee in receipt of a public service pension is entitled to return to work for the HSE through an agency without affecting their pension; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48720/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In cases of skills shortages in the public sector, it may be necessary for a retiree to be re-hired by their former employer for a period of time. In those cases, the pension of the retiree is abated.

The purpose of abatement is to ensure that the combined total income of a public service pensioner from salary and pension does not exceed the income that the pensioner would have received had he not retired from his public service post.

In relation to the Deputy's question, if the retiree is employed by an agency, then the individual is not an employee of the HSE. Consequently, the question of abatement does not arise.

Hospital Appointments Status

315. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied). [48725/17]

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.

Mental Health Services

316. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the reason the HSE has failed to secure an independent living placement for a person (details supplied) who has been detained in a mental health facility for four years without having a psychiatric condition; when a place will become available; the location of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48726/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Hospital Waiting Lists

317. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied) at the Mater hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48727/17]

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.

Vaccination Programme

318. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health the details of research undertaken to date by his Department to ensure the safety of the Gardasil vaccine; his plans to engage with the advocacy groups and families representing the 628 persons who claim to have suffered adverse health effects shortly after having received the vaccine; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48734/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): All medicines, including vaccines are subject to ongoing review and evaluation of all available data from a range of sources, including systematic scientific literature review, to consider any impact that their data may have on the overall assessment of the benefits and risks of a medicinal product. Taking into account the totality of the available information, the benefits of the HPV vaccines continue to outweigh their risks. The safety of these vaccines continues to be monitored at EU level through the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and its expert committees, which includes representatives from member state competent authorities such as the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA).

The HPRA is responsible for monitoring the safety and quality of all medicines including vaccines that are licensed in Ireland and operates a national adverse reaction reporting system, which members of the public and healthcare professionals are encouraged to submit any suspected adverse reactions through this system. All Reports received by the HPRA are routinely transmitted to the EMA's adverse reaction database for inclusion in global signal detection and monitoring activities.

I am aware of claims of an association between HPV vaccination and a number of conditions experienced by a group of young women. An illness that occurs around the time a vaccine is given and is already known to be common in adolescence does not imply the vaccine caused the problem. It appears that some girls first suffered symptoms around the time they received the HPV vaccine, and understandably some parents have connected the vaccine to their daughter's condition. It is important to reassure people that anyone who is suffering ill health is eligible to seek medical attention, and to access appropriate health and social care services, irrespective of the cause of their symptoms. As there is no scientific evidence that the vaccine causes long term illnesses, the HPV vaccine cannot be held responsible for these illnesses.

The individual nature of the needs of some children may require access to specialist services and the Health Service Executive are currently working to put in place a clinical care pathway appropriate to the medical needs of this group.

Mental Health Services Provision

319. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the services that can be made available by the HSE to a person (details supplied) in view of the mental health concerns expressed by their general practitioner; if he is satisfied with the level of mental health services available to those under 18 years of age in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48736/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Home Care Packages Funding

320. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive funding for their home care package; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48737/17]

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

321. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on spending in respect of the service reform fund; the amount that has been drawn down from this fund to date; the specific services that have received funding from the fund to date; the stated use of the funds drawn down from the fund by each applicable service to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48738/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Service Reform Fund was established by the Department of Health, Atlantic Philanthropies, the HSE and Genio to support the implementation of reforms in disability, mental health and social inclusion services in Ireland. The fund represents a total combined investment of €45 million by the Department and Atlantic Philanthropies to re-configure existing services towards more person-centred supports which are also transparent, accountable and cost-effective, in line with government policy.

Of the total €45 million fund, just under €34 million has been allocated to date. This includes the allocation of €18.7 million for disability projects focussed on transitional funding to move people out of congregated settings and a further €12.5 million for mental health projects. The HSE chairs the Service Reform Fund Implementation Group comprising the delivery partners - Genio, HSE Social Care Directorate and HSE Mental Health Directorate to co-ordinate implementation of the specific agreed priority actions.

As the drawdown of funding by individual services is an operational matter for the HSE the remainder of the Deputy's question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

General Practitioner Services

322. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if it is permissible for general practitioners to charge small fees to persons with medical cards for certain services or weekend visits; if not, the way in which this practice is being monitored to ensure that it is not commonplace; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48740/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the terms of the current GMS contract, GPs are required to provide eligible patients with ‘all proper and necessary treatment of a kind usually undertaken by a general practitioner and not requiring special skill or experience of a degree or kind which general practitioners cannot reasonably be expected to possess.’ There is no provision under the GMS contract for persons who hold a medical card or GP visit card to be charged for such services provided by their GP, or the practice nurse on behalf of the GP.

The contract also stipulates that GPs must make suitable arrangements to enable contact to be made with them, or a locum/deputy, for urgent cases outside normal practice hours. This includes weekends. GPs are reimbursed by the HSE for any services they provide to GMS patients outside of normal surgery hours. While there is no obligation on GPs to participate in GP out of hours cooperatives as a means of meeting their contractual out of hours requirements, such services have been developed and expanded over time and are now an essential part of our primary care services helping to ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, urgent care needs are met in the primary care setting.

Furthermore, the GMS contract explicitly states that GPs must not seek or accept money from eligible patients in reward for services provided under that contract. Consultation fees charged by GPs outside the terms of the GMS contract are a matter of private contract between the clinicians and their patients. If a patient who holds a medical card or GP visit card believes he or she has been incorrectly charged for services by his or her GP, then that patient may make a complaint to the HSE Local Health Office, who will deal with the matter in accordance with the HSE's Complaints Policy.

Mental Health Services

323. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health when the 24-7 crisis mental health service will be launched as announced in February 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48757/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Currently the HSE Mental Health Services provide a 24-hour service through its Acute Units located in General Hospitals for people requiring urgent assessment and treatment. The HSE Mental Health Division is initially seeking to expand upon the services available in the community to ensure a 7-day-a-week service. Based on an extensive data collection process, areas have been identified that would require additional resources to achieve such cover. Engagement with local management teams has commenced in order to further progress implementation of 7-day-a-week service by the end of 2017.

The HSE Mental Health Division is also establishing an evidence-informed model including detailed clinical, governance, training, and performance measurement structures for the op-

eration of a 24/7 service. Through engagement with local CHO management teams, a working group has been established capturing the views of those from across the service pertaining to what form these extended services should take. Building on the development of 7-day-a-week services, these views will be presented to management for consideration and implementation.

With regard to specific timeframes, as this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Brexit Issues

324. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the preparations made in his Department in the event of no agreement being reached between the United Kingdom and the European Union on the terms of the UK's exit from the EU; if such preparations involve the drawing up of detailed and specific contingency plans in the event of a hard Brexit and a trade regime based on WTO tariffs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48779/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has responsibility for coordinating the whole-of-Government response to Brexit. In this capacity, the Department of Health is working closely with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to address the many challenges resulting from Brexit. This cooperation also involves the relevant State Agencies.

Work at Cabinet level is being prepared through cross-Departmental coordination structures. These represent a frequent and active channel through which all relevant Departments are providing their research, analysis and overall policy input to the Government's wider response to Brexit, including its priorities for the ongoing Article 50 negotiations between the EU and the UK.

As the outcome of the negotiations is not yet known, an important focus of the planning and preparation being undertaken through these structures is on deepening the Government's analysis and understanding of the exact consequences of a range of different possible scenarios. This represents an intensification of efforts to build on the Government's contingency planning.

The Department of Health and its agencies have been conducting detailed analysis on the impacts of Brexit in the area of health. A number of issues are being examined and contingency planning for a range of eventualities is underway. A key issue will be to ensure that there is minimum disruption to health services and that essential services are maintained on a cross-Border, all-island and Ireland-UK basis. The health sector has a highly mobile workforce and free movement issues and the mutual recognition and assurance of professional qualifications are being considered. On regulatory issues, it is clear that having a single set of rules across the European Union is enormously helpful – to protect human health, to ensure consumer protection and to provide a level playing field for industry. The UK no longer being part of a harmonised regulatory system in relation to food safety standards, pharmaceuticals, medical devices and cosmetics could necessitate increased certification requirements or disrupt trade between Ireland and the UK. Ensuring continuity in the supply of medicines and medical devices following the UK's departure from the EU is a priority. The issue of customs is of relevance as it relates to additional food safety controls and medicines. The implications of Brexit for networks and organisations such as the EU Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed, the European Reference Networks on rare diseases and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control are also under consideration.

These issues are currently being examined by my Department and its agencies and this

work will continue over the period ahead. The key priorities for my Department are to ensure continuity in the provision of health services and to avoid, or mitigate changes to the current situation that would have a negative impact on human health. These are also key factors in considering the prioritisation of risks.

Health Insurance Data

325. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons availing of private health insurance by age groups (details supplied). [48788/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The table provides the most recent data available from the Health Insurance Authority (HIA) and shows the number of insured persons by age group as of 1 July 2017.

This information is compiled in respect of the commercial health insurers and excludes people serving waiting periods and members of Restricted Membership Undertakings (which provide insurance to people who are members of a particular group, normally a vocational group or employees of a particular organisation).

People availing of Private Health Insurance by age group - July 2017

Age Group	Membership for the Market as of 1 July 2017
0-17	474,552 (23.37%)
18-29	218,205 (10.75%)
30-39	288,813 (14.23%)
40-49	325,905 (16.05%)
50-54	147,250 (7.25%)
55-59	136,467 (6.72%)
60-64	125,121 (6.16%)
65-69	108,276 (5.33%)
70-74	87,031 (4.29%)
75-79	57,479 (2.83%)
80-84	36,723 (1.81%)
85+	24,381 (1.20%)
Total	2,030,203 (100%)

Vaccination Programme

326. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the alleged inclusion of thiomersal in the influenza vaccine being administered by the HSE; if his Department and the HSE are studying reports of increased instances of miscarriage allegedly due to this substance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48790/17]

327. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if all elements used in the HSE influenza vaccine are safe for pregnant persons; the evidence his Department and the HSE have to support this; if recent conflicting evidence is being examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48791/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 326 and

327 together.

Influenza can be a serious illness for people in ‘at risk’ groups which can lead to hospitalisation and death. It is strongly recommended that people in at-risk groups get the flu vaccine. ‘At-risk’ people include those aged 65 years and older, people with chronic illness requiring regular medical follow-up, those with lower immunity due to disease or treatment, pregnant women, and residents of nursing homes, and other long stay facilities. The priority for this winter is to increase uptake of the influenza vaccine in ‘at risk’ groups and in health care workers to reduce and control the incidence of flu and outbreaks in the community and healthcare settings.

Pregnant women should be given the flu vaccine as they are at a higher risk of serious respiratory illness and complications. Getting flu in pregnancy can also lead to premature births and smaller babies. As the flu vaccine is inactive it can be given safely at any time during pregnancy. The flu vaccine protects women during their pregnancy and provides ongoing protection to their newborn baby during their first few months of life. Ideally you should get the flu vaccine as early as possible in your pregnancy. The flu season usually occurs between September and April and if you are pregnant through two flu seasons, two vaccines, one in each season, may be necessary.

The flu vaccine is available from your GP or Pharmacist. It is available free of charge from GPs for all people in ‘at risk’ groups, and from pharmacists for everyone in ‘at risk’ groups aged 18 years and over. If you have a ‘Medical Card’ or ‘GP Visit Card’ the vaccine and consultation are free. If you do not have a ‘Medical Card’ or ‘GP Visit Card’ the vaccine is free but you will be charged a consultation fee.

The information on the HSE website clearly indicates that there is no thiomersal in the vaccine used in the 2017/2018 flu campaign.

Hospital Procedures

328. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of times primary percutaneous coronary intervention emergency procedures were carried out at University Hospital Waterford outside the normal hours of 9 to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday in each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017, by month and year, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48792/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): 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 Accommodation Provision

329. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health the progress made on the 96 bed extension to University Hospital Limerick and the transfer of the university maternity hospital to the Dooradoyle campus; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48793/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Health capital funding was outlined in the recently published Public Service Estimates for 2018 and the HSE is currently developing its Capital Plan for 2018 - 2021.

The Government is also preparing a new 10 year National Investment Plan for the period 2018-2027, which is expected to be published by the end of the year alongside and in support

of the forthcoming new National Planning Framework, to sustain national economic and social progress over the long term.

My Department has asked the HSE to reply directly to you in respect of proposed capital developments at University Hospital Limerick.

Departmental Staff Training

330. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the cost of providing external coaching and-or training services for staff development in his Department over the past five years and to date in 2017, by cost per year, in tabular form; the company that delivered the training courses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48808/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Department of Health supports its staff in their Learning and Development needs.

With regards to the specific query, the detailed information requested by the Deputy is currently being collated and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Medical Card Eligibility

331. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Health his plans to introduce the necessary primary legislation to increase the gross income per week to €1,000 in order for persons over 70 years of age to receive a medical card; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48819/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Alteration of Criteria for Eligibility) (No. 2) Act 2013, when a person attains the age of 70, the medical card income limits are €500 gross income per week for a single person and €900 gross income per week for a couple.

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 general scheme, although having lower income thresholds, provides for income disregards and relevant outgoings to be taken into account in the assessment process.

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.

There are no proposals at present to amend the legislation for the granting of eligibility for medical cards for persons aged 70 and over. However, it should be noted that the gross income limits are reviewed annually and considered in the context of the budget.

Primary Care Centres

332. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health the range of services provided

at primary care centres (details supplied) in County Mayo; if physiotherapy services will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48826/17]

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.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

333. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health if kuvan, the only medical treatment available for phenylketonuria, will be made available to persons with this rare genetic disorder; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48828/17]

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

In reaching a decision, the HSE examines all the evidence which may be relevant in its view for the decision and will take into account such expert opinions and recommendations which it may have sought, including, for example, advice from the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE).

Sapropterin (Kuvan) was considered under the national pricing and reimbursement processes in 2009. At that time, insufficient evidence was available to support the pricing and reimbursement application submitted.

In 2016, the HSE was advised that a new health technology assessment dossier would be submitted on sapropterin. The NCPE completed its assessment of the new dossier in September 2017 and did not recommend sapropterin for reimbursement, as it was not deemed cost effective at the price sought by the company.

The HSE assessment process is ongoing and the HSE will take into account any relevant expert advice when making its decision, in line with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013.

Services for People with Disabilities

334. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if there are grants available to assist a group (details supplied) in its work. [48829/17]

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.

HSE Properties

335. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if he will request the HSE to make urgent repairs to a health centre (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48854/17]

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.

Ambulance Service Provision

336. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if all ambulance shifts in the north-east region have been covered for the months of September, October and November 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48859/17]

337. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the arrangements in place to cover sick leave or annual leave for ambulance shifts in the north-east region; if there are ambulance shifts currently without cover as a result of sick leave or annual leave in this region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48860/17]

338. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if ambulance shifts in the north-east region have been forced to close as a result of sick or annual leave; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48861/17]

339. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the ambulances available for response in the north-east region for November 2017; the number of call outs made by each of the available ambulances; and the location of the call outs to which ambulances were dispatched, in tabular form. [48862/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 336 to 339, inclusive, together.

As the issues raised by the Deputy are operational matters, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Mental Health Services Funding

340. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the amount and percentage of the mental health budget spent on staffing and non-staffing expenditure, respectively, in each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48868/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Provision

341. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health his views on mental health

patients who have to receive treatment at locations outside of their community health care organisation some distance from their primary residence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48869/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Data

342. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons awaiting an initial assessment as part of child and adolescent mental health services for three months, six months, nine months, 12 months, 15 months and more than 15 months, respectively, by county, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48896/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Data

343. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of consultant psychiatrist positions which have yet to be filled within child and adolescent mental health services, by county, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48897/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Data

344. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of beds which are available within child and adolescent mental health services in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48898/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Data

345. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of vacant suicide crisis assessment nurse positions within child and adolescent mental health services, by county, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48899/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Data

346. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of full-time positions which exist within adult mental health services; the number of said positions which exist within children's mental health services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48900/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Hospital Appointments Status

347. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive a hospital appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48918/17]

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.

Health Services Provision

348. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if he is satisfied with the care provided to a person (details supplied). [48921/17]

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 Waiting Lists

349. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation

for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48927/17]

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

350. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48933/17]

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 Accommodation Provision

351. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding University Hospital Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48953/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): 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.

Mental Health Services Data

352. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health the number of children and adolescents waiting for an appointment for child and adolescent mental health services in CHO1 at the end of October 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48959/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Outreach Clinics

353. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the provision of outreach clinics in circumstances in which persons living in regional areas who suffer from juvenile idiopathic arthritis can be treated locally; the counties in which regional clinics are available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48960/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The specialty of rheumatology continues to be one of the most rapidly growing services within Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin and now accounts for the highest number of medical day care patients per year. This increase in demand has had a corresponding effect on waiting lists for paediatric rheumatology services.

The HSE has developed a new National Model of Care for Paediatric Healthcare Services, which includes the development of a hub and spoke model of care for paediatric rheumatology as part of a national clinical network for paediatrics. The new children's hospital will have a central role in this national model of care which will include the provision of outreach clinics to regional centres to improve access for those children living outside the greater Dublin area. The development of the new children's hospital and urgent care centres will provide an opportunity to progress operational integration of the three existing children's hospital rheumatology services and to plan for the appropriate provision of these services well in advance of the move to the new facilities. The Children's Hospital Group has confirmed that facilities for rheumatology services in the new children's hospital will include clinical examination rooms in one of the Outpatient suites as well as day beds in the Day Care Unit which will be assigned to rheumatology in light of the fact that rheumatology is predominately an outpatient and day care based service. Admissions to inpatient services will be accommodated in the medical ward.

In relation to the particular query regarding current regional rheumatology services, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Health Services Provision

354. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health his views on the shortage of health care professionals including registrars, physiotherapists, psychologists and ophthalmologists in paediatric rheumatology services; his plans to increase the number of paediatric rheumatology consultant posts here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48961/17]

355. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health when funding will be provided for implementation of the business plan submitted by rheumatology management at Our Lady's Children's Hospital in Crumlin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48962/17]

356. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to set up a formal service for teenagers to transit from paediatric rheumatology treatment to adult services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48963/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 354 to 356, inclusive, together.

In relation to the queries raised, as they are service matters, I have asked the HSE to respond

to you directly.

Respite Care Services Funding

357. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Health if a dedicated funding allocation can be made available to the HSE locally for increased levels of respite care in counties Sligo and Leitrim CHO1 region in view of the fact that new houses need to be purchased to provide this care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48964/17]

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 Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Appointments Status

358. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if an outpatient appointment for a person (details supplied) in County Cork will be expedited. [48965/17]

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

359. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment scheduled for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48984/17]

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 Cross Border Directive (CBD) entitles persons ordinarily resident in Ireland who have an appropriate referral for healthcare to opt to avail of that healthcare in another EU/EEA country. Healthcare accessed under the CBD can be accessed in either the public or the private healthcare system of the country abroad. The HSE operates the CBD in Ireland. In line with practice in other EU Member States the HSE, through the National Contact Point (NCP) office, provides information for patients on the Cross Border Directive on its website <http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/schemes/cbd/> and also by phone.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Severe Weather Events Response

360. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health the number of vulnerable persons who are reliant on HSE funded home care services left without all or partial care hours on 18 October 2017 due to Storm Ophelia; the policies and provisions that will be made to ensure continuity in service and essential care for vulnerable clients of home care agencies in the event of future weather warnings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48985/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Hospital Waiting Lists

361. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if an early date for an operation will be arranged for a person (details supplied). [48988/17]

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.

Emergency Departments Data

362. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the number of attendances at each accident and emergency department in 2016 and to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48996/17]

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.

HSE Regional Service Plans

363. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if the chief medical officer or a body in the HSE has recommended the implementation of the Portlaoise action plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49028/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The most important issue in relation to consideration of services at the Midlands Regional Hospital Portlaoise is that patient safety and outcomes must come first. Reports on Portlaoise hospital in recent years have pointed to the need for reconfiguration of some services to ensure that patients are treated in the most appropriate setting by specialist staff that can safely meet their needs. Since 2014, the focus has been on supporting the hospital to develop and enhance management capability, implementing changes required to address clinical service deficiencies, and incorporating the hospital into the governance structures within the Dublin Midlands Hospital Group. Significant work has been undertaken to strengthen and stabilise current arrangements for services at the hospital to ensure that services currently provided that are not sustainable are discontinued and those that are, are safety assured and adequately resourced.

The HSE has confirmed that hospital funding has increased by 28% relative to the 2012 budget and staffing levels have risen by 29% from the 2014 base. Funding of €300,000 has also been provided in 2017 to facilitate the opening of the new medical assessment unit.

In addition, governance and management arrangements in Portlaoise Hospital have been strengthened, additional clinical staff have been appointed and staff training, hospital culture and communications have improved.

The Dublin Midlands Hospital Group has been working for some time on a draft plan for a new model of clinical service delivery at Portlaoise Hospital. A draft plan was submitted to my Department in December 2016. This draft report was reviewed in detail and was the subject of detailed engagement between Department officials and the HSE. Significant additional work was undertaken by the HSE on foot of this engagement resulting in a revised draft plan that was submitted to my Department in September 2017.

The report is currently under detailed consideration in my Department. Once there is an agreed position on the draft plan, it is intended that there will be further engagement with all interested parties, to ensure that the needs of patients, staff, the local and wider community are addressed. Any future changes to services at Portlaoise, will have to take account of existing patient flows and demands in other hospitals, as well as the need to develop particular services at Portlaoise in the context of the overall service configuration in the Dublin Midlands Hospital Group.

Drug and Alcohol Task Forces

364. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the funding that will be provided in 2018 for the drugs task forces; the details of the allocation of that funding between the different task forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49036/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): The Government's response to addressing substance misuse in Ireland is set out in Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery - A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2020. The strategy emphasises a health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland, based on providing person-centred services that promote rehabilitation and recovery. It identifies a set of key actions to be delivered between 2017 and 2020, and provides an opportunity for the development of further actions from 2021 to 2025 to address needs that may emerge later on in the

lifetime of the strategy.

The key health-related priorities for 2018 under Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery and the associated resource requirements will be determined in the context of the development of the HSE National Service Plan. The amount of funding available to each Task Force, Project and Programme in 2018 will also be determined by the Department of Health, in conjunction with the HSE.

Patient Data

365. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons remaining in institutional settings, that is, hospitals, psychiatric hospitals, care homes, nursing homes and so on, longer than their discharge date; if there is a study of instances in which persons are remaining in institutional settings for significant periods of time after their discharge date passes; and if these instances are related to risk of homelessness, in tabular form. [49054/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Departmental Communications

366. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health the domain names registered to or owned by his Department or through a third-party company. [49067/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The following domain names are currently registered to my Department. Some refer to areas which were applicable to the former Department of Health & Children and no longer relate to the business of the Department of Health, while others are no longer in use but the registration has not expired.

Domain Name	Description
health.gov.ie / health.irlgov.ie	Department's government domain
doh.ie / dohc.ie	Former domains for Department's website
healthyireland.ie	Website for framework for improved health and well being
emadublin.ie	Website for relocate the European Medicine Agency to Dublin
patientsafetyfirst.ie	Patient Safety website (now incorporated in Departmental website)
healthreform.ie	Health reform website
adoptionauthority.ie	Original Adoption Authority website
ombudsmanforchildren.ie	Office of the Ombudsman for Children
fluoridationforum.ie	Forum on water fluoridation in Ireland
nationalchildrensoffice.ie	Former National Children's Office
activeaging.ie	Active ageing website
droghedareview.ie	Independent review
cpsqa.ie	Commission on Patient Safety and Quality Assurance

Domain Name	Description
lcnhi.ie	Commission of Investigation (Leas Cross Nursing Home)
odao.ie	Office of the Disability Appeals Officer
oco.ie	Office of the Children's Ombudsman
nacda.ie	National Advisory Committee on Drugs & Alcohol (now incorporated in Departmental website)
mbhcoi.ie	Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes
farrellycommission.gov.ie	Commission of Investigation (Certain matters relative to a disability service in the South East and Related Matters)
payment-scheme.gov.ie	Independent Review of Issues relating to Symphysiotomy

Parliamentary Questions Costs

367. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the average costs associated with processing and answering written and oral parliamentary questions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49126/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In 2011, an analysis of parliamentary and legislative processes in my Department was co-ordinated by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. This included an estimation of the average cost of responding to Oral (including Priority) and Written Parliamentary Questions. These were indicative estimates based on survey responses from staff in my Department. They do not include any costs relating to, say, stationery, nor do they include any estimates of costs relating to input to responses from the Health Service Executive. They are set out in the table.

Process	Average Cost per question in 2011
Written PQs	€ 77
Oral PQs	€741

Health Services Provision

368. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health his views on the continued lack of a rehabilitation unit for persons with a neurological disability in the south of the country despite the recommendations from numerous reports; and his further views on the status of the most recent report commissioned by the South-South West Hospital Group for the planning of such a unit which is now more than a year overdue. [49149/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): 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.

Legislative Process

369. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the details of the contact be-

tween his Department and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment in respect of the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015, specifically on provisions and amendments previously tabled relating to restrictions on advertising on the Internet and for related definitions and offences; the way in which the two Departments plan to deal with this gap in the Bill with regard to Internet advertising; if he will report on developments in this area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49152/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): There has been ongoing engagement between my Department and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment in relation to internet advertising.

In April 2014, my Department made a submission to the Internet Content Governance Advisory Group whose Report was published in 2014. My Department is also represented on the Interdepartmental Implementation Group of the Internet Content Governance Advisory Group.

In relation to the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015, my Department consulted with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment on the matter of internet advertising, the proposed amendments to the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill and the related offences. Having fully considered the matter, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment indicated that such amendments would present difficulties in terms of enforcement. My Department concurred with this view.

Hospital Waiting Lists

370. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE will fund a surgical procedure carried out in a private setting for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49153/17]

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.

Disability Services Funding

371. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the way in which personalised budgets or individualised funding is administered through the HSE in circumstances in which a person has a disability (details supplied); if parents can apply for part of the funding to employ a personal assistant for the days their child is not in the service and is engaged in alternative activities; if they must be out of the service to receive this funding; and if he will make a state-

ment on the matter. [49155/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): As the Deputy may be aware the Programme for Government contained a commitment to the introduction of personalised budgets for people with disabilities. I established a Task Force on Personalised Budgets on 20 September 2016, on foot of this commitment.

The Task Force on Personalised Budgets consists of a Strategy Group and an Advisory & Consultative Group. It includes officials from the relevant Government Departments and agencies, HSE, academic and policy experts, stakeholder organisations and a wide range of people with lived experience of disability and disability services (both intellectual and physical). Its remit is to make recommendations on personalised budgets models which will give people with disabilities more control in accessing health funded personal social services, giving them greater independence and choice in accessing services which best meet their individual needs. A Reference Group comprising people with lived experience of disability and disability services was also established, and the views of this group inform the Task Force deliberations.

Offering people the choice of a personalised budget is becoming increasingly common internationally as a way of providing people with more choice and control over the services and supports they access. While the concept of personalised budgets is not limited to health and personal social services, the Task Force is focussing on personalised budgets for services for adults with disabilities funded by the HSE Disability Services in the first instance. The Task Force has been asked to report with recommendations on personalised budget models by the end of 2017.

Historically, personalised budgets have been made available to a small number of people participating in pilot projects and to a very limited number of people whose specific circumstances required additional flexibility. Further roll-out of personalised budgets in 2018 will be informed by the Task Force report and will follow a structured implementation plan and process. As the Deputy's query relates to a service matter I have referred the question to the HSE for review and direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services Provision

372. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health his plans to improve dementia services in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49159/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services

373. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the way in which the HSE has addressed local clinical governance issues within Roscommon's mental health services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49160/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Questions - Written Answers
Electronic Health Records

374. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the way in which the HSE plans to develop a patient-based information technology system on a national basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49161/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I presume by “a patient-based information technology system on a national basis” that the Deputy is referring to the HSE’s plans for the phasing in of a national Electronic Health Record (EHR). It should also be noted that the HSE is delivering a wide range of technology enabled programmes which support the delivery of Electronic Health Records.

The EHR business case, which has been developed by the HSE, highlights a number of optional timescales and investment approaches. The scale of the task to implement a national electronic health record programme is very large, challenging and requires a complex planning, approval and tendering process. It is a five to ten year programme of work depending on the scale of resources deployed. We must also be cognisant of the delivery of an EHR in the context of the work being planned for the New Children’s Hospital, which aspires to be the first digital hospital facility in the country.

I welcome the recognition of the priority required for investment in the EHR Programme in the Sláintecare Report which recommended “continued strong support of the e-health strategy - particularly ensuring the necessary funding for timely roll-out of the EHR system”.

For a programme of this scale and scope, realistic timescales and funding options are important to ensure that the adoption of both the technology and the business change required by front line staff can be absorbed and managed in a coherent way. In addition to resourcing the EHR project with substantial manpower and financial resources, experience from other countries demonstrates that the vendor markets supplying many of these services needs to be carefully managed in terms of capacity and capability to deliver working tailored solutions in a satisfactory manner. The Electronic Health Record (EHR) as defined in the high level strategic business case has 4 main elements - the Shared Care Record, the Community & Primary Care EHR, the Acute Operational EHR and the EHR integration suite. The Strategic Business Case is published on the eHealth Ireland website. The HSE appointed a programme manager to oversee the implementation of the Electronic Health Record in May 2017 and work is continuing with the HSE and my Department on progressing the business case with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The next phase of the EHR programme is to develop detailed business cases for each component, specification of requirements, procurement documentation and support during the procurement process.

The HSE sought and received conditional sanction from my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to undertake 4 tenders, utilising the Office of Government procurement framework, to provide them with external support for the programme. The 4 tenders are for the delivery of support for the following areas:

- programme office;
- acute EHR;
- community EHR; and
- Shared Care Record and Integration.

The tender documents were published in August and the tender process closed mid-Septem-

ber. To date, one contract for this work has been awarded for the acute hospital EHR in view of the requirements for the National Children's Hospital. In the case of the other two lots, a re-tendering exercise is underway. The outputs from this work will allow greater clarity on the scope of the individual components for what is being procured and the detailed costings for each of the areas that will make up the electronic health care record. Only when this detailed work is completed can the procurement process be considered for submission to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and prioritisation assigned to the work. The work in relation to EHR will continue and feed into the implementation response to the Sláintecare report being prepared by my Department .

Mental Health Services Provision

375. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the way in which the national forensic mental health capital project's second phase will decide on the location of new regional intensive care rehabilitation units in the HSE west and HSE south areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49162/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Planning permission for a new modern forensic mental health facility in Portrane, to replace the Central Mental Hospital in Dundrum together with associated new facilities, was granted in June 2015. Site preparation works were undertaken by the HSE during 2016.

Phase 1 comprises a new 170 single bed National Forensic Mental Service facility. This includes a 130 bed main hospital, as well as a co-located 10 bed Forensic Child and Adolescent Mental Health Unit, and a 30 bed Intensive Care Rehabilitation Unit. Construction on Phase I commenced in June 2017, and this is progressing satisfactorily. The new facilities will open in 2020, following Equipping and Commissioning stages.

Phase 2 of the National Forensic Mental Health capital project envisages the provision of new regional Intensive Care Rehabilitation Units. It is intended that these will be prioritised within the HSE capital programme over the medium term. As the HSE has carried out some preliminary work on these proposals to-date, I have asked the Executive to respond directly to the Deputy in relation to the detail of these.

Mental Health Services Staff

376. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 556 of 13 July 2017, the number of new whole-time equivalent positions the €15 million in funding for mental health in 2017 will provide; the number of positions in medical, nursing, health and social care management and administration, general support staff and patient and client care categories; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49163/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Funding

377. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the amount of the €15 million in new funding for mental health in 2017 that has been expended; and if he will make a statement

on the matter. [49164/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Health and Social Care Professionals Regulation

378. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 395 of 17 October 2017, when it is expected that the draft regulations to designate the professions to establish the registration board will be ready for submission to Houses of the Oireachtas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49168/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I can confirm that the draft Regulations to designate the professions of counsellor and psychotherapist and to establish a registration board for the professions were, in accordance with the provisions of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005, laid before each House of the Oireachtas on 9th November 2017 and resolutions approving the drafts have been submitted to each House for consideration.

Health Services Provision

379. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if suitable services will be put in place for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49180/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Hospital Waiting Lists

380. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Health if an incident (details supplied) will be investigated; the efforts to ensure this will not occur again; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49181/17]

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.

Commencement of Legislation

381. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health when he plans to facilitate the commencement of sections 2 and 3 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015; the timeframe for full enactment; if his attention has been drawn to the many families affected by this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49183/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Draft regulations to facilitate the commencement of Parts 2 & 3 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 have been prepared for the consideration of the Office of Parliamentary Council, which Office is responsible for settling Regulations before they are laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas. My Department is also working to resolve a small number of technical issues in order to ensure that the processes associated with Parts 2 & 3 of the Act can be commenced.

National Children's Hospital

382. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to proposals to name the new national children's hospital in honour of Dr. Kathleen Lynn (details supplied); and his views on whether this would be an excellent choice of name for the new hospital. [49202/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): A comprehensive and inclusive process involving parents, children, staff and youth organisations was organised by the Children's Hospital Group to choose a name for the new entity to run the new children's hospital and associated outpatient and urgent care centres. I understand that hundreds of names were proposed and submitted for consideration through this process. The name selected for the new entity, Phoenix Children's Health, was announced on 23 October 2017.

Home Care Packages Provision

383. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if a home care package application by a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49209/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Home Care Packages Data

384. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of providing an extra 100 intensive home care packages in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49212/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Home Help Service Expenditure

385. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the expected budget increase for home help services nationally for the year 2018; if an increase in this budget will result in more positions available for qualified personnel to work in home help services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49218/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): In budget 2018 a further €37 million has been made available for older people services, comprising €5m funding in 2017 and €32 million next year, to further strengthen supports for older people, particularly to facilitate speedier discharge from acute hospitals over the winter period. A significant proportion of this additional funding will go towards home care services. The Department is working with the HSE to prepare the 2018 National Service Plan. Pending agreement of the Plan I am not in a position to comment either on the funding that will be made available for dementia care or the specific services that will be provided.

Speech and Language Therapy Staff

386. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of both in-post and vacant whole-time equivalent speech and language therapists in the Dublin south city LHO; and the number of these accessible by persons in the catchment areas of Rathmines, Terenure and Rathfarnham. [49221/17]

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.

Health Services Staff Data

387. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of both in-post and vacant whole-time equivalent social workers in the Dublin south city LHO; and the number of these accessible by persons in the catchment areas of Rathmines, Terenure and Rathfarnham. [49222/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Health Services Staff Data

388. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of both in-post and vacant whole-time equivalent public health nurses in the Dublin south city LHO; and the number of these accessible to persons in the catchment areas of Rathmines, Terenure and Rathfarnham. [49223/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

General Practitioner Data

389. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of general practitioners in the Dublin south city LHO who have signed up to the free general practitioner service for the under sixes scheme; and the number of these accessible by persons in the catchment areas of Rathmines, Terenure and Rathfarnham. [49224/17]

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.

Speech and Language Therapy Waiting Lists

390. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the waiting times for children aged under 18 years of age for speech and language assessment in the Dublin south city LHO; and the number of these within the catchment areas of Rathmines, Terenure and Rathfarnham. [49226/17]

391. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the waiting time for children aged under 18 years of age for speech and language therapy treatment in the Dublin south city LHO; and the number of these within the catchment areas of Rathmines, Terenure and Rathfarnham. [49227/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 390 and 391 together.

As these questions relates to service matters, I have arranged for them to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Speech and Language Therapy Staff

392. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of both in-post and vacant whole-time equivalent speech and language therapists in the Cork south Lee LHO; and the number of these accessible by persons in the catchment area of Douglas. [49228/17]

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.

Health Services Staff Data

393. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of both in-post and vacant whole-time equivalent social workers in the Cork south Lee LHO; and the number of these accessible by persons in the catchment area of Douglas. [49229/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Health Services Staff Data

394. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of both in-post and vacant whole-time equivalent public health nurses in the Cork south Lee LHO; and the number

of these accessible by persons in the catchment area of Douglas. [49230/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

General Practitioner Data

395. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of general practitioners the Cork south Lee LHO who have signed up to the free general practitioner service for the under sixes scheme; and the number of these accessible by persons in the catchment area of Douglas. [49231/17]

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.

Speech and Language Therapy Waiting Lists

396. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the waiting times for children under 18 years of age for speech and language assessment in the Cork south Lee LHO; and the number of these within the catchment area of Douglas [49233/17]

397. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the waiting times for children aged under 18 years of age for speech and language therapy treatment; the number in the Cork south Lee LHO; and the number of these within the catchment area of Douglas [49234/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 396 and 397 together.

As these questions relates to service matters, I have arranged for them to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Medicinal Products Availability

398. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health his plans to include the flash glucose monitoring system for diabetics in the general medical services scheme through the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49240/17]

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.

Disability Services Provision

399. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of the school leaver's process and respite services for persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49260/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Govern-

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

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

Health Service Executive (HSE) Disability Services engages in a detailed and person centred process with a wide range of agencies every year, to identify the most appropriate service provider and quantum of service, to meet the individual needs of each school leaver. This process takes place over a number of months and is led by the needs of each individual school leaver. In addition, HSE Disability Services also engages with individual school leaver families to listen to any concerns they may have regarding the process and works with both the families and agencies to seek an appropriate placement for the school leaver.

Currently day services are transitioning to a new approach outlined in the policy New Directions. Through the implementation of New Directions, work is on-going to develop a standardised pathway for all young people with disabilities and it is envisaged that this work will likely recommend earlier transition planning between educational and health care practitioners to facilitate a more seamless transition for these children and their families.

The changed day services that are evolving as a result of this new policy implementation will mean that school leavers entering day services in 2017 and in future years will experience the benefits of the New Directions approach to service delivery.

Interim Standards for New Directions have also been developed and will be phased in using a continuous quality improvement approach over the coming years.

As the remaining issue raised by the Deputy is a service matter, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

HSE Reports

400. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health given the recent publication in the media (details supplied) of the action plan for Portlaoise hospital report, the reason it has not yet been made public by his Department; the reason he has not issued a response to the report since it was finalised in December 2016; the level of consultation with local staff and service users on the issue; his views on the medical bodies' concerns of risks to patients in terms of critical care, patient transfers and consultant recruitment in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49262/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The most important issue in relation to consideration of services at the Midlands Regional Hospital Portlaoise is that patient safety and outcomes must come first. Reports on Portlaoise hospital in recent years have pointed to the need for reconfiguration of some services to ensure that patients are treated in the most appropriate setting by specialist staff that can safely meet their needs. Since 2014, the focus has been on supporting the hospital to develop and enhance management capability, implementing changes required to address clinical service deficiencies, and incorporating the hospital into the governance structures within the Dublin Midlands Hospital Group. Significant work has been undertaken to strengthen and stabilise current arrangements for services at the hospital to

ensure that services currently provided that are not sustainable are discontinued and those that are, are safety assured and adequately resourced.

The HSE has confirmed that hospital funding has increased by 28% relative to the 2012 budget and staffing levels have risen by 29% from the 2014 base. Funding of €300,000 has also been provided in 2017 to facilitate the opening of the new medical assessment unit.

In addition, governance and management arrangements in Portlaoise Hospital have been strengthened, additional clinical staff have been appointed and staff training, hospital culture and communications have improved.

The Dublin Midlands Hospital Group has been working for some time on a draft plan for a new model of clinical service delivery at Portlaoise Hospital. A draft plan was submitted to my Department in December 2016. This draft report was reviewed in detail and was the subject of detailed engagement between Department officials and the HSE. Significant additional work was undertaken by the HSE on foot of this engagement resulting in a revised draft plan that was submitted to my Department in September 2017.

The report is currently under detailed consideration in my Department. Once there is an agreed position on the draft plan, it is intended that there will be further engagement with all interested parties, to ensure that the needs of patients, staff, the local and wider community are addressed. Any future changes to services at Portlaoise, will have to take account of existing patient flows and demands in other hospitals, as well as the need to develop particular services at Portlaoise in the context of the overall service configuration in the Dublin Midlands Hospital Group.

Mental Health Services Provision

401. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health his plans for the management of child mental health and child protection emergencies in the Portlaoise hospital catchment area; the level of consultation there has been with service users and local staff, including CAMHS and Tusla on the issue; if he will report on the risks to children with mental health or child protection issues in terms of critical care, patient transfers and consultant recruitment in the area in view of the recent publication in the media (details supplied) of the action plan for Portlaoise hospital report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49263/17]

402. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health his views on the plans for adult mental health in the Portlaoise hospital catchment area; the level of consultation there has been with service users and local staff; if he will report on the risks to adult mental health patients in terms of critical care, patient transfers and consultant recruitment in the area in view of the recent publication in the media (details supplied) of the action plan for Portlaoise hospital report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49264/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 401 and 402 together.

As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Hospital Staff Recruitment

403. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the timeframe for the

recruitment and appointment of a consultant (details supplied) to Letterkenny University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49271/17]

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.

Home Care Packages

404. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if a home care package can be facilitated prior to Christmas 2017 in the case of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49272/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Dental Services

405. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if the Dentist Act 1985 will be amended to allow dental hygienists direct access to persons in view of recent changes to the dental treatment benefit scheme reinstating a free scale and polish; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49275/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I do not proposed to make an amendment to Part VII of the Dentists Act 1985 at this point in time as my Department is currently developing new legislation to replace the Dentist Act 1985. The regulation and role of dental hygienists is being examined in the context of this new legislation.

The development of new dental legislation is a priority for me. Drafting the scheme of the Bill has commenced, however, it is at an early stage.

Services for People with Disabilities

406. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health the amount of funding allocated to HSE managed and run disability and respite services in each of the community health organisation, CHO, areas in 2016; the amount of funding allocated to HSE managed and run disability and respite services in each of the CHO areas in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49299/17]

408. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health when residential respite services will be restored in counties Sligo and Leitrim; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that it is almost a year since the state of the art, purpose built facility, Solas, stopped providing respite services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49302/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 406 and 408 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.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy's questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for the questions to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Respite Care Services

407. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health the reason access to respite care in County Monaghan has been refused to persons who availed of this option previously; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49301/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Question No. 408 answered with Question No. 406.

Health Services Funding

409. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the budgetary allocation for the gay men's health service, GMHS, for each of the past five years; the regional allocation of the funding for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49303/17]

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

Health Services

410. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 1309 of 20 June 2017, the proposed relocation of the gay men's health service located at the clinic; and his plans to replicate this service outside of Dublin. [49304/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Appointments Status

411. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be scheduled. [49307/17]

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

412. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his plans to review the loco parentis rule that restricts the nature of the HSE home care provided to sick children by agency nurses who are forbidden to allow parents to leave the home unless another adult is present; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49308/17]

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.

Health Services Funding

413. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health the status of an additional funding application under section 39 for a facility (details supplied) which provides a comprehensive service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49309/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

National Treatment Purchase Fund

414. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his plans to use the National Treatment Purchase Fund for certain urology procedures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49312/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I acknowledge that waiting times are often unacceptably long and I am conscious of the burden that this places on patients and their families.

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. Budget 2018 allocated additional funding in the region of €10m for the remainder of 2017 to fund patient treatment across a range of key specialties and procedures.

In order to reduce the numbers of long-waiting patients, the HSE has been implementing Waiting List Action Plans for 2017 in the areas of Inpatient/Daycase, Scoliosis and Outpatient Services. The Inpatient/Daycase Action Plan is being delivered through a combination of normal hospital activity, as well as insourcing and outsourcing initiatives utilising NTPF funding. Under the Inpatient/Daycase Plan, since early February, over 29,000 patients have come off

the Inpatient/Daycase Waiting List. Long-waiting Urology patients are a core group who have received treatment under the Inpatient/Daycase Initiative.

The NTPF has advised that to date 14,548 patients have been authorised for treatment in private hospitals under its initiatives, 5,431 patients have accepted an offer of treatment in a private hospital and that 2,011 patients have received their procedure. The NTPF has also indicated that 3,821 patients have been authorised for treatment in public hospitals under the Plan's insourcing initiatives, 1,471 offers of treatment have been accepted and 818 patients have been treated.

The NTPF have advised that, as of 17 November, the total number of Urology procedures that have been undertaken through NTPF funding in both public and private hospitals is 305.

Primary Care Centres Provision

415. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of a primary care centre in Lucan, County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49314/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the HSE has responsibility for the provision, along with the maintenance and operation of Primary Care Centres and other Primary Care facilities, the Executive has been asked to reply directly to the Deputy.

Primary Care Centres Provision

416. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of a primary care centre in Rowlagh, Clondalkin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49315/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE advises that agreement has been reached with the adjacent college in relation to the details of the planning application, and it is expected that the planning application will be lodged by the end of the year.

Home Care Packages

417. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health if home care packages as provided for in budget 2018 will be prioritised for persons with dementia, in view of the absence of community supports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49325/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Each year 4,000 people in Ireland develop dementia – an average of 11 people every day. Currently there are approximately 55,000 people living with dementia in the Republic of Ireland, and this number is expected to almost treble to over 150,000 by 2046. These numbers highlight the need for us as a nation to acknowledge and understand the condition and its impact on individuals and society as a whole.

In recognition of the particular challenges faced by people with dementia and their carers, the Government published Ireland's first National Dementia Strategy in December 2014. The purpose of the Strategy is to increase awareness of dementia, ensure timely diagnosis and intervention, and develop enhanced community based services.

The Strategy emphasises that most people with dementia live in their own communities and can continue to live well and to participate in those communities for far longer than many people appreciate.

My Department and the HSE agreed a joint Programme with the Atlantic Philanthropies in late 2014 to implement significant elements of the Strategy. The National Dementia Strategy Implementation Programme seeks to promote a greater focus on timely diagnosis of dementia and the value of early intervention. A key strand of the programme is the development of measures to raise public awareness, reduce stigma, and promote the inclusion and involvement in society of those with dementia. The Dementia Understand Together campaign integrates these objectives under one campaign.

The National Dementia Strategy Implementation Programme also includes Intensive Homecare Packages for people with dementia; the upskilling of GPs and Primary Care Teams to diagnose and manage dementia; and the establishment of a National Dementia Office in the HSE to coordinate and drive the Strategy's implementation.

The projected spend for Intensive Home Care Packages in 2017 is €9m supported by HSE and Atlantic Philanthropies funding. At the end of September 2017, out of a total of 236 people in receipt of an Intensive Home Care Package, 148 people with dementia were in receipt of a dementia specific Intensive Homecare Package. It is also worth noting that people with dementia can also avail of standard home care. The HSE continues to provide mainstream home help, routine Home Care packages and other appropriate community based supports such as day care, respite etc., to people with dementia whose needs have been assessed as requiring these supports and within available resources.

In budget 2018 a further €37 million has been made available for older people services, comprising €5m once-off funding in 2017 and €32 million next year, to further strengthen supports for older people, particularly to facilitate speedier discharge from acute hospitals over the winter period. A significant proportion of this additional funding will go towards home care services.

My Department is working with the HSE to prepare the 2018 National Service Plan. Pending agreement of the Plan I am not in a position to comment either on the funding that will be made available for dementia care or the specific services that will be provided. I will be happy to update the Deputy once the Service Plan is finalised.

Health Services Staff Data

418. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the number of locums compared with the number of HSE staff by professional medical discipline at each hospital under the aegis of the HSE each month from January 2016 to date; the salaries paid to staff compared to salaries paid to locums by medical discipline at each hospital for the same period. [49336/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Palliative Care for Children

419. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if, following the recent launch of the palliative care services three year development framework 2017 to 2019 document, he plans

to publish a framework specific to children's palliative care; and if not, the plans he has to bring forward policy or a framework for children's palliative care [49372/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The evaluation of the Children's Palliative Care Programme, which was published in November 2016, contains 20 recommendations for the further development of children's palliative care services. The Evaluation noted that the Children's Palliative Care Programme had made a major difference to the lives of children with palliative care needs and their families and recommended a strengthening of the Children's Palliative Care Programme to include more children's outreach nurses, a second consultant paediatrician post with a special interest in children's palliative medicine and a continuation of the education programme in Crumlin. To date, all but one of the recommendations (recommendation 3) have been explored in further detail, and 17 of the recommendations are being progressed. Some of the most significant areas of progress are highlighted below.

The aim of the children's outreach nursing service is to co-ordinate seamless continuity of care between the acute paediatric unit, community services and the child's home. The nurse develops strong working relationships with colleagues within the acute and community settings e.g. paediatric medicine, general practice, community paediatric services, disability services, nursing services, specialist adult palliative care home teams, and voluntary services such as Jack and Jill, Laura Lynn, etc. Two additional Children's Outreach Nurses were recruited in 2017, one in Donegal and one in Dublin. A third new Nurse will be appointed in Kerry in 2018.

The Consultant Paediatrician with a Special Interest in Palliative Care leads the specialist paediatric palliative care team in Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin. Preparations are under way to recruit a second consultant paediatrician with a special interest in children's palliative medicine who will be based in Temple Street. This post will be funded by the IHF for the first year, and by the HSE thereafter. The Children's Hospital Group has agreed that the posts will be located in the New National Children's Hospital when opened.

A business case has been submitted to the HSE's office for Nursing and Midwifery Service Development for the continuation of the training courses in Crumlin on caring for children with life-limiting conditions. There is a commitment to provide training to meet the needs of community based adult palliative care teams and hospital based paediatric medical and nursing staff.

The IHF and Laura Lynn have agreed to fund a national coordinator for children's palliative care for a three-year period. Discussions are underway with the Children's Hospital Group and the appropriate Integrated/Clinical Programmes on the job description and the full integration of the role into paediatric services.

With regard to the recommendation on the provision of adequate and needs based respite services, discussions have commenced with HSE Primary Care and Disability Services on the integration of children's palliative care with existing and future in-home and out-of-home services.

The HSE is addressing the lack of available and standardised bereavement care in conjunction with the IHF. A scoping exercise is required to identify existing services and gaps in service provision.

As highlighted by the Evaluation, integration with disability services, primary care, complex care, the new National Children's Hospital and the paediatric clinical care programme is being pursued as a key part of the implementation of the recommendations.

The HSE launched the Palliative Care Services Three Year Development Framework on No-

vember 14 2017. This Framework was developed in order to inform and direct the development of adult palliative care services in Ireland for the remainder of this decade. National policy on adult palliative care is largely based on the 2001 Report of the National Advisory Committee on Palliative Care. Given the advances in changes in the landscape of Irish medicine in general, and in palliative care in particular, since 2001, the new Framework was developed in order to meet the changed landscape of palliative care.

My Department does not intend to develop a separate framework for children's palliative care at present. Implementation of the recommendations made in the evaluation of the Children's Palliative Care Programme provides a suitable framework that guides the development of children's palliative care for the coming years.

Services for People with Disabilities

420. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if emergency funding will be provided to find a permanent care facility for the four adults with profound intellectual and physical disabilities currently availing of services (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49376/17]

421. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if funding will be provided to the local authority to provide a long-term full-time care facility for the four adults with profound intellectual and physical disabilities currently availing of services (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49377/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 420 and 421 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 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.

Health Services Funding

422. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health his plans to provide extra funding under the section 39 grants heading to the community health care organisation, CHO, area 2 in view of the need to fund an association (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49387/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): 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, therefore neither the HSE nor my Department has a role in determining the salaries or other terms and conditions applying to these staff.

The staff of these Section 39 organisations are not public servants and therefore were not

subject to the FEMPI legislation which imposed pay reductions. It follows then that the staff of the Section 39 bodies will not be eligible for any pay restoration associated with the unwinding of this legislation and provided for under the more recent Public Service Agreements. It is a matter for Section 39 organisations to negotiate salaries with their staff as part of their employment relationship and within the overall funding available for the delivery of agreed services.

Whilst it is understood that pay cuts were imposed on Section 39 employees, it is not clear that these cuts were applied in a universally consistent manner across all the Section 39 agencies. It is also important to recognise that this group of organisations within the health sector is just one element of a larger complex issue which could have significant cost implications for the Exchequer across the public services as a whole.

Hospital Beds Data

423. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 1004 to 1006, inclusive, of 26 July 2017 and 94 of 15 November 2017, if he will clarify which of the statements is correct; his policy for hospitals' (details supplied) long-stay accommodation beds; if previous records on this issue will be corrected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49389/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The State's Capital Programme "Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021" which was published on 30 September 2015 included an investment programme in health infrastructure. Based on this, the HSE prepared its programme of investment in public nursing home facilities.

The programme which was announced on 26 January 2016 included the development of a new 130 bed centre, centrally located in Letterkenny to ensure that bed capacity in the region, which includes Ramelton, Lifford and Stranorlar is secured on a sustainable basis.

As I confirmed in my recent Parliamentary reply to the Deputy that since this announcement in 2016, and following discussions with public representatives, Health Forum members and local community groups, local HSE management in CHO 1 agreed to review overall requirements for the area. This included an assessment of the current and future needs for both short and long term beds and an assessment of the adequacy of the three existing facilities referred to by the Deputy. I understand that the review has been completed and a report is to be submitted to the HSE's National Social Care Division in the first instance, and then the HSE's National Capital Property Steering Group.

Hospitals Discharges

424. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of elective discharges in each public and-or voluntary hospital in each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017; the number of which were private and the number of which were public, by hospital, by year, in tabular form. [49401/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Hospitals Discharges

425. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of elective discharges in each speciality as per the NTPF definitions of speciality in each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017; the number of which were private and the number of which were public, by hospital, by year, in tabular form. [49402/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Hospital Waiting Lists

426. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if there is a common outpatient waiting list as per the consultants contract 2008. [49403/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HIQA Report and Recommendations on Patient Referrals from General Practice to Outpatient and Radiology Services, including the National Standard for Patient Referral Information published in 2011 makes a number of recommendation in relation to Secondary Care Referral Management Systems, including that GP should address referrals in the first instance to a central point within a hospital, then to the relevant specialty/service, followed by named consultant if relevant. The approach is supported in the report by international evidence.

With regard to the Consultant Contract 2008, a key objective of the Contract is to improve access for public patients to public hospital care. Under the Consultant's Contract 2008 and HSE guidance issued from the National Director of Acute Hospitals in September 2009 a common waiting list for treatment, diagnostic investigations, tests and procedures on an outpatient basis in public hospitals is identified. In addition, under HSE policy, private outpatients may not attend public outpatient consultant-led clinics.

Finally, under the *HSE National Framework for operation and management of Outpatient Departments* published in 2013, referrals for outpatient appointments to a named consultant should be treated as general to the specialty involved, unless it is more appropriate for a particular patient to be managed by a specific consultant.

Hospital Charges

427. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the revenue raised from charges for private patients in public beds; the number of procedures in each hospital which has treated private patients in public beds; and the number of applications for payment by the insurer that were submitted by each hospital for such procedures carried out by public and-or voluntary hospital, in each of the years 2013 to 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form. [49404/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): This question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Herd Number Applications

428. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if an application for a herd number by a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48683/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): An application to register a herd number in the name of the above was received in the Regional Veterinary Office in Tralee on 10 November and an inspection was carried out on 13 November. Further documentation is required before a herd number can issue and the applicant has agreed to furnish the documents to the Regional Veterinary Office.

Fodder Crisis

429. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to the shortage of fodder in western counties including in County Mayo; the steps he is taking to deal with same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48689/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): It is clear that Weather conditions over much of this Autumn have been challenging for farmers and created difficulties for farmers particularly in the Western regions and on heavier land types.

Grass growth rates this year have been ahead of last year. However the poor weather resulted in cattle being housed earlier than normal in places, particularly on the heavier soils; it also affected late cut silage making operations.

It appears that there are supplies of fodder in the form of silage and hay available across the country for those farmers who may require to supplement their own fodder supply. However, I have asked Teagasc to work locally in areas with fodder difficulties, to support good budgeting of fodder supplies on farms for the winter ahead. My Department continues to monitor the situation.

The European Commission agreed to my request for an advance payment of the 2017 Basic Payment Scheme. This has been prompted by the inclement weather conditions and also market difficulties caused by currency fluctuations. This means an increase from 50% to 70% in the rate for the BPS to those applicants whose applications were confirmed fully clear. Issuing of these payments commenced after the 15th October and balancing payments will be made with effect from early December. There will also be an increase permitted to the advance for Pillar II Rural Development schemes.

These payments and the payments under the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme, have already injected over €800 million into the Irish rural economy. These payments are providing a very welcome boost for Irish farm families and will help to finance fodder purchase where necessary. My Department will continue to closely monitor the situation.

Herd Number Applications

430. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person (details supplied) has not received a herd number after they lodged the relevant application and documentation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48712/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): An application for a herd number was received from the person named in the Regional Veterinary Office on 15 March 2017. Contact could not be made at the time with the applicant to arrange a farm inspection to check compliance with the requirements for the granting of a herd number. This inspection has recently been carried out and the facilities on the farm currently do not meet the

requirements. My Department has been in contact with the applicant and a further inspection will be arranged when the facilities meet the requirements.

Brexit Issues

431. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the preparations made in his Department in the event of no agreement being reached between the United Kingdom and the European Union on the terms of the UK's exit from the EU; if such preparations involve the drawing up of detailed and specific contingency plans in the event of a hard Brexit and a trade regime based on WTO tariffs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48769/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade with special responsibility for Brexit, Minister Coveney has responsibility for coordinating the whole-of-Government response to Brexit. In this capacity, he is working closely with his colleagues across Government to address the many challenges resulting from Brexit. This cooperation also involves the relevant State Agencies.

Work at Cabinet level is being prepared through cross-Departmental coordination structures. These represent a frequent and active channel through which all relevant Departments are providing their research, analysis and overall policy input to the Government's wider response to Brexit, including its priorities for the ongoing Article 50 negotiations between the EU and the UK.

As the outcome of the negotiations is not yet known, an important focus of the planning and preparation being undertaken through these structures is on deepening the Government's analysis and understanding of the exact consequences of a range of different possible scenarios. This represents an intensification of efforts to build on the Government's contingency planning.

In line with this whole-of-Government work, my Department has conducted a range of analysis and research activities in relation to Brexit. This work is ongoing, and is primarily concerned with the implications of Brexit for agri-food trade with the UK across different sectors.

For example, both internally and in consultation with the relevant stakeholders through the Brexit Stakeholder Consultative Committee and the All-Island Civic Dialogue process, my Department has established the extent of sectoral reliance on the UK market, the potential implications of Brexit for each sector and the possible responses to the challenges presented. It has also been analysing the potential practical impact on the day-to-day functioning of trade flows, as well as potential WTO tariffs that might be applied to Ireland's agri-food exports to the UK in the event of a 'hard' Brexit.

The agencies reporting to my Department have also undertaken important research in relation to Brexit, with Teagasc publishing reports on, for example, the potential implications for the Irish agri-food sector in overall terms and on the implications for family farm incomes, and Bord Bia conducting important work through its Brexit Barometer.

In addition, my Department is in contact with the relevant agencies and with other Departments to co-ordinate further research on the implications of Brexit for the agri-food industry.

Departmental Staff Training

432. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine

the cost of providing external coaching and-or training services for staff development in his Department over the past five years and to date in 2017, by cost per year, in tabular form; the company that delivered the training courses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48798/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested is being compiled and will be forwarded directly to the Deputy.

EU Programmes

433. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if recent reports are correct that the 2018 intervention for skimmed milk powder will be via tender at prices below current regulation level of €16.98 per tonne; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48863/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As the Deputy is aware, there has been significant recourse to intervention for skimmed milk powder (SMP) across the EU since September 2015. There are now approximately 363,000 tonnes of SMP in public intervention stocks. The use of intervention during a turbulent period for the dairy sector provided a welcome safety net for producers in Ireland and across the EU. Whilst the overall dairy sector is now in a much better place, particularly at the farm gate, this intervention stock is now effectively overhanging the EU SMP market.

The Commission's concern, as expressed by Commissioner Hogan on a number of occasions, is to avoid further stock piling of SMP next year. The current Commission proposal is to reset the volume limit for intervention buying in at a fixed price to zero, from the existing limit of 109,000 tonnes. Buying into intervention could continue, but on the basis of a tendering route. The Commission have indicated that such provisions will be implemented via the legislative route of normal implementing acts, whereby the Commission, whilst consulting with Member States, can act independently of the views expressed.

In assessing the Commission proposal, I recognise that the current situation in respect of existing stocks should not be allowed to persist indefinitely. However, the issue of current stocks cannot be disentangled from the issue of managing SMP intervention in 2018 and beyond. The issues involved, with respect to both market management and sentiment in the sector, are complex and require ongoing careful management.

My Department has and will continue to engage with the Commission, and with other Member States, and with national stakeholders on these proposals:

- The Commission has been asked to set out an overall strategy in respect of dealing with the related issues of current stocks and management of SMP intervention in 2018 in tandem.

- In freeing up stocks, we will continue to request that the Commission do so in a prudent way, which does not send signals to the market that could affect overall sentiment in the sector.

- Ireland's preference is that the proposed measure be specified as for 2018 only, to avoid setting a precedent for the longer term. It is important that the Commission remain vigilant in monitoring the market situation, and has contingencies in place in the event of market volatility re-emerging.

434. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the length of all contracts for GLAS 1, 2 and 3 persons; the year that contracts commenced and will end for GLAS 1, 2 and 3 persons, in tabular form; if it is possible to extend existing contracts; and if so, if it forms part of the normal RDP amendment approval process at EU level. [48911/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): All GLAS contracts run for a minimum period of five years as set out as follows.

	Start Date	End Date	Number
GLAS1	01/10/2015	31/12/2020	23693
GLAS1	01/01/2016	31/12/2020	1595
GLAS2	01/01/2016	31/12/2020	11262
GLAS3	01/01/2017	31/12/2021	13325

While the governing regulations allow for extension of contracts in specific circumstances all GLAS contracts run until the end of the current programming period and all available funding under the RDP is fully committed.

Fishing Industry

435. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he is taking to protect Irish fishing interests at EU level; the latest discussions; and if he will report on bilateral discussions on same. [48912/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The fishing industry is a key priority for this Government and my officials and I are constantly engaged in protecting and enhancing the interests of that industry across a wide range of issues at all levels within the EU.

Obviously a key issue is Brexit and the potential implications arising from that but there are also a host of other issues of concern and interest to the Irish fishing industry with which we are constantly engaged. For example, last week alone my officials were part of EU delegations at international fisheries negotiations in London and Morocco, safeguarding Irish interests in important pelagic and tuna fisheries respectively. This week and next there will be high level meetings with the Commission as part of the preparation for the December Fisheries Council.

Our full time Fisheries Attache, part of the Agriculture and Fisheries team in the Permanent Representation in Brussels, represents our interests on a day to day basis in both formal meetings of the Council Working Party on Fisheries as well as with the Commission, the European Parliament and other relevant bodies operating at EU level.

Apart from Brexit, which, as the Deputy is well aware, is the single most important issue facing the industry, there are a host of other ongoing important discussions such as those around new technical measures, regionalisation of fisheries management, the implementation of the Landing Obligation and of course the TAC & Quota negotiations for 2018.

All of these are complex areas but with real impacts for the fishing industry. My aim in all of these negotiations is always, in consultation with the stakeholders, to ensure that we have a profitable and sustainable fishing industry that will continue to benefit our coastal communities.

I can assure the Deputy that my direct engagement and that of my officials with the issues

concerning fisheries at EU level is as comprehensive as it is constant.

Trade Agreements

436. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if market access for Irish meat and dairy product is contingent on agreement at EU level as opposed to bilaterally with Japan and Korea in view of the fact that the EU has trade agreements in place with these countries; the process at EU level by which the share of EU quotas will be allocated to member states. [48913/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Market access for meat and dairy products can be made by the EU for either all, or a number of, Member States such as in the case of meat access to Canada. However, most often this market access is agreed bilaterally between the Department and its equivalent competent authority in a Third Country. This was the case in relation to Ireland gaining beef access to the USA in 2015, the first Member State to do so.

Market access to Japan and South Korea for Irish meat products is currently being negotiated bilaterally. These negotiations are not contingent on any EU-level agreements. The recent Free Trade Agreements with South Korea and Japan relate to tariffs imposed on trade. Quotas are not broken down by Member States. Rather, there is a tariff-rate quota for the entire EU.

Ireland gained market access to Japan for beef at the end of 2013. Current trade consists mainly of frozen beef offal, tongues in particular. In 2016, more than 1,300 tonnes of bovine meat valued at €7.5 million was exported. Ireland also has pigmeat access to Japan and in 2016, a total of 4,750 tonnes was exported, at a value of €14.2 million.

My Department has recently started bilateral negotiations in relation to getting sheepmeat access to Japan. Japanese imports of Irish dairy produce exceeded €14.8 million in 2016 and DAFM has recently agreed, with the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries, bilateral export certificates for the export of dairy products from Ireland to Japan. We are one of four EU member states at an advanced stage of negotiations to gain beef access to South Korea. (The others being Denmark, Netherlands and France). I was very pleased to use the recent Trade Mission as an opportunity to seek to advance progress on beef access on a bilateral basis for Ireland, as part of my meetings with Ministers there.

Dairy exports to South Korea amounted to €3.3 million last year. Both Japan and South Korea have been identified as key strategic markets for future growth in dairy produce.

Fodder Crisis

437. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the budget allocation and actual expenditure on the imported fodder transport scheme in 2013; the number of persons who participated in the scheme, by county, in tabular form; the operation of the scheme and the maximum grant aid permitted per person; if state aid rules apply to this scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48914/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Imported Fodder Transport Scheme 2013 was implemented to reduce the cost to farmers of imported forage (hay, silage, haylage). The aid was targeted at the cost of transport into the country, thus reducing the cost to farmers of a bale of hay by approximately one third.

In view of the prevailing circumstances the quickest and most effective method of ensuring the supply of fodder to those in need was to implement the scheme through the co-operatives, marts and other approved agencies. This served to ensure necessary supplies to the individual farmers and primary producers who were the actual beneficiaries of the scheme.

The scheme was initially designed to cover fodder imports from 15 April 2013 to 3 May 2013 but in view of the continuing demand the scheme was extended to the end of May 2013. The scheme was initially funded at €2 million but this was subsequently increased to €2.8 million.

A total of 76 agencies participated in the scheme which involved their facilitating the import and supply of fodder to farmers who had applied for the scheme and then advising the Department of amount and value of fodder supplied to these farmers. The Department then reimbursed transport costs to the agencies which in turn passed these funds to the individual claimants.

Payments under the scheme were subject to state aid de minimis rules. A total of €2,554,372 issued to 16,120 beneficiaries under the scheme. The county breakdown of these payments is outlined in the table.

COUNTY	NO OF BENEFICIARIES	TOTAL €
Carlow	1	100
Cavan	398	61,428.16
Clare	1,202	89,438
Cork	3,005	672,432.65
Donegal	1,049	181,923.8
Dublin	4	830.06
Galway	1,452	151,432.31
Kerry	2,071	378,063.92
Kildare	24	8,604.64
Kilkenny	112	17,315.62
Laois	55	18,999.44
Leitrim	769	71,070.54
Limerick	1,437	314,616.64
Longford	108	7,004.1
Louth	10	8,006.16
Mayo	1,197	85,947.32
Meath	98	65,171.93
Monaghan	457	111,669.16
Offaly	177	18,913.07
Roscommon	868	70,937.62
Sligo	585	49,877.96
Tipperary	844	125,401.18
Waterford	47	7,448.64
Westmeath	146	34,606.16
Wexford	2	1,106.02
Wicklow	2	2,027.12
TOTAL	16,120	2,554,372.22

Fodder Crisis

438. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the budget allocation and actual expenditure on the scheme of assistance for persons who suffered fodder losses as a result of the severe flooding in 2016; the operation of the scheme and the maximum grant aid permitted per person; if state aid rules apply to this scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48915/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The 2016 Fodder Aid Scheme was implemented in January 2016 in response to damage to fodder supplies arising from the period of protracted flooding in December, 2015 and January, 2016. The aim of the scheme was to compensate farmers in approved cases for the direct replacement cost in instances where genuine damage to silage, hay, concentrates or straw has been caused by the flooding.

The scheme opened on 7 January 2016 with a closing date of 22 January 2016. A total of 391 applications were received under the scheme of which 330 were paid a total of €660,619. All payments were subject to state aid de minimis rules.

EU Programmes

439. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on plans by the European Commission to limit the amount of skimmed milk powder that it buys in public intervention in 2018; his further views on a tender system that is planned for the intervention process in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48916/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As the Deputy is aware, there has been significant recourse to intervention for skimmed milk powder (SMP) across the EU since September 2015. There are now approximately 363,000 tonnes of SMP in public intervention stocks. The use of intervention during a turbulent period for the dairy sector provided a welcome safety net for producers in Ireland and across the EU. Whilst the overall dairy sector is now in a much better place, particularly at the farm gate, this intervention stock is now effectively overhanging the EU SMP market.

The Commission's concern, as expressed by Commissioner Hogan on a number of occasions, is to avoid further stockpiling of SMP next year. The current Commission proposal is to reset the volume limit for intervention buying in at a fixed price to zero, from the existing limit of 109,000 tonnes. Buying into intervention could continue, but on the basis of a tendering route. The Commission have indicated that such provisions will be implemented via the legislative route of normal implementing acts, whereby the Commission, whilst consulting with Member States, can act independently of the views expressed.

In assessing the Commission proposal, I recognise that the current situation in respect of existing stocks should not be allowed to persist indefinitely. However, the issue of current stocks cannot be disentangled from the issue of managing SMP intervention in 2018 and beyond. The issues involved, with respect to both market management and sentiment in the sector, are complex and require ongoing careful management.

My Department has and will continue to engage with the Commission, and with other Member States, and with national stakeholders on these proposals:

- The Commission has been asked to set out an overall strategy in respect of dealing with the related issues of current stocks and management of SMP intervention in 2018 in tandem.

- In freeing up stocks, we will continue to request that the Commission do so in a prudent way, which does not send signals to the market that could affect overall sentiment in the sector.

- Ireland's preference is that the proposed measure be specified as for 2018 only, to avoid setting a precedent for the longer term. It is important that the Commission remain vigilant in monitoring the market situation, and has contingencies in place in the event of market volatility re-emerging.

Farmers Charter

440. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the farmers' charter between his Department and farming organisations has agreed on payment dates for RDP schemes in 2017 and 2018; and if yes, the dates agreed upon. [48917/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Farmers' Charter of Rights is effectively an agreement between farm representative organisations and my Department. It sets down, inter alia, agreed target timelines for delivery of payments in respect of the schemes, including RDP schemes, operated by my Department.

The current Charter will remain in place until 2020 coinciding with the lifetime of the current Pillar I and Pillar II schemes.

The Farmers' Charter of Rights, and the agreed targets contained therein, is available in the customer service area of my Department's website. The target payment timeframes are set out in the charter.

The operation of a number of schemes covered by this Charter is governed by EU/National legislation while others are governed by national law only. The very ambitious targets that my Department strives to achieve under the Charter - targets which compare extremely favourably with the payment timeframes of our EU counterparts - cannot legally supersede national or EU law. The Charter cannot grant rights which would affect or change the operation of those laws in so far as they apply to the Schemes in question.

Agriculture Scheme Appeals

441. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a decision will be made on an appeal by the agriculture appeals office for a person (detailed supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48923/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The independent Agriculture Appeals Office has confirmed that, in December 2016, a review of the Appeals Officer's decision was requested. Such reviews must be undertaken to determine if there was an error in the Appeals Officer's decision and require a detailed assessment of the case in full compliance with the legal requirements. A number of requests for review of appeal decisions were received prior to the request concerned. Cases are generally dealt with in order of receipt. Every effort is being made to complete the review of the case concerned.

Fishing Industry

442. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding fishing with micro-nets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48930/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I assume from the Deputy's question that he is referring to the issue of fishing by means of pair trawling. My Department has received a number of queries from various groups regarding the issue of pair trawling by fishing vessels including in relation to marine Special Areas of Conservation.

My Department understands that pair trawling in inshore waters and estuaries around Ireland is confined to fishing for sprat and that there are a number of potential impacts that the fishery could have on the local ecology of these areas. In 2017, the Marine Institute is involved in an enhanced data collection program on coastal sprat fisheries that will provide new data on by-catch rates of non-target species.

In addition, a risk assessment was undertaken by the Marine Institute of fisheries interactions in Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). The assessment included the potential risk posed by fishing for sprat:

- in the Shannon Estuary to the resident Bottle Nose Dolphin population, and
- in Kenmare Bay for Harbour Seals.

The assessment concludes that:

- The infrequent sprat fishery along the Clare and Kerry coasts is unlikely to significantly affect the Shannon estuary Bottle Nose Dolphin population.

- Local resident populations of this species do not rely on the food subsidy provided by immigration of pelagic fish.

- Also, they do not specialize in feeding on shoaling fish and take individual prey that are larger than sprat (16cm).

- The Bottle Nose Dolphin population in the Shannon Estuary SAC is reported to be stable.

- In relation to Harbour Seals in Kenmare Bay, the assessment noted that the risk posed by pelagic fishing on harbour seals through by-catch and disturbance of haul-out locations was low.

I encourage anyone who may have a concern about pair trawling by fishing vessels to work with the fishing industry on the issue through the industry's representatives, i.e. the various fish producer organisations and the Inshore Fisheries Forums.

Beef Data and Genomics Programme

443. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48941/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named successfully applied to join the Beef Data and Genomics Programme on 13 May 2015 and payment in full for the 2015 Programme year was made on 20 April 2016.

However, the person named also applied under a second herdnumber (C1410731) and re-

quested that both herds be amalgamated. Following a review it was agreed that the maximum payable area of both herds could be amalgamated under C1410197. Final processing has recently taken place and a supplementary payment for the 2015 Programme year will issue in the near future.

The person named has already been paid in full for the 2016 Programme year. Payments for 2017 will commence in December, subject to compliance checks.

Trade Agreements

444. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the outcome of recent discussions he has had with the EU agriculture and trade Commissioners regarding the need to protect the beef sector in negotiations regarding a Mercosur trade deal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49043/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I and my officials have been very active in highlighting the potentially very damaging impact of a Mercosur deal on the European agriculture sector, and on the beef sector in particular. We continue to monitor the situation closely and respond as appropriate to developments in order to defend the interests of Irish farmers, working in close co-operation with my Government colleagues, particularly the Táinaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, and the Taoiseach. Indeed, the Taoiseach raised the matter in the course of recent meetings with French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker.

At political level, I have continuously raised the issue with my Member State colleagues and with Commissioners Hogan and Malmström, both within the Council of Agriculture Ministers and in written form. These efforts have been reinforced at official level through similar contacts with Member States and the Commission, particularly through the Special Committee on Agriculture and the Trade Policy Committee.

Most recently, Ireland made the latest in a series of very strong interventions on this matter at the Trade Policy Committee in Brussels on 27 October, and I raised the matter at the Council of Agriculture Ministers in Luxembourg in October and again in Brussels on 6 November. I have also worked very closely with a number of other Member States, most notably France, including in the production of a joint paper that was submitted to the European Commission on 26 September outlining our shared concerns. And I wrote to Commissioner Malmström in early October, reiterating my concerns in relation to the tabling of a tariff rate quota (TRQ) offer for beef.

I was deeply disappointed that the Commission decided to submit a beef TRQ offer during the October round of negotiations with the Mercosur bloc, as I believe that this could not be coming at a worse time for the EU beef sector. However, it must be noted that no agreement on a Mercosur deal has been finalised at this point.

I believe there is a need for continued vigilance in relation to the conduct of these trade negotiations, and I will continue to insist that they are handled appropriately, and in a manner that safeguards the interests of the Irish and European beef sector. In this regard I believe full account must be taken of the findings of the Commission's own assessment of the cumulative impact of trade deals on the agri food sector, and the potentially very damaging impact of Brexit on an already delicately balanced EU beef market. Against this background I will continue to build alliances with other Member states and to defend the interests of the Irish and EU beef sectors.

Departmental Communications

445. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the domain names registered to or owned by his Department or through a third party company. [49066/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The domain names registered to or owned by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine or through a third party company are listed in the table.

Domain
agriappeals.gov.ie
agriculture.gov.ie
dacs.gov.ie
dafmlab.gov.ie
dafrd.gov.ie
efabis.gov.ie
woodspect.ie
coford.ie
woodenergy.ie
agfood.ie
agriculture.ie
agrifood2010.ie(aliaes:agri-vision2015.ie)
agrionline.ie
alab.ie
avianflu.ie
birdflu.ie
efabis.ie
fawac.ie
fishingnet.ie(aliaes:seafishing.ie)
foodexports.ie(aliaes:foodexport.ie)
footandmouth.ie
killybegsharbour.ie
organicfocus.ie
treecheck.net

Parliamentary Questions Costs

446. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the average costs associated with processing and answering written and oral parliamentary questions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49116/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I wish to advise the Deputy that the average cost of processing and answering a Parliamentary Question will vary considerably according to the nature of the question asked.

Parliamentary Questions are assigned to the particular Division(s) of my Department dealing with the subject matter(s) and replies are prepared as part of the normal work of that Division. The number and level of staff and the time spent on an individual answer depends on the

complexity of the issue raised, the form in which the information exists and is requested, and whether an oral or written reply is required.

Therefore, while my Department expends a lot of time and effort processing and answering Parliamentary Questions, it is not possible to calculate the average cost.

Forestry Premium Payments

447. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a forestry payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49199/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The application from the person in question is currently being finalised and payment should reach her account next week.

Single Payment Scheme Eligibility

448. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 357 of 14 November 2017, if the listing of animals for stocking is determined at national level or European level; the reason alpacas are not included; if he will reconsider the eligibility rules to include alpacas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49219/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The stocking density requirements under the Area of Natural Constraints Scheme are defined by the Member State in agreement with the European Commission. The existing stocking density requirements can be satisfied by cattle, sheep, goats, deer and equines.

The ANC scheme is currently subject to a redesignation process under EU regulations which will see eligible areas defined by biophysical criteria. This new scheme was originally intended to be introduced for 2018. However, a proposal for a one year extension of this deadline to 2019 is presently under consideration at EU level as part of a range of regulatory changes under what is termed the “omnibus Proposal”. It is not intended to introduce any changes to the stocking requirement of the Scheme at this stage given that a new Scheme will be designed following the redesignation process.

GLAS Issues

449. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to re-open the GLAS scheme for new entrants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49236/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The target set out in the Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020 to approve 50,000 GLAS participants before the end of 2018 has already been achieved. The fact that the RDP target has been achieved almost two years ahead of schedule is a significant achievement on the part of both farmers and my Department, and is evidence of the commitment of Irish farmers to the sustainable growth of the Irish agri-food sector into the future.

There are no plans to re-open the scheme. My focus now is on ensuring that payments to these participants are processed and my Department is working hard to begin making these 2017 advance payments in the coming weeks. The GLAS scheme is one of a suite of many RDP schemes and the re-opening of any scheme can only be considered within the overall RDP budget which is currently fully committed.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments

450. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if funding will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49274/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): A comprehensive review was undertaken by officials within my Department of the REPS 4 contract concerned. This review took into account details of all monies paid, monies deducted and monies refunded over the entire course of the contract. As a result of this review, the Department is satisfied that all monies due to the applicant have been paid, and that no further action is warranted. The Department will issue written confirmation to the applicant, showing all the relevant details concerning the calculations of payments, deductions and refunds and the corresponding areas the payments were based upon.

Forestry Grants

451. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an afforestation licence application (details supplied); when a decision will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49306/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The application referred to by the Deputy for the Afforestation Grant and Premium Scheme was received in my Department on 23rd March, 2017. My Department strives to ensure the suitability of sites approved for afforestation and the adherence to guidelines for the protection of ecological and archaeological assets. This particular site contains both such assets and therefore must be assessed for any potential impact from the proposed activity.

The Department's archaeologist and ecologist have both visited the site and provided reports. Based on their comments, further information has been requested with regard to the ecological features of the site. The site is located within an area of high biodiversity value. Records show that species listed in the Flora Protection Order have been found and given the occurrence of legally protected plant species and the mosaic of habitats found, further information is required for the Department to fully evaluate this large complex site and to assess the potential ecological impacts of the proposed development.

The applicant and their registered forester have received details of the information that is required in order to progress this application. When received and evaluated, the Department will make its recommendations, which will inform the decision issued to the applicant.

Departmental Functions

452. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 354 of 14 November 2017, if his Department will now request the

removal of the claim to partnership with his Department by the organisation (details supplied) from that organisation's public website. [49357/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The conditions under which my Department's logo may be used have been clarified with the organisation in question.

Fishing Vessel Licences

453. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if, in the instance of the proposed penalty points being attached to a vessel owner's licence, they would remain attached to his or her licence should a court subsequently find in favour of the vessel owner; the rights of appeal to the courts the vessel owner has following a decision reached by the proposed board of determination which the Minister proposed to establish by statutory instrument; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49365/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The European Union (Common Fisheries Policy) (Point System) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 125 of 2016) establishes a point system, which will apply to the Licence Holder of a sea-fishing boat when a serious infringement of the Common Fisheries Policy is detected. It is intended that the new Statutory Instrument which I intend to sign shortly will replace S.I. No. 125 of 2016 and change the make-up of the Determination Panel set up under the 2016 S.I. to determine if on the balance of probabilities a serious infringement occurred and whether it is a serious infringement. This will involve the appointment of three independent legal professionals nominated by the Attorney General, thereby completely separating the enforcement and the determination functions. The new SI will, to the extent possible, take on board the issues of concern in relation to procedures and processes highlighted in High Court judgments on this matter. It will also address certain minor technical and drafting issues arising in S.I. No. 125 of 2016.

In June 2016, I advised the Oireachtas that subject to addressing some important legal and administrative issues, that I was hopeful of moving towards a system of sequential application of EU points in conjunction with the prosecution process, having consulted with the Attorney General's office. I made it clear that this move was subject to addressing some important legal and administrative issues in order to ensure compliance with EU law.

There has been extensive examination and consideration of all the issues in relation to meeting our EU obligations to implement the points system in the interim period. The firm legal view available to me is that it is not possible to deliver on an effective and dissuasive points system, as required under EU law, by assigning points to licence holders upon successful prosecution.

Accordingly, as is the case with SI No. 125 of 2016, it is intended that the new SI will provide that points assigned to a holder of an Irish licence remain assigned regardless of any criminal proceedings pending, or the outcome of any such proceedings, in respect of the serious infringement concerned.

In relation to rights of appeal, it is intended that the new S.I. will provide for a right to appeal to an independent Fisheries Adjudicator if the licence holder is dissatisfied with the determination of the Determination Panel. The Adjudicator is a legal person appointed by the Minister.

It is also intended that under the new S.I. the licence holder may appeal on a point of law a decision of the independent Fisheries Adjudicator to the High Court. In the 2014 S.I., this appeal was "final and conclusive" – this aspect of the provision has been removed.

Fish Quotas

454. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the initial draft proposals issued from the European Commission regarding the TACs and quota for fishing for 2018; the steps he has taken prior to the December 2017 European Commission meeting on this matter in order to protect the fishing industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49366/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Ireland has an interest in 57 separate stocks that are managed under the Common Fisheries Policy by way of the TAC (Total Allowable Catch) & Quota system.

The Commission published its proposals for 46 of these on the 7th of November. The remaining proposals, some of which are dependent on the outcome of ongoing international negotiations, are expected over the coming weeks.

With regard to the specific proposals that we have, I have launched a public consultation as part of our Sustainability Impact Assessment and I look forward to the outcome of that process which I intend to lay before the Oireachtas on the 28th of this month.

While we only received the Commission proposals earlier this month, our preparation began much earlier. In many respects, it is an all-year affair with the scientific data used to inform the negotiations collected continuously over a 12-month period. It is the publication of this data from June onwards that allows us to begin our preparation in earnest as the advice gives a strong indication of what the proposals might look like.

The long term scenario is unquestionably more important than short term gain and I've often spoken about the importance of ensuring healthy, sustainable stocks. Nevertheless, if a severe cut is recommended, I have a clear duty to ensure that it is fully justified. I am always conscious of the immediate impacts the decisions taken at the December Fisheries Council have for so many communities around our coast. This is why I believe the advance preparation should be as comprehensive and inclusive as possible involving my own Department as well as Bord Iascaigh Mhara and the Marine Institute; all industry representatives and the Environmental Pillar. This process is invaluable and helps me identify the key areas of concern.

I should also point out that the December Council doesn't happen in isolation from other fisheries negotiations. A range of international meetings that effectively decide the quotas for some very important stocks such as mackerel, blue whiting, Atlanto Scandian Herring and Albacore tuna are also conducted. Ireland is a very active participant at all of these negotiations and they form part of the broader picture for our fishing opportunities that is sometimes forgotten in the bustle of December Council.

In parallel to those negotiations, work is ongoing for myself and my team throughout the run up to December with a number of important technical meetings. These meetings are not bureaucratic formalities. They help me to understand the priorities of other Member States and also gauge where Ireland can build relationships to help us deliver our priorities at Council.

This year, as always, we are facing challenging proposals in a number of fisheries. Without pre-empting the outcome of the Sustainability Impact Assessment, or going into a stock by stock analysis, it is safe to say that I am concerned about a number of the proposals, particularly but not exclusively, for stocks in the Celtic Sea. Where cuts are justified by the scientific advice I will support them but, unfortunately, I do not think that all of the cuts proposed by the Commission are so justified.

The Hague preferences, with which the Deputy is very familiar and indeed was a key figure in defending them during the Reform of the CFP, will, as usual come under attack. Their retention is never certain and this year, in the context of Brexit, there is likely to be a renewed effort to limit their application.

The December Council is always a challenge and this year will be no different. I can assure the Deputy that Ireland is well prepared and I will do my utmost to ensure that the final outcome is one that is good for the industry and the long term sustainability of the stocks.

GLAS Payments

455. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if payment will be made to a person (details supplied) for commonage the person owns under the GLAS scheme; if not, the rule under which the owner has been disqualified from payment on this commonage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49381/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 3 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2017.

The GLAS participant did not submit an SPS claim for the commonage share in 2014 therefore the person named is not eligible to be paid on the commonage action.

Rural Development Programme Data

456. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount of money paid out under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 under the REPS and AEOS schemes to date; the estimated amount of further money that will be paid out under these two schemes during the period up to the closure of the schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49384/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The amount of money paid out to date under the Rural Development Programme 2014 to 2020 for the REPS and AEOS schemes is €270.4m. REPS has now ended and AEOS 3 will cease at the end of 2018. It is expected that approximately a further €15 million will be paid out in AEOS up to the closing of the scheme.

GLAS Expenditure

457. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the actual expenditure under GLAS in each year to 2016 and to date in 2017; the estimated expenditure for 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49385/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The table provided demonstrates the expenditure on GLAS in respect of each year.

Year	Expenditure
2015	€11,452,000
2016	€102,615,247
2017 (up to 17/11/2017)	€53,145,862

Total	€167,213,109
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Total GLAS expenditure for 2017 will depend on the GLAS 2017 advance payments which will commence in the coming weeks.

It is expected that the full budget allocated to GLAS under the Rural Development Programme will be fully utilised over the lifetime of the Programme.

Departmental Funding

458. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount of funding that his Department awards to an institute (details supplied). [48681/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): My Department does not award funding to the Public Relations Institute of Ireland.

A payment of €1,890 was made to the Institute in December 2016 in respect of course fees for a staff member in the Department.

Broadband Service Provision

459. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when persons (details supplied) will receive broadband. [48723/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I refer the Deputy to the reply to Question No. 198 of 16 November 2017. While the position is unchanged, in summary I understand that an official from my Department has provided a detailed report outlining the status of High Speed Broadband availability in the area to the individuals named in the Question. While the premises referenced by the Deputy falls within an AMBER area and will be covered through the State led Intervention under the NBP, I understand that there are at least two operators (including mobile and Fixed wireless) that are capable of providing an interim solution.

Brexit Issues

460. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the preparations made in his Department in the event of no agreement being reached between the United Kingdom and the European Union on the terms of the UK's exit from the EU; if such preparations involve the drawing up of detailed and specific contingency plans in the event of a hard Brexit and a trade regime based on WTO tariffs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48772/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): As Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade with special responsibility for Brexit, Minister Coveney has responsibility for coordinating the whole-of-Government response to Brexit. In this capacity, he is working closely with his colleagues across Government to address the many challenges resulting from Brexit. This cooperation also involves the relevant State Agencies. Work at Cabinet level is being prepared through cross-Departmental coordination structures. These represent a frequent and active channel through which all relevant Depart-

ments are providing their research, analysis and overall policy input to the Government's wider response to Brexit, including its priorities for the ongoing Article 50 negotiations between the EU and the UK.

As the outcome of the negotiations is not yet known, an important focus of the planning and preparation being undertaken through these structures is on deepening the Government's analysis and understanding of the exact consequences of a range of different possible scenarios. This represents an intensification of efforts to build on the Government's contingency planning.

As Minister for Communications, Climate Action, & Environment, my Department covers a wide portfolio. Senior officials in relevant divisions of my Department prepared a paper outlining potential Brexit main impacts, with recommendations, to provide a comprehensive overview of sectoral issues faced within the Department. The Department is working closely with the Department of Foreign Affairs and other Government Departments to develop Ireland's wider response to the challenges and opportunities posed by Brexit. Senior officials from the Department are also engaged with the TF50 EU negotiating team in Brussels in mapping out particular North/South issues as part of the signalled preparations for future trade discussions.

Potential impact on any sector will depend largely on the shape of the future relationship between the EU and UK. EU/UK negotiations have not yet commenced discussion of future trade issues. It is therefore not possible to provide a detailed assessment.

My Department has convened two Civic Dialogues this year focusing on Energy. The objective of these events is to gather input from energy stakeholders including citizens and industry regarding the potential impact of Brexit. This input is taken into consideration by the Department in its Brexit related activities and planning.

Departmental Staff Training

461. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the cost of providing external coaching and-or training services for staff development in his Department over the past five years and to date in 2017, by cost per year, in tabular form; the company which delivered the training courses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48801/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The information requested is being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Renewable Energy Generation Targets

462. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the estimated annual fines that Ireland will incur due to missing renewable energy targets by 2020; the way in which he plans to fund these fines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48815/17]

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. Ireland is committed to achieving this target through meeting 40% of electricity demand, 12% of heat and 10% of transport from renewable sources of energy, with the latter transport target also being

legally binding.

While good progress has been made to date, with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) advising that 9.5% of Ireland's overall energy requirements in 2016 were met from renewable sources, meeting the 16% target remains challenging. The SEAI's most recent assessment is that Ireland will achieve between 13.2% and 15.4% of its 16% renewable energy target by 2020, indicating that Ireland should be between 82% to 96% to its target. However, while the focus of my Department remains firmly on meeting our 2020 target and on implementation of renewable energy measures, including a new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) and Renewal Heat Incentive (RHI), contingency planning has commenced in the Department to explore the potential extent, mechanisms and cost of addressing our target within the framework of the Directive.

The Renewable Energy Directive provides a comprehensive framework for Member States to work towards achieving individual and EU renewable energy targets, including mechanisms for countries to work together such as statistical transfers, which allow Member States to meet their targets by purchasing credits from Member States that overachieve on their renewable targets.

In the absence of an established market mechanism, estimates of the cost of using instruments such as Statistical Transfers are necessarily tentative. Work undertaken by the SEAI in 2016 indicated that the cost to Ireland of not meeting our overall renewable energy targets may be in the range of €65 million to €130 million for each percentage point Ireland falls short of the overall 16% renewable energy target. However, the European Commission's EU Reference Scenario, Energy, transport and GHG Emissions Trends to 2050, which is available at the following link, https://ec.europa.eu/clima/sites/clima/files/strategies/analysis/models/docs/full_referencescenario2016report_en.pdf, states that modelling indicates that the overall EU level target of 20% will be met, underlining the difficulty in any market estimate process and the vulnerability to a range of cost assumptions and the level of transfers that might be required in a market where the overall target at EU level is met. Costs per percentage point for statistical transfers could be below the lower end of the range suggested by SEAI but this will depend on market conditions when and if purchases are made.

Any requirement for statistical transfers to meet compliance would be undertaken against a background of discussions by the Irish authorities with the EU Commission and relevant Member States. As any purchases arising would be made over a period, the costs to the Exchequer of acquiring statistical transfers to meet any potential shortfall would be spread over a period of more than one year and in any event the cumulative costs would not be known until 2021, the deadline for completion of all purchases.

Prospecting Licences

463. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of proposed prospecting (details supplied) in the Kilbricken-Quin area of County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48920/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): There are two Prospecting Licence Areas (PLAs) in the Kilbricken/Quin area of Co. Clare – PLA 3679 and PLA 3787. The licences for these areas are two of ten Prospecting Licences (PLs) currently held by Hannan Metals Ltd. A Prospecting Licence relates to prospecting only and does not give the licence holder permission to mine. The status of the two licences is as follows:

PL Area	Start Date	Expiry Date	Status
3679	19-12-2005	18-12-2017	Licence Active
3787	08-06-1994	07-06-2018	Licence Active

In 2017, the Exploration and Mining Division of my Department granted permission to Hannan Metals Ltd. for exploration drilling in PLA 3679. Permission was also granted for seismic and road-based geophysical surveys in both PLAs. In addition, the activities permitted under these licences include data compilation and review, prospecting and geological mapping.

The company continues to prospect in both PLAs in line with the licences issued and permissions granted by the Exploration and Mining Division.

Departmental Communications

464. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the domain names registered to or owned by his Department or through a third party company. [48949/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): My Department maintains the 32 domains and 11 sub domains that are listed as follows. Apart from the main Departmental website it is necessary in the interests of customer service to have some dedicated websites related to specific areas of Departmental responsibility.

Domain	Registrar	Registration date	Intended Purpose
aarhuscon- vention.ie	GOV. NET- WORKS	10-Jan-13	Redirect to http://www.housing.gov.ie/environment/aarhus-convention/aarhus-convention
Broadband. gov.ie	GOV. NET- WORKS	Sub- Domain	Redirect to http://www.dccae.gov.ie/communications/en-ie/Broadband/Pages/Connecting-Communities.aspx#
dcenr.ie	GOV. NET- WORKS	15-Jun-07	Redirect to DCENR.gov.ie(previous Department Name)
dccae.ie	GOV. NET- WORKS	30-Jun-16	Redirect to DCCAE.gov.ie
dcmnr.ie	GOV. NET- WORKS	03-Jul-02	Redirect to DCENR.gov.ie (previous Department Name)
Dccae.gov. ie	GOV. NET- WORKS	Sub- Domain	Department Website
Dcenr.gov. ie	GOV. NET- WORKS	Sub- Domain	Redirect to DCCAE.gov.ie (previous Department Name)
Dcmnr.gov. ie	GOV. NET- WORKS	Sub- Domain	Redirect to DCCAE.gov.ie (previous Department Name)
earthscien- ceireland. org	www.123-reg. co.uk	28-Aug-12	GSI
EGOVER- NANCE.IE	GOV. NET- WORKS	02-Mar-06	Site to Manage Boards under the aegis of the department
eInclusion. ie	GOV. NET- WORKS	28-Feb-07	Redirect to Digital Inclusion (Communications) section of the department

Questions - Written Answers

Domain	Registrar	Registration date	Intended Purpose
EPBD.IE	GOV. NET-WORKS	09-Nov-04	Energy Performance of Buildings Directive Redirect to Energy Efficiency Legislation (Energy) section of the departments website
explorationand-mining.com	Webhost.ie	31-Jan-08	All Ireland Exploration and Mining Division and GSINI providing Licencing and Geology information
geoscienceireland.ie	irishdomains.com	20-May-11	Redirect to Geoscience.ie
Geoscience.ie	irishdomains.com	13-Aug-12	Geoscience Ireland, is an integrated natural resources organisation, supported by the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI).
Gic2016.gov.ie	GOV. NET-WORKS	Sub- Domain	Redirect to http://www.dccae.gov.ie/communications/en-ie/Broadband/Pages/Connecting-Communities.aspx#
Goingdigital.gov.ie	GOV. NET-WORKS	Sub- Domain	Redirect to www.goingdigital.ie
gsi.ie	GOV. NET-WORKS	14-Jul-00	GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF IRELAND (GSI) providing geological advice and information, and for the acquisition of data for this purpose. GSI produces a range of products including maps, reports and databases and acts as a knowledge centre and project partner in all aspects of Irish geology. It is a division of the and has about 50 multi-disciplinary staff.
gsiseabed.ie	GOV. NET-WORKS	30-Aug-00	This website has been the home of the Irish National Seabed Survey (INSS) for six truly important years in the evolution of Irish marine science. The remainder of 2006 and future years will see INFOMAR building on the achievements and coverage delivery of INSS to date

Domain	Registrar	Registration date	Intended Purpose
gsishop.ie	GOV. NETWORKS	27-Sep-07	As the National Earth Science Agency GSI is responsible for gathering, storing and disseminating geological information. This involves field mapping and recording of data as well as compilation and interpretation of geological data gathered by others. The geological information held by the GSI is used by staff to answer queries, produce reports and compile special or series maps. The Public may also access these data, either by purchasing paper maps and reports or using free digital data.
islesproject.eu	Webhost.ie	05-Oct-17	Irish-Scottish Links on Energy Study- Transferred from Scottish Government October 2017
makeitsecure.ie	GOV. NETWORKS	12-Oct-04	It is the intention of the makeITsecure initiative to provide a focal point and guide to users on the importance of the safe use of the internet.
makeitsecure.org	register.com	12-Oct-04	
mineralsireland.ie	GOV. NETWORKS	16-Oct-07	Exploration and Mining Division (EMD) siteRegulation and permitting of exploration for and extraction of minerals (excluding petroleum, stone, sand, gravel and clay); Promoting inward investment; Policy development; Representing and protecting the State's interests as mineral owner of an estimated 60% of all minerals; The exclusive right to work all minerals regardless of ownership (with a few minor exceptions); Rehabilitation of former mine sites where the Minister has an identified role;
ncsc.ie	GOV. NETWORKS	08-Jul-16	National Cyber Security Centre
pad.ie	GOV. NETWORKS	27-Jun-02	Redirect to Petroleum Affairs Division (Natural Resources) section of www.dcenr.gov.ie
Pad.gov.ie	GOV. NETWORKS	Sub- Domain	Redirect to Petroleum Affairs Division (Natural Resources) section of www.dcenr.gov.ie

Questions - Written Answers

Domain	Registrar	Registration date	Intended Purpose
pip.ie		17-Aug-01	The Petroleum Infrastructure Programme (PIP) was set up by the Petroleum Affairs Division (PAD) in 1997. PIP presently comprises two sub-programmes:- the active Petroleum Exploration and Production Promotion and Support (PEPPS) and the now completed PIP (1997 - 2002) sub-programmes.
PlanetEarth.ie	GOV. NETWORKS	08-Dec-06	Redirects to the Events Diary of www.gsi.ie
rcfan.ie	GOV. NETWORKS	12-Nov-07	Irish translation of www.dcenr.ie Redirects to www.dcenr.gov.ie
rcgac.ie	GOV. NETWORKS	30-Jun-16	Irish translation of www.dccae.ie Redirects to www.dccae.gov.ie
Rcgac.gov.ie	GOV. NETWORKS	Sub- Domain	Irish translation of www.dccae.gov.ie
Rcfan.gov.ie	GOV. NETWORKS	Sub- Domain	Irish translation of www.dcenr.gov.ie
rx3.ie	GOV. NETWORKS	30-Sep-09	Resource Efficiency section of Waste Policy
Schooldigitalchampion.gov.ie	GOV. NETWORKS	Sub- Domain	Redirects to http://www.dccae.gov.ie/communications/en-ie/Digital-Strategy/Pages/School-Digital-Champion-National-Programme.aspx
srd.ie	DigiHost	27-May-16	For National Broadband Scheme
tellus.ie	GOV. NETWORKS	12-Jun-14	Tellus Border is an EU INTERREG IVA-funded regional mapping project collecting geo-environmental data on soils, water and rocks across six border counties The project is a cross-border initiative between the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland, the Geological Survey of Ireland, Queen's University Belfast and Dundalk Institute of Technology
tellusborder.eu	Tucows.com Co.	21-Nov-10	Tellus Border is an EU INTERREG IVA-funded regional mapping project collecting geo-environmental data on soils, water and rocks across six border counties The project is a cross-border initiative between the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland, the Geological Survey of Ireland, Queen's University Belfast and Dundalk Institute of Technology
Tellus.gov.ie	GOV. NETWORKS	Sub- Domain	Redirects to http://www.tellus.ie

Domain	Registrar	Registration date	Intended Purpose
INFO-MAR.IE	blacknight	22-May-06	The INFOMAR programme is a joint venture between the Geological Survey of Ireland and the Marine Institute and is the successor to the Irish National Seabed Survey
ISDE.IE	heanet	19-Jan-06	Redirect to Infomar.ie
SEABED-SURVEY.IE	heanet	16-Jul-04	Redirect to Infomar.ie
SMART-BAY.IE	heanet	15-May-07	In conjunction with GSI , SmartBay Ireland supports; the collection of marine data for the National and International R&D communities, the trial, demonstration and validation of novel marine sensors and equipment

Fishing Licences

465. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to protect and promote small coastal fishing communities, in particular those fishermen who did not avail of the salmon hardship scheme in 2007 and instead waited for salmon stocks to recover so that they could return to fishing; if he has given consideration to subsidies for polyvalent licences for these fishermen; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49050/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): The substantive elements of the Deputy's question, relating to licences in the polyvalent segment of the Irish fishing fleet and the protection and promotion of coastal fishing communities, are within the remit of the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine and its Agency, Board Iascaigh Mhara (BIM).

The remit of my Department is largely confined to the management of salmon stocks both inland and at sea. Management of salmon stocks is carried out by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) and is supported by scientific advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and Ireland's independent Standing Scientific Committee. Salmon research in coastal areas and in the marine environment concentrates on increasing knowledge of migratory patterns, marine based mortality and return rates to home rivers. Stock assessments are carried out on the individual genetic stock in each of Ireland's 147 salmon rivers, river sections and estuaries

The Atlantic salmon is a protected species under the EU Habitats Directive with which Ireland's current salmon management regime complies. In order to align fully with the Directive and the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) principles, the Irish Government closed mixed stock salmon fisheries in 2007 including coastal and offshore fishing. Harvest fisheries are now only allowed on individual river stocks which are shown to have a surplus of fish over their individual conservation limit and in estuaries where the stocks from individual rivers entering the estuaries are each meeting their individual conservation limits.

The Salmon Hardship Scheme was introduced in 2007 under which fishermen active in the commercial salmon fishery could opt to voluntarily cease fishing and undertake not to seek a

licence in the future. In excess of €25 million was allocated to the scheme to facilitate payments to fishermen, with a further €5 million provided for community development projects. The scheme closed for applications on 31 December 2007 and ceased in 2008. It is considered that individual river stocks would be in a far more perilous state if the closure of mixed stock fisheries had not been implemented.

Parliamentary Questions Costs

466. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the average costs associated with processing and answering written and oral parliamentary questions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49119/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): My Department answered 2,365 written and oral parliamentary questions in the last 12 months. It is not possible to isolate the administrative cost of processing parliamentary questions from the overall administrative costs of my Department as this work is carried out as part of the normal day-to-day running of business areas.

Sustainable Development Goals

467. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the role his Department has in the implementation of the sustainable development goals. [43768/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): As Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, I have lead responsibility for promoting and overseeing the coherent implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on a whole-of-Government basis, and for the establishment of a robust SDG implementation and reporting framework. I will also present Ireland's first Voluntary National Review to the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2018.

Given the broad scope and cross-cutting nature of the SDGs, the Government recognises that strong and effective governance arrangements are essential to ensure high-level engagement with the 2030 Agenda and effective interdepartmental cooperation on the implementation of the Goals.

Therefore, a Senior Officials Group (SOG) has been established to co-ordinate and monitor SDG implementation and to report, as required, to Government. The SOG is chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach, with support provided by my Department. To further support the work of the SOG, my Department has also established an Interdepartmental SDG Working Group, comprised of representatives from all Departments with responsibilities for the SDGs.

In addition, a Sustainable Development Unit has been established within my Department. This Unit is currently preparing Ireland's first National SDG Implementation Plan, in consultation with other Departments through the SDG Interdepartmental Working Group. The National SDG implementation Plan will, inter alia, set out arrangements for SDG-related stakeholder engagement and reporting.

In line with the whole-of-Government approach to implementing the SDGs, all Ministers retain responsibility for implementing the individual SDGs relating to issues under their aegis.

Question No. 468 answered with Question No. 67.

Question No. 469 answered with Question No. 76.

Renewable Energy Generation Targets

470. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on the calls for higher European renewable energy targets and higher efficiency targets in the new clean energy package being negotiated in the EU. [49173/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Last July I published Ireland's first statutory National Mitigation Plan. This Plan lays the foundations for transitioning Ireland to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy and includes actions being taken in the electricity sector to achieve a low carbon energy sector by 2050. This Plan follows on from the December 2015 publication of Ireland's latest Energy White Paper.

The adoption of the Clean Energy for All Europeans Package will be a critical milestone on the path to achievement of Ireland's national transition objective to 2050.

Ireland remains committed to fulfilling the European Council Conclusions of October 2014, which set a binding EU target for renewable energy of at least 27% for 2030 and an indicative target at EU level of at least 27% in energy efficiency. In fact, Ireland has consistently called for ambitious targets on energy efficiency to be reflected in the Clean Energy Package. It is important that our contribution to the overall goals can be met in a cost efficient way, that is fair and technically achievable, and takes account of our specific economic circumstances and geographical position on the periphery of Europe.

Broadband Service Provision

471. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans, in terms of infrastructure and timescale, for rolling out high speed broadband to Boyle and its rural hinterland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49194/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): In April I published an updated High Speed Broadband Map which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. This map shows the areas targeted by commercial operators to provide high speed broadband services and the areas that will be included in the State Intervention Area under the National Broadband Plan (NBP). The Map is searchable by eircode.

Premises in and around Boyle fall into the below areas:

- The AMBER areas represent the target areas for the proposed State led Intervention under the NBP and are the subject of an ongoing procurement process.

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

- The Light BLUE areas represent eir's commercial rural deployment plans to roll out high speed broadband to 300,000 premises by the end of 2018 as part of an Agreement signed with me in April.

The following table details percentage of premises, with the approximate number of premises in brackets, to be covered by the State led Intervention and through commercial investment in the area identified by the Deputy. Individuals can access the High Speed Broadband Map www.broadband.gov.ie using their eircode to ascertain the colour code (BLUE/Light BLUE or AMBER) status for their specific home or business.

Townland	% Premises within the NBP Intervention Area	% Premises within Commercial Operator's Area	% of premises of eir planned rural deployment
Aghnagrange	68% (15)	32% (7)	0%(0)
Greatmeadow	0% (0)	100% (158)	0% (0)
Termon	3% (14)	97% (404)	0%(0)
Mocmoynce	9% (18)	91% (174)	0%(0)
Lowparks	44% (7)	56% (9)	0%(0)
Knocknashee	0% (0)	100% (145)	0%(0)
Deerpark	100% (142)	0% (0)	0%(0)
Warren Or Drum	21% (159)	79% (583)	0%(0)

My Department is in a formal procurement process to select a company or companies who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network in the State intervention area. That procurement process is now at an advanced stage. The "Detailed Solutions" submitted by two bidders on 26th September are being evaluated by the NBP specialist team. The next stage in the procurement process is the receipt of final tenders followed by the appointment of a preferred bidder(s) and contract signature.

As part of this procurement process, the bidder(s) will be required to submit their strategies, including timescales, for the network build and rollout. Delivering connectivity to the 542,000 premises that fall within the State led intervention under the NBP remains a Government priority and my Department will engage with the winning bidder(s) to ensure the most efficient deployment as part of the contract.

To improve both mobile and broadband services in rural Ireland in advance of the roll out of the high speed broadband network to be built in the State intervention area I established, in July 2016, a Taskforce to identify solutions which can be implemented in the short, medium and long term to alleviate mobile phone and broadband coverage deficits, to identify priority areas for rollout and investigate how better services could be provided to consumers. These solutions will enhance the existing services prior to the full build and rollout of the network planned under the NBP State led intervention.

Under this Taskforce, engagement between telecommunications operators and local authorities through the Broadband Officers is continuing to strengthen. These Broadband Officers are acting as single points of contact in local authorities for their communities. The appointment of these officers is already reaping rewards in terms of ensuring a much greater degree of consistency in engagements with operators and clearing obstacles to developing infrastructure. There is a link to a list of these local Broadband Officers on my Department's website.

Legislative Programme

472. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to bring forward the cyber security Bill 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49213/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The 2015 National Cyber Strategy set out the priorities for the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) for the period 2015-2017, as the being the protection of Government ICT Infrastructure while building capacity in other areas, particularly around preparing for the implementation of the EU Network and Information Security Directive.

This Directive, which has a transposition date of May 2018 has a complex series of measures associated with it. These include the creation of an entirely new process around the protection of critical national infrastructure and separate measures around the security of Digital Service Providers. These are all being designed and delivered by my Department at present. Significant progress has been made in both of these areas; for example, last week Minister of State Kyne launched a public consultation on the draft security measures that will be required of Critical National Infrastructure operators in the State under this Directive. The legal components of the Directive will be put into place by Statutory Instrument, early in 2018.

The dynamic and challenging nature of this issue, and the risks posed to citizens and the State, are clearly significant. The NCSC will likely require further statutory powers beyond those required under the Directive, and that Heads of Bill in this regard will be brought before Government in due course. Priority is currently being given to the drafting of the secondary legislation to facilitate the transposition of the Network and Information Security Directive.

Recycling Data

473. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the recycling charge paid when purchasing a new vehicle covers car tyres; if not, the items covered in this recycling charge; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49252/17]

474. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the person or body that pays towards the costs incurred by car dismantlers for disposal of end-of-life tyres whereby the cost of disposal per tyre is approximately €5; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49253/17]

475. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the net value for end-of-life tyres, per tyre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49254/17]

476. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the environmental management cost on new tyres is cashed in on end-of-life tyres; if so, the way in which this is administered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49255/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 473 to 476, inclusive, together.

I introduced new structures for tyres and waste tyres on 1 October 2017 to address the chronic problem of waste tyres in Ireland, including a lack of consistent and accurate data on tyres and a significant rate of non-compliance with Tyres Regulations.

The new structures will be funded by a visible Environmental Management Cost (vEMC) of €2.80 ex VAT for car tyres and €1.50 ex VAT for motorcycle tyres. Under the new Regulations anyone who places a tyre on the market in the State for the first time, including the sale of new vehicles, is obliged to charge the vEMC on these tyres.

The market share of a producer who places tyres on the market in Ireland is determined by an independent body (Producer Registration Limited) which collects this confidential data. PRL determine the level of the vEMC to be paid by a producer and, in turn, advise the compliance scheme (Repak ELT) of this amount. The compliance scheme collects the vEMC and uses these funds to treat all waste tyres in an environmentally sound management manner.

Tyre operators, including car dismantlers, will have their waste tyres that have incurred a vEMC collected, free of charge, by waste collectors registered with Repak ELT.

The value of a waste tyre is determined by the means by which it is treated at end of life and is determined by the market for collection and recovery or recycling.

The scheme will, for the first time ever, record data on the numbers of tyres coming on and off the Irish market.

Broadband Service Provision

477. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the extent to which he has examined the feasibility of putting in place a contract to supply those areas currently excluded from the broadband services with particular reference to the possibility of extending the service to within specific distances from the existing facilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49393/17]

478. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of households and businesses throughout the country unable to access high speed broadband; if it will be possible in the short term to extend the services outward from the existing lines for a specific distance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49394/17]

489. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the timetable for the provision of high speed, high quality broadband in all areas throughout the country; the areas already provided with such service; the timeframe for each area in the future with particular reference to past experiences; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49444/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 477, 478 and 489 together.

The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) will ensure high speed broadband access (minimum 30 megabits per second) to all premises in Ireland, regardless of location. The NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector so that to date approximately 1.5m or 65% of the 2.3m premises in Ireland can get access to high speed broadband and this footprint is expanding.

In April I published an updated High Speed Broadband Map which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. This map shows the areas targeted by commercial operators to provide high speed broadband services and the areas that will be included in the State Intervention Area under the National Broadband Plan (NBP).

The Map is colour coded and searchable by address/eircode:

- The AMBER areas represent the target areas for the proposed State led Intervention under the NBP and are the subject of an ongoing procurement process.

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

- The Light BLUE areas represent eir's commercial rural deployment plans to rollout high speed broadband to 300,000 premises by the end of 2018 as part of an Agreement signed with me in April.

There are over 2.3 million premises in the State. Approximately 540,000 fall within the AMBER area and will be covered under the State led Intervention. Just under 1.5 million premises are in a BLUE area and are or will be covered by commercial providers, while approximately 300,000 are LIGHT BLUE and fall to be covered by eir's planned rural deployment.

My Department is in a formal procurement process to select a company or companies who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network in the State intervention area. That procurement process is now at an advanced stage. The "Detailed Solutions" submitted by two bidders on 26th September are being evaluated by the NBP specialist team. The next stage in the procurement process is the receipt of final tenders followed by the appointment of a preferred bidder(s) and contract signature.

As part of this procurement process, the bidder(s) will be required to submit their strategies, including timescales, for the network build and rollout. Delivering connectivity to the premises in the State led intervention under the NBP remains a Government priority and my Department will engage with the winning bidder(s) to ensure the most efficient deployment as part of the contract.

In 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 by the end of 2018. My Department will be monitoring this rollout to ensure that eir meets its obligations under the Agreement. A copy of the Agreement is available on my Department's website, www.dcae.gov.ie.

To improve both mobile and broadband services in rural Ireland in advance of the rollout of the high speed broadband network to be built in the State intervention area I established, in July 2016, a Taskforce to identify solutions which can be implemented in the short, medium and long term to alleviate mobile phone and broadband coverage deficits, to identify priority areas for rollout and investigate how better services could be provided to consumers. These solutions will enhance the existing services prior to the full build and rollout of the network planned under the NBP State led intervention.

Under this Taskforce, engagement between telecommunications operators and local authorities through the Broadband Officers is continuing to strengthen. These Broadband Officers are acting as single points of contact in local authorities for their communities. The appointment of these officers is already reaping rewards in terms of ensuring a much greater degree of consistency in engagements with operators and clearing obstacles to developing infrastructure. There is a link to a list of these local Broadband Officers on my Department's website.

Electricity Generation

479. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the extent to which various alternatives for generation of electricity can contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gases with particular reference to solar and wind energy; the extent to which these two sources can provide uninterrupted supply in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49395/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The 2014 National Policy Position on Climate Change and 2015 Energy White Paper include ambitious long-term commitments, respectively, to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 80% compared to 1990 levels and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the sector by between 80% and 95% by 2050. Moreover, the Programme for Government sets out that Ireland's long-term interests are best supported by further decreasing our dependence on fossil fuels through the continued development of renewable electricity generation.

As energy use and greenhouse gas emissions are inextricably linked, meeting this objective will require a radical transformation of Ireland's energy system from being predominantly fossil-fuel based to a clean, low carbon energy system. It is recognised that certain renewable technologies such as wind and solar may have complementary generation profiles however both solar and wind remain intermittent renewables and therefore the DS3 programme managed by Eirgrid is critical to upping the non-synchronous limit of renewable electricity on the system.

My Department is developing a new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) which will be designed to assist Ireland in meeting its renewable energy contribution to EU-wide targets out to 2030. The design of the new scheme has included an extensive independent economic appraisal. This appraisal compared the cost of supporting a wide range of commercial renewable technologies, including solar photovoltaics (Solar PV) and both onshore and offshore wind, at various scales including micro-generation, to ensure that the new scheme delivers value for money for energy users whilst also delivering on the energy pillars of sustainability and security of supply. The assessment included analysis of the optimum financial support mechanisms for renewable technologies, in line with the 2014 EU State Aid Guidelines.

A public consultation on the emerging principles of the proposed RESS closed on 10 November. Over 1,250 submissions were received and these will now be reviewed and considered and will inform the final design of the RESS. Following on from this public consultation and review, a final proposal will be brought to Government for approval in early 2018, including the overall costs and technologies to be supported.

At this point no final decisions have been made as regards which technologies will be supported under the new RESS. I welcome and have noted with interest the falling costs of some renewable technologies over the past year, most notably Solar PV and offshore wind. Increasing renewable technology diversity is one of several policy objectives the new RESS is trying to deliver and falling technology costs may lead to increased diversity of the renewable portfolio over the medium term.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

480. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the extent to which Ireland compares with other EU countries in terms of meeting greenhouse gas reduction targets with specific reference to the extent to which each country currently contributes to such emissions; the extent of the sacrifices each has to make meeting the target reductions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49396/17]

492. **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 the current year or thereafter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49447/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 480 and 492 together.

The 2009 Effort Sharing Decision 406/2009/EC established binding annual greenhouse gas emissions targets for EU Member States for the period 2013 to 2020. 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 Environmental Protection Agency produces detailed greenhouse gas emission projections on an annual basis for all key sectors of the economy in collaboration with relevant State and other bodies. The latest projections of greenhouse gas emissions by the EPA, published in April 2017, indicate that emissions from those sectors of the economy covered by Ireland's 2020 targets could be between 4% and 6% below 2005 levels by 2020. 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 not consistent with what would be achievable on an EU wide cost-effective basis.

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. Using banked allowances from the period to 2015, Ireland is projected to comply with its emissions reduction targets in each of the years 2013 to 2018. However, our cumulative emissions are expected to exceed targets for 2019 and 2020, which may result in a requirement to purchase additional allowances. While this purchasing requirement is not, at this stage, expected to be significant, further analysis will be required to quantify the likely costs involved, in light of the final amount and price of allowances required.

With regards to other Member States, a European Commission Communication published on 7 November 2017, *Two years after Paris – Progress towards meeting the EU's climate commitments* (COM (2017) 646), indicated that in addition to Ireland, Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Luxembourg and Malta are also expected to miss their 2020 EU targets on the basis of current projections.

The European Environment Agency (EEA) report, *Trends and projections in Europe 2017*, published on 7 November 2017, provides an updated assessment of the progress of the European Union and its Member States towards their 2020 targets based on the latest available official projections at Member State level. This gives a detailed analysis of the position of each Member State relative to their respective targets and the extent to which each country currently contributes to total EU emissions. The report also includes analysis of progress towards EU and Member States' renewable energy and energy efficiency targets. The report confirms that while the seven Member States referred to above are expected to miss their targets, the European Union as a whole is well on track to meet its 2020 obligations.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

481. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the extent to which he continues to put in place provisions to meet greenhouse gas reductions in line with agreements entered into; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49397/17]

488. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action

and Environment his vision for the attainment of the various targets in respect of climate change such as reduction on dependency on fossil fuels, carbon reduction, encouragement of the alternative energy sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49443/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 481 and 488 together.

The 2014 National Policy Position on Climate Action and Low Carbon Development sets out an ambitious long-term commitment to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in Ireland by at least 80% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2050 across the electricity generation, built environment and transport sectors; and in parallel, to pursue an approach to carbon neutrality in the agriculture and land-use sector, including forestry, which does not compromise capacity for sustainable food production.

Ireland's first statutory National Mitigation Plan, which I published in July of this year, represents an important initial step to set us on a pathway to achieve these commitments by 2050. A key objective of the Plan is also to close the gap to Ireland's 2020 EU target and to prepare for the EU targets that Ireland will take on for 2030.

Although the Plan does not provide a complete roadmap to achieve either Ireland's proposed 2030 target or the 2050 transition objective, the Plan identifies over 70 mitigation measures and 106 related actions to address the immediate challenge to 2020 and begins the process of developing medium-to-long-term policy options to ensure that we are well positioned to take the necessary actions in the next and future decades.

Importantly, the National Mitigation Plan is a living document that will be updated as on-going analysis, dialogue and technological innovation generate more and more cost-effective sectoral mitigation options. This continuous review process reflects the broad and evolving nature of the sectoral challenges outlined in the Plan, coupled with the continued development and deployment of emerging low carbon and cost effective technologies across different sectors of the economy. As this first Plan moves through the implementation phase, this process will enable it to be amended, refined and strengthened over time and assist in keeping Ireland on target to meet our obligations.

Ireland currently relies on imported fossil fuels to meet over 88% of our energy needs at an annual cost of approximately €4.6 billion. Given the inextricable link between energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, achievement of the commitments set out in the National Policy Position will require a significant transformation of Ireland's energy system from being predominantly fossil-fuel based to a clean, low carbon energy system.

To support this ambition the Government has a range of policy measures and schemes in place or under development. These include the Renewable Energy Feed in Tariff schemes, the Biofuels Obligation Scheme, a new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme, and a Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme. Together with a range of energy efficiency measures implemented through schemes managed by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, these measures reflect the on-going Government commitment to, and investment in, decarbonisation of Ireland's energy system.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

482. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the extent to which the domestic motor sector, agricultural sector, public transport and private commercial transport contribute to the totality of greenhouse gas emis-

sions here; the degree to which conversion to electric motor vehicles can contribute to an overall reduction in both the domestic and transport sector; the extent to which the emissions from the agrifood sector can be curtailed without damaging the industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49398/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Official inventories of Ireland’s greenhouse gas emissions are prepared annually by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The most recent data, for the year 2015, were published on 13 April 2017 and are available on the EPA’s website at <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/air/airemissions/ghgemissions/>. According to this data, the breakdown of emissions by sector in 2015 is as follows:

Sector	Mt CO ₂ eq.	% of total 2015 emissions
Agriculture	19.81	33.1%
Transport	11.83	19.8%
Energy Industries	11.80	19.8%
Residential	6.04	10.1%
Manufacturing Combustion	4.55	7.6%
Industrial Processes	1.99	3.3%
F-Gases	1.14	1.9%
Commercial Services	0.94	1.6%
Waste	0.97	1.6%
Public Services	0.81	1.3%
Total ETS	16.84	28%
Total Non-ETS	43.04	72%
Total for all sectors	59.88	100%

Ireland’s transport sector has been the fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions over the period 1990 to 2015. The transport share of overall national emissions has increased from 9% in 1990 to almost 20% in 2015, and transport emissions are expected to increase in the coming years as the economy continues to grow strongly. EPA inventory data for the transport sector distinguishes between road transport, railways, and domestic navigation and aviation. Emissions from the agriculture sector reached an absolute peak in 1998 and, by 2015, were 5.5% below their 1990 levels, albeit on a rising trend since 2012.

The 2014 National Policy Position on Climate Action and Low Carbon Development sets out an ambitious long-term commitment to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in Ireland by at least 80% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2050 across the electricity generation, built environment and transport sectors; and in parallel, to pursue an approach to carbon neutrality in the agriculture and land-use sector, including forestry, which does not compromise capacity for sustainable food production.

Ireland’s first statutory National Mitigation Plan, which I published in July of this year, provides a framework to guide investment decisions by Government in domestic measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Plan sets out Ireland’s vision for achieving the transition to a decarbonised economy, identifying over 70 mitigation measures and 106 related actions across different sectors of the economy.

The National Mitigation Plan outlines a number of measures that are already contributing to emission reductions in the transport sector, including: sustained investment in the public transport network; the introduction of a Biofuels Obligation Scheme; regulations limiting tail pipe emissions in cars; incentives to encourage the purchase of electric vehicles; and redesign-

ing the Vehicle Registration Tax (VRT) and motor tax regimes to promote low carbon emitting vehicles.

In relation to electric vehicles, in May of this year the Government approved and published the National Policy Framework on Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland 2017 to 2030. This policy framework sets an ambitious target that by 2030 all new cars and vans sold in Ireland will be zero emissions (or zero emissions capable). The Low Emissions Vehicle Taskforce, which is co-chaired by my Department and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, is considering a range of measures and options available to Government to accelerate the deployment of electric vehicles. The work of the Taskforce is well underway and has already resulted in a package of measures in Budget 2018 designed to promote a low carbon, electric vehicle future.

The National Mitigation Plan also presents options for a range of additional measures which will further intensify efforts to mitigate emissions from the transport sector. These include:

- the implementation of the National Planning Framework (currently being finalised by Government), which aims to ensure better integration of land use and transport planning policy in order to reduce commuter travel demand and support more efficient patterns of development and travel;

- increasing public transport capacity and securing a shift, where feasible alternatives exist, away from private car use;

- encouraging the take-up of alternative fuels to petrol and diesel; and

- increasing the obligation under the Biofuels Obligation Scheme to further reduce the concentration of high-emitting fuels.

The long-term vision for the agriculture, forest and land-use sectors is based on an approach to carbon neutrality.

It should be noted that the agri-food sector is Ireland's largest indigenous manufacturing industry, with total agri-food employment, including on-farm employment in primary agriculture, forestry and fishing, as well as the food processing industry, accounting for over 165,700 jobs. The most recent data available shows the agri-food sector accounting for 7.6% of Gross Value Added (2014), 23% of all manufacturing turnover (2014), 8.4% of employment (2015) and 10.7% of merchandise exports (2015). Current analysis suggests that the emissions intensity per kcal of food output in 2013 is reduced approximately 14% relative to 2005 and early estimates project that the "business as usual" scenario 2030 emission intensity will be a quarter below the emission intensity in 2005. Further, early estimates of agriculture with additional measures is approximately 35% below 2005, although absolute emissions remain reasonably stable.

The National Mitigation Plan highlights a number of measures that are already contributing to emission reductions in the sector, including: the Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP); Knowledge Transfer Programme; Green, Low Carbon, Agri-Environment Scheme (GLAS); Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Schemes (TAMS II); Organic Farming Scheme; Smart Farming Programme; Business, Environment and Technology through Training Extension and Research (BETTER) Farms Programme.

Importantly, the National Mitigation Plan is a living document that will be updated as ongoing analysis, dialogue and technological innovation generate more and more cost-effective sectoral mitigation options. This continuous review process reflects the broad and evolving nature of the sectoral challenges outlined in the Plan, coupled with the continued development and deployment of emerging low carbon and cost effective technologies across different sectors

of the economy. As this first Plan moves through the implementation phase, this process will enable it to be amended, refined and strengthened over time and assist in keeping Ireland on target to meet our obligations.

Air Quality

483. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the extent to which air quality has deteriorated arising from data collected at various locations throughout the country over the past ten years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49399/17]

486. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the extent to which the levels of air pollution continue to be monitored; if the results are in keeping with best practice and international requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49441/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 483 and 486 together.

Ambient air quality monitoring in Ireland is carried out in accordance with the requirements of the 2008 Clean Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (Directive 2008/50/EC) and the Fourth Daughter Directive (Directive 2004/107/EC of 15 December 2004). These Directives also include rules on how Member States should monitor, assess and manage ambient air quality. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is tasked with co-ordinating and managing the monitoring programme.

Under the Directives, EU Member States must designate “Zones” for the purpose of managing air quality. For Ireland, four zones were defined in the Air Quality Standards Regulations, 2011. The zones in place in Ireland in 2017 are Zone A: the Dublin conurbation; Zone B: the Cork conurbation; Zone C: comprising 23 large towns in Ireland with a population of more than 15,000; and Zone D: the remaining area of Ireland.

Ireland currently has a nationwide network of 30 monitoring stations which measure levels of air pollutants in the four zones. This information is delivered to the public in near real-time at www.airquality.epa.ie. The numbers and locations of the monitoring equipment for each pollutant are determined by the requirements of the Directives for ambient air monitoring in each zone.

The Agency’s most recent annual Air Quality Report was published in November 2017 and provides an assessment of air quality in Ireland for 2016. Values for all network sites were below the EU annual limit value, but exceeded the stricter World Health Organisation guideline values for a number of pollutants at individual sites. The report indicates that most pollutant concentrations are low, with no discernible trend or slight downward trends. It cautions however that NO₂ concentrations in urban areas are close to the EU annual limit value, and increases in traffic numbers or certain weather conditions may lead to exceedances. The report can be found at the following link: <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/air/quality/epaairqualityreport2016.html>.

Notwithstanding the favourable comparison with EU annual limit values, the report notes that maintaining our standard of air quality is a growing challenge. With this in mind, I am committed to bringing forward Ireland’s first ever National Clean Air Strategy. The Strategy, which I hope to finalise in the coming weeks, will provide the policy framework necessary to identify and promote integrated measures across Government that are required to reduce air pollution and promote cleaner air, while delivering on wider national objectives.

A key part of the Strategy will be the expansion of our monitoring and data gathering capacity, to better inform policy choices. Following a review by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of air quality monitoring and information provision in Ireland, a decision was taken to develop a new Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Programme which aims to enhance and build on current arrangements over the period 2017 to 2022. I fully support this important initiative, and have committed funding of some €5 million over the lifetime of the programme, which will significantly strengthen the capacity and capability of the monitoring network to provide more comprehensive, localised air quality information linked to public health advice.

Environmental Policy

484. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the extent to which he plans to reduce the use of plastic and its replacement with a biodegradable product; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49400/17]

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. The last waste characterisation study carried out by the EPA showed that 12.4% of our household waste, by weight, was plastic.

The effects of plastic pollution, in particular, on the marine environment has been well publicised. My colleague, the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government is responsible for marine environmental policy, including marine litter policy in the first instance. Both he and I recognise that the waste we create on land, and certain plastic waste items, in particular, can represent significant marine litter problems. Accordingly we are working together to identify measures to address this with our European partners.

The European Commission circular economy action plan has identified plastics as one of five priority areas for action. On packaging waste, the Commission proposed new reuse and recycling targets. The Commission also pledged to adopt, by the end of 2017, a ‘strategy on plastics in the circular economy, addressing issues such as recyclability, biodegradability, the presence of hazardous substances of concern in certain plastics, and marine litter’.

In terms of plastic packaging at a national level, Repak, the producer responsibility scheme tasked with managing packing in Ireland, has been working with its members (including all the major retailers) to identify ways to reduce or optimise packaging. Under the EU Packaging Directive, Member States cannot impede the placing on the market of packaging which is fit for purpose. Notwithstanding this, I am working with the Regional Waste Management Offices to roll out a number of initiatives to support household waste recycling, including the recycling of plastics, which will ensure that end users are informed and empowered to choose the most environmentally friendly form of packaging.

Telecommunications Services Provision

485. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to develop the communications sector with a view to ready access to state of the art technology, including broadband and mobile telephony in all areas throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49440/17]

487. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Ac-

tion and Environment his plans for access to modern communications technology in all areas throughout the country with particular reference to quality and availability of mobile phone service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49442/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 485 and 487 together.

I recognise the need to ensure that Ireland is well positioned for the future in having a fit for purpose and future proofed telecommunications sector.

The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) will ensure high speed broadband access (minimum 30 megabits per second) to all premises in Ireland, regardless of location. The NBP is being achieved through a combination of commercial investment by the telecommunications sector and a State intervention in those areas where commercial providers acting alone will not provide this essential service.

My Department is in a formal procurement process to select a company or companies who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network in the State intervention area. That procurement process is now at an advanced stage. The next stage in the procurement process is the receipt of final tenders followed by the appointment of a preferred bidder(s) and contract signature. My Department will engage with the winning bidder(s) to ensure the most efficient deployment as part of the contract.

In parallel with the NBP, I specifically included in the Programme for Government a commitment to a Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce. In July 2016, I established the 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 NBP State intervention.

The Taskforce worked with key stakeholders to produce the December 2016 report containing 40 actions to alleviate some of the deficits. The Report is available on my Department's website.

The Implementation Group I co-chair with Minister Kyne is overseeing implementation of the actions and comprises all key stakeholders responsible for delivery. Meetings were held in March and July and the next is scheduled for tomorrow (22 November).

Achievements to date by the Taskforce include:

- Funding of all local authorities to assign a Broadband Officer;
- Close cooperation with local authorities to develop local digital strategies, including Government working closely with local authorities to identify approximately 320 high speed Strategic Community Access Hubs which will be connected at an early date after award of the NBP contract;
- ComReg's development of a testing regime to check mobile handset performance which will inform consumers in choosing products and network services. ComReg will also develop a new network coverage map;
- most local authorities applying waivers in respect of development contributions for telecoms development;
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) has constructed 80km of ducting on the M7/M8 corridor and 14km on the N25 in Cork, with more following in the coming months to help expedite

infrastructure roll-out. TII is also reviewing the cost of duct access for telecoms operators.

The Taskforce is also making progress on two of its actions focussing tackling blackspots in coverage.

In tandem with the work of the Taskforce, the release by ComReg of the 3.6GHz radio spectrum band, which has been identified at EU level as a primary band suitable for the introduction of 5G, will also contribute to addressing increasing mobile data demands and improve mobile coverage.

All of these initiatives will assist in improving the quality of mobile phone and data services, particularly in rural areas.

Question No. 486 answered with Question No. 483.

Question No. 487 answered with Question No. 485.

Question No. 488 answered with Question No. 481.

Question No. 489 answered with Question No. 477.

Postal Services

490. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his vision for the utilisation of postal services, counter services and the postal network generally through the amalgamation of suitable and complementary services available through An Post in all areas throughout the country, thereby maximising the benefit and viability of the network and the continued delivery of services effectively and efficiently; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49445/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I refer to the reply to Priority Questions Nos 37 and 40 on today's order paper.

Electricity Generation

491. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will express as a percentage of daily electricity requirements the amount of electricity now being generated from oil, gas, wind, biomass or other alternatives, respectively, including those likely to become available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49446/17]

494. **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. [49449/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 491 and 494 together.

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.

The most recent annual data from the SEAI indicates that 27.2% of electricity, 6.8% of heat and 5.0% of transport energy requirements were met from renewable sources at end 2016. Overall, SEAI analysis shows that 9.5% of Ireland's energy requirements in 2016 were met from renewable sources.

The following table provides a breakdown of electricity generation from all sources of generation in 2016.

Percentage of Electricity supply from Generation Sources in 2016	
Source	% in 2016
Coal	15.6%
Peat	7.7%
Oil	1.0%
Natural Gas	50.6%
Hydro	2.3%
Wind	20.4%
Solar PV	0.014%
Other Renewables (biomass, landfill gas, biogas, etc)	2.3%
Wastes (Non-Renewable)	0.2%
Total	100.0%

Real time information on electricity generation from the various sources is available at the Eirgrid website at <http://www.eirgridgroup.com/how-the-grid-works/system-information/>

The Government has a range of policy measures and schemes in place or under development designed to stimulate further progress in the domestic renewable energy sector. These include the Renewable Energy Feed in Tariff (REFIT) schemes for the electricity sector and the Biofuel Obligation Scheme in the transport sector. These schemes have proved successful at incentivising large-scale investment in the renewable industry in recent years.

The SEAI's most recent assessment is that Ireland will achieve between 13.2% and 15.4% of its 16% renewable energy target by 2020, indicating that Ireland should be between 82% to 96% to its target. The focus of my Department remains firmly on meeting our 2020 target and on implementation of renewable energy measures, including a new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) and Renewal Heat Incentive (RHI) Scheme.

Question No. 492 answered with Question No. 480.

Landfill Sites

493. **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, re-use, recycle; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49448/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): European, national and regional waste policy are all predicated on the management of waste in line with the waste hierarchy, whereby the prevention, preparation for re-use, recycling and other recovery of waste are preferred (in that order) to the disposal of waste. For

instance, collectors of waste must conduct their activities in accordance with the relevant legislation and the conditions of their waste collection permits which, *inter alia*, require that waste is managed in line with the waste hierarchy.

The Government's policy of increasing the landfill levy to its current level of €75 per tonne has provided a real financial incentive for waste operators to divert as much material as possible from being disposed of at landfill. The success of the above and many other policy and legislative measures, (including the National Waste Prevention Programme and the phasing out of flat rate fees for household waste collection), which encourage waste prevention, preparation for re-use, recycling and other recovery, has meant that more waste can be put to environmentally sustainable and productive use as opposed to being buried in the ground.

Statistics compiled by the Environmental Protection Agency show that we have come a long way in a relatively short period of time in terms of improving our recycling and recovery rates and reducing our reliance on landfill. In this regard, *National Waste Statistics - Reports and Bulletins* are available to download at <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/waste/stats/> including the recently published table on *Progress towards EU waste recycling, recovery and diversion targets*.

Question No. 494 answered with Question No. 491.

Broadband Service Provision

495. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the steps that can be taken to speed up the provision of broadband services by way of fibre optics throughout County Kildare, with particular reference to known black spots and fringe areas within the county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49450/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) will ensure high speed broadband access (minimum 30 megabits per second) to all premises in Ireland, regardless of location. The NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector so that to date approximately 1.5m or 65% of the 2.3m premises in Ireland can get access to high speed broadband and this footprint is expanding.

In April I published an updated High Speed Broadband Map which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. This map shows the areas targeted by commercial operators to provide high speed broadband services and the areas that will be included in the State Intervention Area under the National Broadband Plan (NBP).

The Map is colour coded and searchable by address/eircode:

- The AMBER areas represent the target areas for the proposed State led Intervention under the NBP and are the subject of an ongoing procurement process.

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

- The Light BLUE areas represent eir's commercial rural deployment plans to rollout high speed broadband to 300,000 premises by the end of 2018 as part of an Agreement signed with me in April.

There are over 90,000 premises in Kildare. Approximately 13,000 (15%) fall within the AMBER area and will be covered under the State led Intervention. Nearly 73,000 (80%) of premis-

es are in a BLUE area and are or will be covered by commercial providers, while approximately 4,500 (5%) are LIGHT BLUE and fall to be covered by eir's planned rural deployment.

My Department is in a formal procurement process to select a company or companies who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network in the State intervention area. That procurement process is now at an advanced stage. The "Detailed Solutions" submitted by two bidders on 26th September are being evaluated by the NBP specialist team. The next stage in the procurement process is the receipt of final tenders followed by the appointment of a preferred bidder(s) and contract signature.

As part of this procurement process, the bidder(s) will be required to submit their strategies, including timescales and plans to priority areas, for the network build and rollout. Delivering connectivity to the 542,000 premises that fall within the State led intervention under the NBP remains a Government priority and my Department will engage with the winning bidder(s) to ensure the most efficient deployment as part of the contract.

To improve both mobile and broadband services in rural Ireland in advance of the rollout of the high speed broadband network to be built in the State intervention area I established, in July 2016, a Taskforce to identify solutions which can be implemented in the short, medium and long term to alleviate mobile phone and broadband coverage deficits, to identify priority areas for rollout and investigate how better services could be provided to consumers. These solutions will enhance the existing services prior to the full build and rollout of the network planned under the NBP State led intervention.

Under this Taskforce, engagement between telecommunications operators and local authorities through the Broadband Officers is continuing to strengthen. These Broadband Officers are acting as single points of contact in local authorities for their communities. The appointment of these officers is already reaping rewards in terms of ensuring a much greater degree of consistency in engagements with operators and clearing obstacles to developing infrastructure. There is a link to a list of these local Broadband Officers on my Department's website.

Disabled Drivers Permits

496. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding adding autism as a qualifying factor for the disabled parking pass; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48700/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Disabled Parking Permit (also known as European Parking Card or Disabled Parking Badge) is available to people living in Ireland with a permanent disability, medical condition, severe mobility difficulties and to people who are registered blind. The medical criteria for issue of the permit are strict and only persons whose mobility is severely and permanently restricted qualify.

These criteria were revised and clarified in my Department's Review of the Disabled Parking Scheme in 2010. The review recommended revising the eligibility criteria for the disabled parking permit to focus on limitations on mobility rather than on diagnosis of particular medical conditions or illness. This was in line with the original intention of the scheme.

The disabled parking scheme is operated on behalf of my Department by the Disabled Drivers Association of Ireland (DDAI) and the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA), which are the two bodies empowered to issue disabled parking permits. As Minister, I have responsibility for the regulations under which the scheme operates.

I have no plans to review eligibility criteria at this time. However, should the key stakeholders, in particular the DDAI and/or the IWA, present a case for a further review of the scheme - or indeed specific aspects of it, I would be willing to give consideration to it.

Driver Test Regulations

497. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason a person applying for the national theory test through the Road Safety Authority, RSA, is now required to have a public services card; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48684/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I am glad that the Deputy has raised this important matter.

There is a considerable burden placed on individual citizens by the need to provide a variety of documents to different State bodies when applying for different public services. For many years now it has been policy - under successive governments and enshrined in law since 2005 as part of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act of that year - to reduce this burden, and the administrative burden on the State, by making the Public Services Card (PSC) a one-stop-shop for ID verification.

Under the 2005 legislation, 'specified bodies' - which include the Road Safety Authority - may require production of the PSC as part of a transaction such as an application process. Since June of this year, the RSA has required production of the PSC as proof of identity in the process of taking a Driver Theory Test.

Cycling Facilities Funding

498. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding his Department secured in budget 2018 to promote cycling; and when the target of 10% of commuting by bike as set out in the cycling policy framework will be achieved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48696/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that I secured funding of €116m in Budget 2018 for the development of cycling and walking infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area and Regional Areas over the next four years.

The recent budget 2018 also saw an increase of €30 million in the allocation for Greenways bringing the total allocation for the development of Greenways for the same period to €55.9 million.

The numbers cycling have increased year on year, with the recent Census showing a 43% increase in the numbers cycling to work and while we still have some way to go to reach the target of 10% commuting by bike, the focus is to continue on this trajectory. This substantial investment will allow us to further increase the numbers cycling, thereby easing congestion, improving public health and enhancing the liveability of our cities, and will have, I believe, a transformative effect on our cities over the next four years and beyond. It is of course, also of paramount importance to me, that as we encourage more people to cycle, we are also providing them with safe infrastructure in which to do so.

Driver Test

499. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if an earlier date for a driving test for a person (details supplied) in County Donegal will be arranged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48707/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

Driver Licensing Exchange Agreements

500. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 1816 of 20 June 2017, if he has signed an order under the Road Traffic Act; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48721/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): This question relates to the signing of an agreement with British Columbia on the mutual exchange of driving licences. I am happy to say that the answer is yes.

At the time of the question to which the Deputy refers, I explained that agreement on exchange had been reached in principle, and that the next events were to be the signing of a formal agreement and the signing of an Order under the Road Traffic Acts, as is required for all such driving licence exchange agreements.

Following signing of the final agreement with British Columbia, I signed the Order - S.I. No. 372 of 2017 - on 10 August last. The Order came into effect on that date. The Deputy can find more details on my Department's website, in the press release on this matter issued on 11 August 2017.

Road Improvement Schemes

501. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to alleviate the drainage problem on a national route (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48735/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects 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.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Sports Facilities Provision

502. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his

Department's plans regarding the proposed national velodrome and badminton centre at Abbotstown; the status of the project to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48742/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): In line with the Programme For Government commitment to continuing progress on the National Sports Campus, in Budget 2017 it was confirmed that the Government has committed 16 million euro to develop a National Velodrome and Badminton Centre at the campus in 2020 and 2021.

The proposed facility will comprise a 250 metre cycling track, 12-16 Badminton Courts in the in-track area, spectator seating and ancillary facilities including office space. The Centre will be developed by Sport Ireland to the construction specification of the Union Cycliste Internationale and the Badminton World Federation.

Planning permission was granted for this facility in March 2015 and a cost benefit analysis has been prepared by Sport Ireland. Procurement and construction of the Centre will take approximately 2 years over the period 2020-21.

As the first indoor velodrome on the island, this arena will be hugely valuable resource for our athletes while also helping to increase participation levels in both cycling and badminton.

National Transport Authority Administration

503. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the direction he has given to the National Transport Authority regarding liaising with taxi drivers in Dublin in view of the changes to access in Dublin city centre due to the Luas cross city project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48755/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The regulation of the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the provisions of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013. The NTA also has statutory responsibility for the development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area. On that basis, the NTA are best placed to advise taxi drivers on any changes to access in relation to the Dublin City area due to the Luas Cross City project.

I have referred your query to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

Brexit Issues

504. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the preparations made in his Department in the event of no agreement being reached between the United Kingdom and the European Union on the terms of the UK's exit from the EU; if such preparations involve the drawing up of detailed and specific contingency plans in the event of a hard Brexit and a trade regime based on WTO tariffs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48785/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade with special responsibility for Brexit, Minister Coveney has responsibility for coordinating the whole-of-Government response to Brexit. In this capacity, he is working closely with his colleagues across Government to address the many challenges resulting from Brexit. This cooperation also involves the relevant State Agencies.

Work at Cabinet level is being prepared through cross-Departmental coordination structures. These represent a frequent and active channel through which all relevant Departments are providing their research, analysis and overall policy input to the Government's wider response to Brexit, including its priorities for the ongoing Article 50 negotiations between the EU and the UK.

As the outcome of the negotiations is not yet known, an important focus of the planning and preparation being undertaken through these structures is on deepening the Government's analysis and understanding of the exact consequences of a range of different possible scenarios.

Brexit is a key strategic risk for my Department and there are ongoing consultations and meetings between my officials, other Government Departments and agencies, and other public and private key stakeholders in order to continue to plan for and mitigate the risks associated with Brexit, and to identify opportunities arising.

My Department is represented on all relevant cross-Departmental coordination structures referred to above, and an internal Departmental Committee on Brexit meets on a monthly basis to oversee the Department's analyses and planning as the negotiations progress. There has been wide engagement with sectorial stakeholders.

My Department is continuing to examine a number of possible scenarios relating to the impact of Brexit on transport, tourism and sport in Ireland, including a "no-deal" scenario, and this work will evolve as the negotiations further progress. The work that will emerge from this will identify actions and funding that may be required in response to threats from Brexit.

The imposition of WTO tariffs would indirectly affect the transport sector involved in international trade but the main implications are on regulatory matters where there could be disruption to international transport should the existing EU regulatory frameworks not continue to apply to the UK.

Departmental Staff Training

505. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the cost of providing external coaching and-or training services for staff development in his Department over the past five years and to date in 2017, by cost per year, in tabular form; the company that delivered the training courses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48814/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I have outlined, for the Deputy, in the table the cost of providing training and coaching to staff of the Department in the years 2012 to 2016 and to date in 2017 and the companies who delivered training courses. The training and development of individual staff in the Department is a key component of ensuring the delivery of the business needs and objectives of the Department.

TABLE 1

-	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017 (Jan - 17th Nov)
Training Cost	€152,984.36	€162,993.06	€163,001.47	€162,872.78	€143,992.74	€122,883.43
Training Pro-viders	Carr Commu-nications Ltd	Phoenix Safety Services	Alliance Fran-caise	Alliance Fran-caise	Legal Island	IPASS

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	Common Purpose	The International Academy of Computer Training	BMF business services	Arcline Ltd	EnAct	Achilles Procurement Services
	CPL Training Ltd T/A Nifast	Venture Forward	Boardmatch Ireland	Bord Iascaigh Mhara	IT Knowledge Partners Ltd	Arcline Ltd
	Dublin Business School	Common Purpose	Bord Iascaigh Mhara	Bridge Interpreting	Alliance Francaise	BT Training Solutions
	Institute of Public Administration	CPL Training Ltd T-A Nifast	Carr Communications Ltd	Carr Communications Ltd	Next Action Associates	Carr Communications Ltd
	International Academy of Computer Training (IACT)	Institute of Public Administration	EnAct	Common Purpose	IPASS	Chartered Accountants Ireland
	IPASS	Tiger Consultants	Gaelchultur	CPL Training Ltd T/A Nifast	Institute of Public Administration	Haymarket Media Group Limited
	Joint Aviation Authorities Training Organisation	Carr Communications Ltd	Institute of Project Management	Dublin Fire Brigade	Public Affairs Ireland	Institute of Public Administration
	Legal Island	Irish payroll Association	Institute of Public Administration	ECDIS Ltd	Next Action Associates	International Academy of Computer Training (IACT)
	MAZARS CONSULTING	Red Ensign	International Academy of Computer Training (IACT)	Gaelchultur	ECDIS Ltd	Irish Management Institute
	Pitman Training	Irish Times	Irish Management Institute	HighPerformance Training	European Institute of Public Administration	ITS Ireland
	Pulse Medical Ltd	Donegal IT Centre	Legal Island	ICS Skills	AVEVA Solutions Ltd	La Touche Bond Solon Training Ltd
	Rothwell Performance Consulting	Action Europe Ltd	Phoenix Safety Services	Institute of Public Administration	Carr Communications Ltd	Legal Island
	SureSkills Limited	Institute of Chartered Accountants	RB Counihan & Associates Ltd	Irish Management Institute	CIPD Enterprises (Training)	The Law Society
	The Irish Times		Softworks Computing Ltd	Irish Payroll Association	Advanced Workplace Solutions	Trigraph Professional Services
			SureSkills Limited	Joint Aviation Authorities Training Organisation	IPASS	
			The Institute of Chartered Accountants	Legal Island	Poseidon Ventures Limited	
			The Irish Times	Next Action Associates	Irish Management Institute	
			The Open University	Public Relations Institute of Ireland	PDP Compliance	

			Tiger Consulting	Red Ensign	Arcline Ltd	
				Sea Training International Ltd		
				SureSkills Limited		
				Tiger Consulting		

Irish Aviation Authority

506. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when legislation will be in place for the Irish Aviation Authority to become the noise regulator for the State's airports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48820/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As I advised the Dáil on October 11 this year, it has been determined, based on the most recent legal advices provided to me through the Office of the Attorney General, that the Irish Aviation Authority is not an appropriate body to act as the Competent Authority for the purposes of EU Regulation 598/2014. This represented a departure from previous legal advices which had provided the basis for pursuing the option of nominating the IAA as the Competent Authority, but I understand it was influenced in particular by developments in European case law. Whilst it is a disappointing development, I can assure the Deputy that the appointment of an appropriate Competent Authority is a high priority for me and for my Department. I will continue to keep the Dáil informed of developments in this regard.

Cycling Policy

507. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the interaction or meetings his Department has undertaken in both 2016 and to date in 2017 with either the Department of Health or the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment to promote cycling here; the number of these meetings; the actions agreed thereafter; the progress being made to promote cycling in accordance with the cycling policy framework; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48821/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I wish to advise the Deputy that officials from my Department have had a number of interactions with the Healthy Ireland Division of the Department of Health throughout 2016 and 2017 to discuss issues supportive of cycling. These discussions led to Healthy Ireland providing funding for Cycle Right, the new National Cycle Training Standard. The Department has also been in discussions with Sport Ireland who are developing, in conjunction with Healthy Ireland, a "Get Ireland Cycling" programme, as set out in the National Physical Activity Plan. My Department also contributed material on cycling to the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP) and the National Communication (NC7) documents, which were coordinated through the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

In regard to cycling promotion, officials of my Department and myself met with cycling advocates over the summer to discuss the potential for change in cycling promotion. I am delighted that this work led to a very significant increase in funding for cycling infrastructure in the recent Budget and will see a step-change in funding over the years to 2021. This will see

a number of very important segregated cycle lanes being provided in the Greater Dublin Area and our Regional Cities.

Rail Passengers Data

508. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of rail commuters using the Kildare line at Hazelhatch, Celbridge, Naas and Sallins in 2017 compared to the number of commuters using the same line in 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48830/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA), in conjunction with Iarnród Éireann, 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.

Departmental Contracts

509. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the names of the companies renting a fixing and-or space on telecommunications and-or communications masts from his Department; the income received for each of the past five years for same, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48848/17]

510. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the income received by his Department from the renting to companies of space to use and-or take fixings from telecommunications and-or communications masts on site or on the roof of his Department, in each of the past five years, by location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48886/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 509 and 510 together.

There are no companies renting a fixing or space on telecoms and or telecommunications masts from this Department.

Departmental Bodies Establishment

511. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has given consideration to the establishment of a subsidiary company under Irish Rail to operate Rosslare Europort to ensure autonomy of finance and retention of profits (details supplied). [48922/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I am not giving consideration at this time to the creation of a separate subsidiary company under Irish Rail to operate Rosslare Europort.

Rosslare Europort is unique among the State owned ports as it is not a commercial company operating under the Harbours Acts, but is instead operated as a division of Iarnród Éireann. This is due to a complicated legislative history as the port technically forms part of an Anglo-Irish company dating back to the 19th Century known as the Rosslare and Fishguard and Harbours Company.

The status of the port, and whether its current status potentially inhibits its developments, was most recently considered in a strategic review, commissioned by my Department, and carried out by Indecon Economic Consultants.

Their report concluded that the creation of an independent port authority would be extremely difficult given the Port's complex legal structure. Instead, it was recommended that the Port remain in public ownership and that the possibilities for increased private sector involvement be investigated.

In order to assist Iarnród Éireann's overall consideration of how best to move forward, the company then engaged consultants to assess market interest. The assessment was largely positive in terms of the potential for increased private sector investment in the port; however, it did identify possible implementation issues due to the complicated legislative basis of the port.

Following that assessment my Department sought and received detailed advice from the Office of the Attorney General on the matter. That advice identified a number of legal issues with any such proposal and those issues remain under consideration by my Department.

Sports Capital Programme Administration

512. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the sports capital grant allocations for 2018 for County Kildare will be announced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48942/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on the 24th February. By the closing date, a record number of 2,320 applications seeking €155 million in grants were received.

When the programme was launched, it was envisaged that €30m would be available which would have made the allocation of grants particularly challenging. Following the conclusion of the budget discussions and in order to allow as many worthwhile projects as possible to receive some funding, I am pleased that significant extra resources have been secured to allocate under this round.

The assessment of all the 2,320 applications is now nearing completion and I expect to be in a position to announce full details of the allocations in the coming weeks.

Sports Capital Programme Administration

513. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the dates the allocations under the sports capital programme will be announced. [48956/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on the 24th February. By the closing date, a record number of 2,320 applications seeking €155 million in grants were received.

When the programme was launched, it was envisaged that €30m would be available which would have made the allocation of grants particularly challenging. Following the conclusion of the budget discussions and in order to allow as many worthwhile projects as possible to receive some funding, I am pleased that significant extra resources have been secured to allocate under

this round.

The assessment of all the 2,320 applications is now nearing completion and I expect to be in a position to announce full details of the allocations in the coming weeks.

Sports Capital Programme Expenditure

514. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the sources of State funding relevant to capital funding for sports facilities and campuses encompassing multiple sports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48972/17]

515. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funds and associated projects allocated since 2007 to major capital investments in sport facilities encompassing multiple sports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48973/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 514 and 515 together.

The Sports Capital Programme (SCP) is the primary means of providing Government funding for capital projects to sport and community organisations at local, regional and national level.

The 2017 round of the SCP closed for applications on the 24th February and the announcement of allocations is expected in the coming weeks. The full guide to making an application under the programme is available on my Department's website and applications for assistance can include facilities encompassing multiple sports. In this regard, additional marks are awarded at assessment stage for projects that involve shared facilities. The timing of the next round of the SCP will be announced next year.

In relation to the funding previously provided to facilities encompassing multiple sports, details of all allocations and payments made under the SCP are available on the Department's website at <http://www.dttas.ie/sport/english/sports-capital-programme>

Outside of the SCP, Government funding has also been provided through Sport Ireland (and previously through the National Sports Campus Development Authority) for the development of the National Sports Campus in Abbotstown. Total Capital Funding allocated for the Campus in the period 2007 to 2017 is set out in the table.

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
€6,807,364	€4,000,000	€3,855,719	€1,347,328	€676,414	€3,900,000	€7,965,000	€4,352,887	€30,132,000	€31,124,000	€4,400,000

National Planning Framework

516. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will meet with a group (details supplied) campaigning for a greater share of infrastructural capital investment in County Donegal; if he has given consideration to the much needed transport infrastructure required if County Donegal is to attract jobs and develop further; the way in which he intends to address same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48999/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I am fully aware of the importance in enhancing regional accessibility and I note the emphasis on the matter as proposed by the draft National Planning Framework.

I am not aware that the Group in question has submitted a request to meet. If they would like to send a request to my Office that request will obviously be given consideration.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

517. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the grants available for a club (details supplied); if supports are available for the development of other clubs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49026/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The Sports Capital Programme is the primary means of providing Government funding to sport and community organisations at local, regional and national level.

The 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on the 24th February and the announcement of allocations is expected in the coming weeks. The full guide to making an application under the programme is available on my Department's website and it would be open to the organisation referred to by the Deputy to apply for funding under future rounds.

The timing of the next round of the Sports Capital Programme will be announced next year.

National Driver Licensing Service

518. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of persons with sleep apnoea who have registered their condition with the national driver licence service as required under the European Union Directive 2014/85/EU; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49033/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

Departmental Communications

519. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the domain names registered to or owned by his Department or through a third party company. [49071/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I refer the deputy to the table which contains the information as requested.

State agencies under the remit of my Department have been forwarded a copy of your enquiry. They have been requested to respond to you directly. Please advise my private office, if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Internet Domain	Owner
AAIU.ie	DTTAS
Bikeweek.ie	DTTAS
Coastguard.ie	DTTAS

Internet Domain	Owner
departmentoftransport.ie	DTTAS
deptoftransport.ie	DTTAS
Dttas.ie	DTTAS
dublintransport21.ie	DTTAS
eport.ie	DTTAS
Gardacostanaheireann.ie	DTTAS
Ircg.ie	DTTAS
ircgstores.ie	DTTAS
Irishcoastguard.ie	DTTAS
irishmaritimeadministration.ie	DTTAS
marinesurveyoffice.ie	DTTAS
mcib.ie	DTTAS
moraninquiry.ie	DTTAS
railwayinquiries.ie	DTTAS
RoadHaulage.ie	DTTAS
safeseas.ie	DTTAS
Safetyonthewater.ie	DTTAS
Seafarers.ie	DTTAS
Smartertravel.ie	DTTAS
sportscapitalprogramme.ie	DTTAS
Sustainabletransport.ie	DTTAS
Sustainabletravel.ie	DTTAS
Transport.ie	DTTAS
transport21.ie	DTTAS
Vesselregister.ie	DTTAS
motarchain.ie	DVCSD
motarelv.ie	DVCSD
motarviews.ie	DVCSD
motorelv.ie	DVCSD
npmotorelv.ie	DVCSD
motortax.ie	DVCSD
motortrans.ie	DVCSD
motorviews.ie	DVCSD
npmotarchain.ie	DVCSD
npmotortax.ie	DVCSD
npmotortrans.ie	DVCSD
nvdffservices.ie	DVCSD
rtol.ie	DVCSD

Parliamentary Questions Costs

520. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the average costs associated with processing and answering written and oral parliamentary questions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49132/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The work involved in answering Parliamentary Questions, be they Priority or Ordinary Oral Questions or Written Questions, is a key part of my and my officials' work. Given the range of questions asked by Deputies, the work required will vary greatly from question to question as therefore will the cost. To provide an estimate of average cost would need a detailed time and resource analysis over a significant time period. No such analysis has been carried out in my Department and I do not propose that such work be carried out.

Rail Network

521. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the ownership of the line and land surrounding the proposed western rail corridor is fully within one of the CIÉ holding companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49203/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issue raised is a matter for Córas Iompair Éireann (CIÉ) and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to CIÉ for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Roads Maintenance

522. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the expenditure under the regional roads programme in 2016 and to date in 2017; the expenditure of each project in terms of actual expenditure on road, planning or design costs and administration or other costs; the specific nature of each of these costs by local authority, in tabular form; if an assessment of local authority costs on all road projects was completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49204/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of each Local Authority, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from local authorities' own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection, prioritisation and timeline for commencement and completion of construction of works to be funded is also a matter for the local authority.

Each year the Department prepares and lodges in the Dáil Library regional and local road grant allocation and end of year payment booklets. Details of the regional and local road payments for 2016 and allocations for 2017 are, therefore, available in the Dáil Library.

Details of expenditure relating to regional and local roads Grant Programmes claimed by the end October 2017 are outlined in the table.

Programme	Expenditure to end October 2017 €
Restoration Improvement	102,506,127
Restoration Maintenance	34,036,145
Discretionary Grant	62,300,465
Bridge Rehabilitation	2,555,876
Safety Improvement Works	1,491,253
Speed Limits	545,955
Specific Improvement Grants	2,766,231

Programme	Expenditure to end October 2017 €
Strategic Regional Local Roads	6,190,520
Severe Weather	1,158,259
Training Grant	1,319,409
Miscellaneous	527,344
TOTAL	215,397,584

The planning and implementation of individual projects within grant programmes is the responsibility of the relevant local authority. Grants are subject to the terms and conditions set by the Department, including, where applicable, competitive tendering for design consultants, advance works and construction contracts.

The Department conducts spot checks on whether grants have been claimed in accordance with its terms and conditions and is also strengthening its road engineering inspectorate.

Driver Test

523. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of theory test attendees who have been refused access to sit their booked theory test due to the detail of their middle name in the test booking not matching the newly issued PPS cards, by month and Road Safety Authority, RSA, test centre, in tabular form; the way in which these tests are charged for and re-booked in respect of fees and revenue transactions; the amount of lost revenue his Department has incurred in circumstances in which a refund was issued; the way in which this impacts on the delay for new theory test applicants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49251/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

Road Projects

524. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will request Transport Infrastructure Ireland, TII, to reassess the need for a link (details supplied) to progress in view of Brexit and for the viability of the Border region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49259/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects 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.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply in relation to the national road section of the outline East-West link. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Sports Capital Programme

525. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the full details of the allocations under the 2017 round of the sports capital programme will be announced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49276/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on the 24th February. By the closing date, a record number of 2,320 applications seeking €155 million in grants were received.

When the programme was launched, it was envisaged that €30m would be available which would have made the allocation of grants particularly challenging. Following the conclusion of the budget discussions and in order to allow as many worthwhile projects as possible to receive some funding, I am pleased that significant extra resources have been secured to allocate under this round.

The assessment of all the 2,320 applications is now nearing completion and I expect to be in a position to announce full details of the allocations in the coming weeks.

Road Network

526. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans for improving Fintra bridge on the R263 in County Donegal; the timeframe for the delivery of the project; the estimated cost of the project; the completion date for the entire project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49295/17]

527. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans for improving Tír Chonail Street bridge in Donegal town; the timeframe for the delivery of the project; the estimated cost of the project; the completion date for the delivery of the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49296/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 526 and 527 together.

The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads (including bridges) is the statutory responsibility of Donegal County Council, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from local authorities' own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection, prioritisation and timeline for commencement and completion of construction of works to be funded is also a matter for the local authority.

In May 2017, Donegal County Council applied to my Department for additional funding to progress work on two regional road bridges in County Donegal (Tirconnail Bridge in Donegal town and Fintra Bridge on the R263). The funding request consisted of:

- A deck replacement and associated works for Tirconnail Bridge and
- The construction of a new replacement Fintra bridge

I have given approval to Donegal County Council to proceed with the replacement of Tirconnail bridge at a maximum cost of €700,000. The timeline for completion of the works is a matter for the local authority.

In respect of the construction of a new replacement bridge at on the R263 at Fintra, Co. Donegal, my officials have been liaising with the Council in relation to options for this bridge. That process is continuing and no allocation can be confirmed in respect of that project until a conclusion is reached on the most appropriate option. However, it should be noted that I, and my department, are committed to the project.

Road Projects

528. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans for improving the N56 between Inver bridge and Killybegs in County Donegal; the interim measures for improving the surface of that section of the N56 in view of the fact it is not fit for purpose; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49297/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects 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.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Dublin Bus Fleet

529. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will liaise with the NTA and advise the number of additional buses that will be made available to Dublin Bus to meet increasing demand, in view of the fact that customer numbers on all services across the city have risen considerably in recent weeks; when these additional buses will come into operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49326/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, my Department provides annual funding to the National Transport Authority (NTA) for a rolling programme of bus replacement and refurbishment of the Dublin Bus PSO fleet. The extent to which this funding is used to replace older vehicles or to expand the PSO fleet is determined by the NTA taking account of demand.

Noting the NTA's responsibility in the matter, I have referred the Deputy's question to the Authority for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Bus Éireann

530. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way in which the insolvency of a semi-State company such as Bus Éireann might occur; if such declaration is a function of his, the management or another agency; and the precise circumstances that would trigger such a declaration. [49367/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Bus Éireann is a

company set up under the Companies Acts and is therefore subject, in principle, to legislative provisions applying to such companies in circumstances of insolvency. Section 7(10) of the Transport (Re-Organisation of Córas Iompair Éireann) Act, 1986, which established the three subsidiary companies of CIÉ, provides that a resolution for the voluntary winding up of a company shall not be adopted unless resolutions have been passed by each House of the Oireachtas consenting to such winding up.

I do not wish to speculate on the circumstances that would trigger such a declaration of insolvency. I believe Bus Éireann has a vital role to play in providing transport services and implementation of the April Labour Court Recommendation can provide for a successful and sustainable future for Bus Éireann. More generally, I have committed toward building upon the increased funding. I have already provided for both capital investment and PSO support for the public transport sector, in which the Company remains a key player.

Rail Services Provision

531. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent of proposed augmentation and investment in rail services over the next five years with particular reference to the extent that services can be tailored to meet the ongoing travel requirements of commuters, namely, identifying how best the rail services in general can meet the demands of medium to middle distance commuters from towns and villages outside of the greater Dublin area, thereby alleviating road traffic congestion and reducing travel time; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49452/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Budget 2018 provided for an increase in the multi-annual capital investment for public transport with a four-year capital envelope of €2.7 billion to 2021. This includes investment of over €1 billion in heavy rail infrastructure. The investment will be used to maintain safety and services levels on the rail network and will also fund projects such as the new rail Central Traffic Control Centre to improve national rail movements; the City Centre Re-signalling Project; fleet acquisition and the DART Capacity Enhancement Programme.

In Budget 2018 I also secured an 8% increase in the overall Exchequer funding available for PSO bus and rail services throughout the country. This means that in 2018 over €285 million will be allocated via the National Transport Authority (NTA) to support the continued delivery of these socially necessary but financially unviable services that have grown in recent years.

Noting the responsibilities of the NTA and Iarnród Éireann, I have forwarded the Deputy's question to both organisations for a more detailed reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Children in Care

532. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the length of time children in Dublin south city LHO and the catchment areas of Rathmines, Terenure and Rathfarnham are waiting to be allocated a social worker, in respect of cases, including high priority cases, of child protection and children in care. [49225/17]

533. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the length of time children in Cork south Lee LHO and the catchment area of Douglas are waiting to be allocated a social worker, in respect of cases, including high priority cases, of child protection

and children in care. [49232/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 532 and 533 together.

Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has informed me that, at the end of August 2017, there were 6,237 children in care. Of these, 323 (5%) did not have an allocated social worker. It is important to note that if a child has not been allocated a social worker, their needs are reviewed regularly by the Principal Social Worker.

Tusla does not collate data by county; however the the relevant information, correct to end of August 2017 is detailed in the following table. This information is published monthly as the “National Performance and Activity Dashboard” on www.tusla.ie/data-figures.

Administrative Area	Dublin South Central	Cork
Number of children in care	378	836
Number of children in care awaiting allocation of a social worker	1	38
Number of open cases	1,347	3,561
Number of open cases awaiting allocation of a social worker	434	597
Number of high priority open cases	120	146

I am informed by Tusla that a case awaiting allocation may be listed as ‘active’ on a ‘duty’ system. This means that there are actions being undertaken by a dedicated duty team or rotating social workers on a duty roster to progress the protection and welfare of the child. Examples of actions being undertaken include telephone calls relating to the concern, visits to see the child, completing initial assessments and, where a child is in care, completing child in care reviews or care plans.

I can inform the Deputy that there were 25,775 open cases nationally at the end of August which includes children in care. Of these, 5,536 were awaiting allocation of a social worker. An open case is one which is assessed as needing a dedicated (allocated) social work service. Of these, 1,019 were designated as high priority, 3,441 as medium priority and 1,076 as low priority. A high priority case can include children needing further child protection assessment and intervention, children involved with child protection court proceedings, children in care for less than 6 months and children with high risk mental health and anti-social difficulties. Many children who are deemed medium and low priority have welfare rather than child protection needs and will engage with family support services.

The following table provides information on the length of time the 1,019 high priority open cases are awaiting allocation of a social worker.

High Priority Open Cases Awaiting Allocation, by time waiting August 2017

1 month	425
1 - 3 months	222
3 months	372
Total	1,019

Addressing the number of children who are awaiting the allocation of a social worker is a

priority for me. I secured additional funding for the purpose of addressing this issue in 2017, and Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, is now in the second year of a 3-year plan to provide for the allocation of a dedicated social worker to all children who need one. The Deputy should note that all urgent and emergency cases notified to Tusla are dealt with immediately. Urgent and emergency cases could involve cases of abandonment, allegations of physical and sexual abuse, parental ill health leading to the need for an immediate placement, or threat to the safety or life of a child by a third party.

My Department will continue to closely monitor progress in this regard and I will continue to engage directly with the Tusla Board and senior management team to review progress.

Brexit Issues

534. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the preparations made in her Department in the event of no agreement being reached between the United Kingdom and the European Union on the terms of the UK's exit from the EU; if such preparations involve the drawing up of detailed and specific contingency plans in the event of a hard Brexit and a trade regime based on WTO tariffs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48771/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade with special responsibility for Brexit, Minister Coveney has responsibility for coordinating the whole-of-Government response to Brexit. In this capacity, he is working closely with his colleagues across Government to address the many challenges resulting from Brexit. This cooperation also involves the relevant State Agencies.

Work at Cabinet level is being prepared through cross-Departmental coordination structures. These represent a frequent and active channel through which all relevant Departments are providing their research, analysis and overall policy input to the Government's wider response to Brexit, including its priorities for the ongoing Article 50 negotiations between the EU and the UK.

As the outcome of the negotiations is not yet known, an important focus of the planning and preparation being undertaken through these structures is on deepening the Government's analysis and understanding of the exact consequences of a range of different possible scenarios. This represents an intensification of efforts to build on the Government's contingency planning.

With regard to my own Department, the Deputy will be aware that in January of this year I hosted an all-Ireland sectoral dialogue with young people, members of the Advisory Council for Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020, and other stakeholders in Croke Park to discuss the potential impact of Brexit on the lives of children and young people on the island of Ireland. The key findings of this important event have been published in a report which is available on my Department's website. Since then, the Advisory Council has considered the report and work is ongoing in relation to the more detailed implications of Brexit.

Furthermore, matters in relation to Brexit were discussed by over 100 children and young people in April of this year as part of the annual regional Comhairle na nÓg Networking events. This has enabled my Department to identify those issues which may impact on children and young people, post-Brexit, and indeed identify other issues which resonate strongly with our youngest citizens.

The consultation and research undertaken to date by the Department of Children and Youth

Affairs has identified a number of issues of potential concern should negotiations between the EU and UK not conclude successfully. However, these matters are small subsets of much larger items which will be considered, in the main, in conjunction with colleagues in the Departments of Finance, Justice and Equality, Education and Health as part of the wider negotiating process.

Departmental Staff Training

535. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the cost of providing external coaching and-or training services for staff development in her Department over the past five years and to date in 2017, by cost per year, in tabular form; the company that delivered the training courses; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48800/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The information required by the Deputy is not readily available in the format requested. I have requested my Department to assemble the information as soon as possible and this will be forwarded directly to the Deputy.

Departmental Contracts

536. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the names of the companies renting a fixing and-or space on telecommunications and-or communications masts from her Department; the income received for each of the past five years for same, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48834/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I can confirm to the Deputy that my Department does not receive any income by renting a fixing and or space on telecoms and or communications masts.

Departmental Contracts

537. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the income received by her Department from the renting to companies of space to use and-or take fixings from telecommunications and-or communications masts on site or on the roof of her Department, in each of the past five years, by location; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48872/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I can confirm to the Deputy that my Department does not receive any income from renting to companies of space to use and or take fixings from, telecoms and or communications masts on site or on the roof of my department.

Mother and Baby Homes Inquiries

538. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when the report of the expert technical group dealing with the site of the former mother and baby home at Tuam, County Galway, will be published; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48925/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): In June of this year I appointed a multi disciplinary team of technical experts to ensure that decisions on the future of the site of the former Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, Co. Galway would be informed by international best practice. Their initial report was published on my Department's website at www.dcy.gov.ie.

I have received the Expert Technical Group's final report and have sought the advices of the Attorney General on its publication. My Department is consulting with relevant Departments and agencies and I propose to bring the report to Government shortly with a view to its publication. I can assure the Deputy that consultations will take place with stakeholders before any decisions are made on the future of the site.

Adoption Legislation

539. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016 will progress; and when it is likely to reach Dáil Éireann; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48970/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016 provides for the first time a statutory entitlement to identity information for adopted persons. It provides for a structured and regulated access to information and tracing services for those affected by adoption. It sets out the information that can be provided and the circumstances in which it can be provided to adopted persons. A key provision in the Bill provides that an adopted person aged 18 years or over who was adopted prior to commencement of the Bill will be provided with the information required to apply for his or her birth certificate, subject to certain conditions. The Bill also provides for access to relevant records containing the information concerned that are held by the Authority. The Bill passed Second Stage in Seanad Éireann in May 2017. The Bill is a priority and will proceed to Committee Stage in the Seanad as soon as possible.

Child Care Services Funding

540. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the budget allocated to the access and inclusion model of early education and child care provision under each of the levels four to seven of this scheme annually since its introduction to date in 2017; the amounts allocated under these levels, in tabular form; the amounts drawn down for 2016 and 2017 on a quarterly basis respectively; the number of children in each county who have benefitted from funding under each of these four levels to date in 2017; the areas of support in which this funding under each of the four headings has been applied; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49045/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): AIM supports children with disabilities to reap the full benefits of free pre-school education. Its goal is to empower pre-school providers to deliver an inclusive pre-school experience. AIM is a child-centred and evidence-based model, involving seven levels of progressive support, moving from the universal to the targeted, based on the needs of the child and the pre-school setting.

Where a pre-school provider, in conjunction with a parent, considers that some additional support is needed in order to meet the needs of a child with a disability in an inclusive way, an application can be made for a suite of targeted supports, namely:

Level 4: Expert Early Years Educational Advice and Support

This level provides access to mentoring for early years practitioners from a team of dedicated Early Years Specialists. To avail of this support, pre-school providers and parents are requested to complete an online Access and Inclusion Profile. This looks at the strengths, abilities and needs of the child, as well as the strengths and needs of the pre-school setting.

Level 5: Equipment, Appliances and Minor Alterations Capital Grants

This level provides for access to specialised equipment, appliances, assistive technology and/or minor alterations capital grants for early years settings to ensure children with a disability can participate in the ECCE programme. A short report from a designated professional is required confirming that the specialised equipment or minor building alterations are necessary.

Level 6: Therapeutic Intervention

This level provides access to therapeutic services where they are critical to enable the child to be enrolled and to fully participate in the ECCE Programme. To avail of this support, pre-school providers and parents are requested to complete the online Access and Inclusion Profile. The Early Years Specialist will review the profile and, where therapeutic input is likely to be required; the Specialist will initiate contact with the HSE. The HSE decides on the appropriate level of therapeutic intervention.

Level 7: Additional Assistance in the Pre-School Room

This level provides additional assistance in the pre-school room where this is critical to ensuring a child's participation in the ECCE Programme. It is estimated that pre-school providers may need Level 7 in the case of approximately 1% to 1.5% of all children. In line with emerging best practice to support the integration and independence of children with a disability, AIM does not fund Special Needs Assistants (SNAs). Rather, it provides financial support to the pre-school provider, which can be used either to reduce the adult to child ratio in the pre-school room or to buy in additional assistance to the pre-school room. Accordingly, Level 7 assistance is a shared resource for the pre-school setting.

AIM was launched in June 2016. The total funding allocated and outturn in 2016 and 2017 to levels 4, 5 and 7 of AIM by my Department is set out in the table. Funding for AIM Level 6 comes from the Department of Health Vote.

The Inter-Department Group, which developed AIM, recognised that it would take approximately three years to fully develop and implement the Model. It is expected that demand for all levels of support under AIM will increase in years 2 and 3 and the budget available for AIM makes provision for this.

Level	Element of Model	Allocation 2016 (m*)	Outturn 2016 (m*)	Allocation 2017(m*)	Outturn (to date) 2017(m*)
4.	Expert Early Years Educational Advice and Support	5.40		10.10	
	First Quarter		1.028		2.8
	Second Quarter		1.028		1.617

Level	Element of Model	Allocation 2016 (m*)	Outturn 2016 (m*)	Allocation 2017(m*)	Outturn (to date) 2017(m*)
	Third Quarter		0.914		Nil
	Fourth Quarter		1.26		Nil
5.	Equipment, Appliances and Minor Alterations Grants and application process	1.61		2.50	
	First Quarter		Nil		0.1
	Second Quarter		Nil		0.2
	Third Quarter		0.120		0.21
	Fourth Quarter		Nil		0.1
6.	Therapeutic Intervention	-	-	-	-
7.	Additional Assistance in the Pre-School Room and Application Process	5.43		14.10	
	First Quarter		Nil		2.973
	Second Quarter		Nil		Nil
	Third Quarter		0.546		1.829
	Fourth Quarter		1.279		2.9

*Figures rounded to the nearest thousand.

The number of children in each county who have benefitted from supports under AIM Levels 4, 5 and 7 for the 2016 and 2017 ECCE programme years is shown in the following tables.

Number of Children receiving AIM support in ECCE 2016

County	Level 4	Level 5 equipment	Level 5 alterations	Level 7
Carlow	31	3		14
Cavan	54	12		31
Clare	104	7	1	71
Cork	343	36	2	217

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County	Level 4	Level 5 equip- ment	Level 5 altera- tions	Level 7
Donegal	113	12	6	71
Dublin	505	33	5	246
Galway	121	13	2	82
Kerry	93	19	7	63
Kildare	111	14	2	59
Kilkenny	35	7	1	20
Laois	59	9	1	36
Leitrim	15	4	2	8
Limerick	134	10	3	91
Longford	29	2		13
Louth	79	9	1	41
Mayo	53	7		31
Meath	96	17	2	46
Monaghan	28	5		23
Offaly	41	7		31
Roscommon	32		2	18
Sligo	21	8		16
Tipperary	91	11	2	58
Waterford	53	7	1	31
Westmeath	44	5		19
Wexford	88	2	1	51
Wicklow	50	5	1	26
county not known				18

Number of Children receiving AIM support in ECCE 2017 as at 14 November 2017

County	level 4	level 5 equip- ment	level 5 altera- tions	level 7
Carlow	19			16
Cavan	22	3	1	24
Clare	60	4	2	50
Cork	183	24	6	170
Donegal	54	8	1	47
Dublin	260	13		200
Galway	67	4		56
Kerry	65	3		44
Kildare	67	6		44
Kilkenny	23	4		18
Laois	36	5	1	22
Leitrim	6	1	1	8
Limerick	78	9	1	71
Longford	10			9

County	level 4	level 5 equip- ment	level 5 altera- tions	level 7
Louth	47	2		34
Mayo	38	2		35
Meath	75	11	3	61
Monaghan	15	1		17
Offaly	25	2		24
Roscommon	28	2		17
Sligo	16	5	1	14
Tipperary	54	1	1	47
Waterford	32	1		27
Westmeath	21			14
Wexford	52	1	1	32
Wicklow	32	4		29

Psychological Assessments

541. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the way in which a court order relating to psychological assessments will be carried out in respect of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49057/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As this is an operational matter for Tusla, I have asked that they respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Departmental Communications

542. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the domain names registered to or owned by her department or through a third party company. [49065/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The following is the list of domain names registered to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

www.dcyia.ie	www.ministerforchildren.ie	www.officeoftheministerfor-children.ie
www.hubnanog.ie	www.hubnanóg.ie	www.dailnanog.ie
www.childrenyouth.ie	www.omcya.ie	www.specialneedspreschool.ie
www.comhairlenanog.ie	www.equalstart.ie	www.childrensdatabase.ie
www.preschoolaccess.ie	www.freepreschooldisabili- tysupports.gov.ie	www.childlawproject.ie
www.affordablechildcare.ie	www.growingup.ie	www.esri.ie/growing-up-in-ireland

Parliamentary Questions Costs

543. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the average costs associated with processing and answering written and oral parliamentary questions;

and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49118/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The time and effort involved answering Parliamentary Questions can vary considerably according to the nature of the question asked. No staff in my Department are assigned full time to dealing with Parliamentary Questions. The number and level of staff, and the time spent on individual replies, depends on the complexity and urgency of the issues raised, the ease of access to the required information, and the degree of cross-Divisional co-ordination required in preparing the reply.

I have responded to 1,674 Parliamentary Questions to date for 2017. Undoubtedly, a considerable amount of time is spent answering these questions. However, it is not possible to quantify the cost for the reasons outlined above.

Children in Care

544. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to a premises owned and operated by Tusla or planned by Tusla in the Seanacloc Tower area of County Cork; the type of unit this will be; the number of children or young persons who will reside there; the age category of persons who are due to reside there; the number of staff that will be employed there; the number of social workers that will work there; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49261/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has advised that a well established existing children residential centre is being refurbished and this has required the temporary relocation of the children living in the centre for a period of time, estimated to be about 2 to 3 months. The refurbishment is part of the agreed actions following a HIQA inspection in 2016.

Tusla has stated that appropriate processes are followed when using alternative premises during refurbishments and every effort is made to avoid effects on the local community and minimise the disruption for the children involved. The children's residential centre is staffed by a manager, deputy manager and social care staff team. Social workers are not part of the staffing structure of a residential centre.

From time to time, renovations are required at children's residential centres to maintain a comfortable and safe environment for the children or young people living there. If needed, suitable temporary accommodation is arranged to minimise any disruption to their lives while building works are completed. The necessary building works will improve the existing living arrangements for the young people living at the centre.

It is important to note that under the Child Care Act 1991, children in care, including those in residential care, must not be identified.

Disability Support Services Provision

545. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the role her Department will play in the implementation of the access and inclusion model of supports for children with disabilities; the funding her Department is providing for this in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49356/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): AIM supports children with disabilities to reap the full benefits of free pre-school education. Its goal is to

empower pre-school providers to deliver an inclusive pre-school experience. AIM is a child-centred and evidence-based model, involving seven levels of progressive support, moving from the universal to the targeted, based on the needs of the child and the pre-school setting. These include:

Level 1: An Inclusive Culture - This level is the critical foundation for the model. This sets out that a strong culture of inclusion must be fostered and embedded to support all children's maximum participation in the ECCE Programme. Under this level, a new Inclusion Charter has been developed. Updated Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Guidelines have been published and a nationwide training programme on these Guidelines is currently being rolled out. By mid-October, almost 1,900 pre-school practitioners completed this training. A new higher education programme, Leadership for Inclusion for Early Years (LINC), has also been developed and up to 900 pre-school practitioners are expected to graduate from this Programme every year for the next 4 years. These graduates will work as Inclusion Co-ordinators in their pre-school setting attracting an increase of €2 per child per week in the rate of ECCE capitation payable to that setting.

Level 2: Information for Parents and Practitioners - This level recognises the requirement of parents and pre-school practitioners to have clear, consistent and up to date information accessible to them regarding early years services and supports. A dedicated website (www.aim.gov.ie) has been launched under this level and a communications strategy is currently being developed by my Department.

Level 3: A Qualified and Confident Workforce - This level, in recognising the requirement to continue to develop a qualified workforce that can confidently meet the needs of all children wishing to participate in the ECCE Programme, provides for a multi-annual training programme for pre-school practitioners. In May 2017, my Department established a Training Working Group to develop and support the delivery of a suite of training courses for pre-school practitioners under AIM Level 3. These courses, which will be funded by my Department, will be available from 2018.

Where a pre-school provider, in conjunction with a parent, considers that some additional support is needed in order to meet the needs of a child with a disability in an inclusive way, an application can be made for a suite of targeted supports, namely:

Level 4: Expert Educational Advice and Support - This level provides access to mentoring for pre-school practitioners from a team of dedicated AIM Early Years Specialists. To avail of this support, pre-school providers and parents are requested to complete an online Access and Inclusion Profile. This looks at the strengths, abilities and needs of the child, as well as the strengths and needs of the pre-school setting.

Level 5: Equipment, Appliances and Minor Alterations Capital Grant - This level provides for access to specialised equipment, appliances, assistive technology and/or minor alterations capital grants for pre-school settings to ensure children with a disability can participate in the ECCE programme. A short report from a designated professional is required confirming that the specialised equipment or minor building alterations are necessary.

Level 6: Therapeutic Intervention - This level provides access to therapeutic services where they are critical to enable the child to be enrolled and to fully participate in the ECCE Programme. To avail of this support, pre-school providers and parents are requested to complete the online Access and Inclusion Profile. The Early Years Specialist will review the profile and, where therapeutic input is likely to be required; the Specialist will initiate contact with the HSE. The HSE decides on the appropriate level of therapeutic intervention.

Level 7: Additional Assistance in the Pre-School Room - This level provides additional assistance in the pre-school room where this is critical to ensuring a child's participation in the ECCE Programme. In line with emerging best practice to support the integration and independence of children with a disability, AIM does not fund Special Needs Assistants (SNAs). Rather, it provides additional capitation to the early years setting, which can be used to:

- a. reduce the adult to child ratio in the pre-school room by enrolling less children without financial loss or
- b. increase the adult ratio in the pre-school room by buying in additional assistance.

Accordingly, Level 7 assistance is a shared resource for the early year setting.

The total funding allocated to AIM for 2018 by my Department is €32.42m.

My Department has lead responsibility for AIM and works with the Departments of Education and Skills and Health, and a range of agencies and organisations, (i.e. City and County Childcare Committees, the Early Years Specialist Service, the Health Service Executive, the National Council for Special Education, the National Disability Authorities and Pobal) on AIM implementation.

Brexit Issues

546. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the preparations made in his Department in the event of no agreement being reached between the United Kingdom and the European Union on the terms of the UK's exit from the EU; if such preparations involve the drawing up of detailed and specific contingency plans in the event of a hard Brexit and a trade regime based on WTO tariffs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48783/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade has special responsibility for Brexit and for coordinating a whole-of-Government response to Brexit. In this capacity, the Minister is working closely with his colleagues across Government to address the many challenges resulting from Brexit. This cooperation also involves the relevant State agencies.

Work at Government level is being prepared through cross-Departmental co-ordination structures. These represent a frequent and active channel through which all relevant Departments are providing their research, analysis and overall policy input to the Government's wider response to Brexit, including its priorities for the ongoing Article 50 negotiations between the EU and the UK.

As the outcome of the negotiations is not yet known, an important focus of the planning and preparation being undertaken through these cross-Departmental structures is on deepening the Government's analysis and understanding of the potential consequences of different possible scenarios. My Department will engage in, and contribute to, this analysis.

Departmental Staff Training

547. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the cost of providing external coaching and-or training services for staff development in his Department over the past five years and to date in 2017, by cost per year, in tabular form;

the company that delivered the training courses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48812/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Department of Rural and Community Development was established on 19 July 2017. Learning and development services are currently being provided by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government on behalf of my Department while we recruit staff to fill our remaining vacancies. As a consequence, it is not possible to provide the information requested by the Deputy within the time specified. I will revert to the Deputy when I have collected the requisite information in respect of the period 19 July to date.

Seniors Alert Scheme

548. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he is will request Pobal to run at least one of the upcoming information events regarding the operation of the new seniors alerts scheme for community groups in counties Sligo and Mayo outside of normal working hours in order to facilitate persons who run this scheme (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48816/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I am pleased to advise that Pobal have organised an evening information session on the new Seniors Alert Scheme in the Knockranny House hotel, Westport, Co. Mayo on 29 November. I understand that Pobal have notified all community groups operating in the area in relation to this event.

Departmental Contracts

549. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the names of the companies renting a fixing and-or space on telecommunications and-or communications masts from his Department; the income received for each of the past five years for same, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48846/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department has not received any rental income for telecommunications equipment since its formation in July 2017.

Departmental Contracts

550. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the income received by his Department from the renting to companies of space to use and-or take fixings from telecommunications and-or communications masts on site or on the roof of his Department, in each of the past five years, by location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48884/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department has not received any rental income from telecommunication equipment since its formation in July 2017.

Communities Facilities Scheme

551. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if there is provision for the building of a new community centre in Kilbarrack in north Dublin; the sites that have been identified for the proposed new community centre; the funding that has been made available for the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49031/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department does not currently operate any scheme or programme which would fully fund the construction of a community centre or similar facilities.

However, the provision of community facilities and amenities is addressed within the local authority planning and development process by co-ordinating the functions of various statutory bodies, local and voluntary groups, local authority own resources and proposals for local development.

Earlier this year my Department launched the national €2 million Communities Facilities Scheme. The Communities Facilities Scheme is targeted at both urban and rural areas and funds projects that seek to enhance communities, address disadvantage and improve social cohesion at a local level. The 2017 round of applications is closed since June last but another round of funding will be launched for 2018 and funding is being maintained at 2017 levels.

A recast RAPID programme launched on 2 November this year and provides €2 million nationally in capital funding, for projects which aim to improve the lives of residents in disadvantaged urban areas and provincial towns.

Both programmes are being managed at a local level by the Local Community Development Committees in conjunction with the Municipal Districts, under the remit of the local authorities.

Information on both programmes can be accessed on my Department's website at www.drcd.gov.ie.

Departmental Communications

552. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the domain names registered to or owned by his Department or through a third party company. [49070/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department does not currently have any domain names registered to it. However, three domain names are in the process of transferring to it from the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, www.tidytowns.ie, www.ruralireland.ie and www.bailteslactmhara.ie.

Parliamentary Questions Costs

553. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the average costs associated with processing and answering written and oral parliamentary questions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49130/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The undertaking of parliamentary work is an in-built aspect of the work of almost all of the teams across the Department. Since establishment in July 2017, the Minister has responded to 160 written parliamentary questions. It is not possible to quantify the precise costs involved.

Local Improvement Scheme Funding

554. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the surcharge applied by each local authority in respect of the LIS scheme, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49205/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) provides funding for works to improve private/non-public roads, many of which are in rural areas. In September this year I allocated €10 million to Local Authorities to deliver the scheme, following consultation with the Authorities on the level of demand for such a scheme.

The 2017 scheme required a contribution from local residents/landholders of 10% of the total cost of works for eligible roads with up to and including 5 residents, and 15% of the total cost for roads with 6 or more residents. Local Authorities were also permitted to include LIS roads that lead to important community amenities such as graveyards, beaches, piers or other tourist/heritage sites and in this instance, the local contribution is provided by the Local Authority itself.

In addition to the specific criteria set out in the 2017 scheme, the LIS was also subject to the criteria set out in the 2002 memorandum published by the then Department of the Environment and Local Government, which allowed administrative expenses of up to 15% of the net cost to be recouped by Local Authorities.

As the LIS roads projects are expected to continue until the end of 2017, it is not possible at this stage to identify the administration costs attributable to LIS roads.

Dormant Accounts Fund

555. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount of uncommitted funds held under the dormant accounts legislation; the amount of these that form part of the statutory reserve; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49386/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Dormant Accounts Act 2001, together with the Unclaimed Life Assurance Policies Act 2003 and the Dormant Accounts (Amendment) Acts 2005-2012, provide a framework for the administration of unclaimed accounts in credit institutions (i.e. banks, building societies and An Post) and unclaimed life assurance policies in insurance undertakings. The Dormant Accounts Fund is managed by the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA).

The legislation governing the Fund provides for a scheme for the disbursement of funds that are unlikely to be reclaimed by account holders, for the purposes of supporting programmes or projects to assist specified disadvantaged groups. My Department coordinates these disbursement schemes.

Since its establishment in April 2003 to the end of September 2017 inflows to the Dormant Accounts fund have totalled €941.5 million, including interest earned of approximately €41 million. Outflows from the Fund amounted to €649.6 million, including €357.9 million which has been reclaimed by account holders. At the end of September 2017, therefore, the value of the Fund stood at €291.9 million.

Of this, the reserve for future reclaims by account holders stood at €80.6 million. Provision

is also made for €86.5 million which remains to be disbursed by the NTMA on foot of approvals already made through the disbursement schemes.

The net value of uncommitted Dormant Accounts Funds stood at €124.8 million at the end of September 2017.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

556. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason a person (details supplied) has had their invalidity pension ceased, in view of the fact that their inability to work has not changed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48903/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): Invalidity pension (IP) is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions.

Following an in-person medical assessment as part of a review of their continued entitlement to Invalidity Pension, it has been decided that the person concerned no longer satisfies the medical conditions for the scheme. She was notified on 28 September 2017 of this decision, the reasons for it and of her rights of review and appeal.

She requested a review and appeal of this decision. Following a review of all the information available it has been decided that there is no change to the original decision. She was notified on 09 November 2017 of the outcome of the review.

As she has appealed the decision to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO), a submission was prepared by the Department and forwarded to the SWAO on 13 November 2017 for determination.

The SWAO will be in touch with her in due course in relation to the progress of the appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Insurance

557. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will address a matter (details supplied) regarding self-employment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48928/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Government is committed to supporting entrepreneurship and self-employment. Self-employed workers who earn €5,000 or more in a contribution year, are liable for PRSI at the Class S rate of 4%, subject to a minimum annual payment of €500. This provides them with access to the following benefits: State pension (contributory) and widow's, widower's or surviving civil partner's pension (contributory), guardian's payment (contributory), maternity benefit, adoptive benefit, paternity benefit, treatment benefit (from March 2017). Entitlement to invalidity pension will be extended to the self-employed from 1 December 2017.

This compares favourably with employees who, in general, are liable to the Class A rate of 4%. In addition their employers are liable to PRSI at the rate of 8.5% on weekly earnings up to

and including €376 or at the rate of 10.75% where weekly earnings exceed €376. Accordingly the combined rate of PRSI rate paid in respect of Class A employees is 12.5% or 14.75%, depending on the level of weekly earnings. These Class A employees are entitled to the full range of social insurance benefits.

I understand the Deputy is also seeking information on access to jobseeker payments for the self-employed. Jobseeker's allowance, which is means tested and jobseeker's benefit which is a contributory scheme provide income support to people who have lost work and who satisfy the qualifying conditions including being available for and genuinely seeking full-time work.

As stated above self-employed people pay PRSI at Class S which does not cover them for jobseeker's benefit. However, a self-employed person who has sufficient social insurance contributions as an employee could qualify for jobseeker's benefit provided they either give up their self-employment or if their self-employment is considered to be "subsidiary employment" i.e. undertaken in addition to and outside of the ordinary working hours of his/her usual employment. In addition, the person must have paid at least 117 employment contributions during the three years preceding the date of their claim or have earnings from the occupation of less than €12.70 per day.

Furthermore, a self-employed person may qualify for the means-tested jobseeker's allowance if their business ceases or if they are on low income as a result of a downturn in demand for their services. If the person were engaged in farming they may qualify for the means-tested farm assist payment.

The issue of extending additional social insurance benefits to the self-employed paying Class S PRSI was considered in the Actuarial Review of the Social Insurance fund (SIF) as at 31 December, 2015, which I published on 18 October 2017. The review, required by legislation, was carried out by independent consultants, KPMG. It examines the projected income and expenditure of the SIF over the course of the 55 year period from 2016 to 2071.

The review found that the fund currently has a modest surplus of income over expenditure. In 2016 there was a surplus of €0.4 billion on expenditure of €8.8 billion and receipts of €9.2 billion. However, this will reduce over the next two years and will return to a small shortfall in 2020. The annual shortfalls are projected to increase from 2021 onwards as the ageing of the population impacts. Projections indicate that, in the absence of further action to tackle the shortfall, the excess of expenditure over income of the fund will increase significantly over the medium to long term. The shortfall in expenditure over income is projected to increase from €0.2 billion in 2020 to €3.3 billion by 2030 and to €22.2 billion by 2071. It should be noted that as self-employed workers will be eligible to apply for invalidity pension from December 2017, the cost of this introduction has been factored into the actuarial review.

As part of the review the independent consultants were required to project the additional PRSI expenditure if invalidity pension and illness, jobseeker's and carer's benefits were extended to Class S self-employed workers and the PRSI contribution rates required to provide these benefits on a revenue neutral basis.

The review found that the combined cost of introducing invalidity, illness, jobseeker's and carer's benefits for class S contributions is estimated to be €118 million in 2018, rising steadily to €223 million in 2020. By 2025 the projected cost is €413 million and, over the period of the review the cost would rise to €1.3 billion in 2071. These costs assume that the cost of extending invalidity pension to the self-employed builds up steeply for the first 10 years after introduction after which time the scheme is almost at maturity or a steady state.

For the shorter term schemes, illness and jobseeker's benefits, it is estimated that they will

reach maturity after 2 years. Projected expenditure on jobseeker's benefit assumes the same incidence rate as prevail in the employed (PRSI Class A) population.

The review indicates that, where these benefits are extended to the self-employed, the class S rate of PRSI contribution would need to increase substantially in order to ensure that the benefits are delivered in a revenue neutral manner. It estimates that when expenditure on the additional benefits is considered over the entire projection period, PRSI rates would need to increase by 94% under a scenario of no subvention from the exchequer. This is equivalent to an increase of the Class S contribution rate from the current 4% rate to 7.8%.

This increased contribution is attributable to the costs of extending these additional benefits to PRSI Class S contributors. It does not take account of the value to PRSI Class S contributors of access to the range of existing benefits, and in particular state pension contributory.

The consultants estimated that the typical cost of state pension (contributory) on its own is of the order of 10% to 15%, depending on other factors including rate of average earnings and date of commencing paying PRSI. Adding in the other benefits referenced, the total Class S rate of contribution to ensure revenue neutrality would be of the order of 20% per annum.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory) Applications

558. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an application for a State contributory pension by a person (details supplied) will be reviewed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48686/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): A copy of the social insurance record relied upon by the Deciding Officer when making the initial decision was provided to the person concerned on 10 April 2017. The person was asked to check that this record was in order and to notify the Department of any discrepancy.

Following a review of the person's state pension (contributory), it was noticed that not all of the person's social insurance contributions had been included in the initial pension eligibility calculation. The person's social insurance record has been updated and a revised decision has been made awarding an increased rate of pension, effective from 2 May 2017, the person's original date of pension award. The person concerned has been notified of this decision on 20 November and arrears have issued.

Additionally, the person's employment record for the period 2002 to 2013 is being investigated by my Department's Scope section. Scope section has written to the person's previous employer on 28 September 2017 and a reminder issued on 15 November 2017. Once Scope section makes a decision on the insurability, or otherwise, of the queried period(s) of employment, the person's pension entitlement will be reviewed. The person concerned will be notified of the outcome of that review, in writing, without delay.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Appeals

559. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a person (details supplied) will have a decision on their appeal for a disability entitlement;

and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48694/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all of the available evidence, has decided to allow the appeal of the person concerned by way of a summary decision. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officer's decision.

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 trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

560. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a person (details supplied) will have a final decision on their application for a disability allowance. [48697/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): This gentleman has been awarded disability allowance with effect from 17 May 2017. The first payment will be made to his chosen payment method on 6 December 2017.

If he was in receipt of another social welfare payment, or an increase was paid to another for his benefit, during the period 17 May 2017 to 5 December 2017, the amount of social welfare already paid requires calculation and will be deducted from any arrears due. Arrears of payment due will issue as soon as possible once any necessary adjustment is calculated.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

561. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made regarding a person (details supplied) who submitted an appeal in August 2017 in respect of their carer's allowance. [48698/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 8 August 2017. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought from the Department of Social Protection. These papers have been received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 17 October 2017 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Appeals

562. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48714/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 19 October 2017. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought from the Department of Social Protection. These papers have been received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 9 November 2017 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Employment Rights

563. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to make changes in legislation that would give rights to employees (details supplied) in cases in which there is a status red weather alert in an area in order to prevent dangerous travel to work and to protect income for lost work resulting from such a weather alert; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48753/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The national response to Storm Ophelia was coordinated by my colleague, the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, Eoghan Murphy T.D., and the National Emergency Coordination Committee. I understand that the response to Storm Ophelia is being reviewed and a report will be prepared which will be submitted to the Government Taskforce on Emergency Planning for its attention before being submitted for the approval of Government in January 2018.

In relation to Occupational Health and Safety, policy responsibility for that remains with my colleague the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation. It would be a policy matter for her Department on whether the Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Acts require amendment should severe weather events like this occur in the future.

My Department issued a notice in relation to whether employees had a statutory right to be paid in the event of severe weather events like 16 October last: <https://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Do-employees-have-a-statutory-right-to-be-paid-for-non-attendance-at-work-due-to-severe-weather-conditions.aspx>.

I have no plans to amend the Payment of Wages Acts at this time.

Rent Supplement Scheme

564. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social

Protection the number of persons under 18 years of age with severe physical disabilities and living in their family home whose family was in receipt of rent supplement in each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017 (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48758/17]

578. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to review rent supplement rates; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48994/17]

579. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the control measures and operational provisions that are in place to ensure that increases in rent that will occur during the year are met and that additional payments by the tenant or topping up of rent does not occur for persons in receipt of rent supplement over the course of the year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48995/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 564, 578 and 579 together.

Rent supplement plays a vital role in housing families and individuals, with the scheme supporting approximately 36,200 recipients for which the Government has provided €253 million for in 2017.

Information on the number of people under-18 years of age with severe physical disabilities that are living in family homes supported by rent supplement is not maintained.

Under-the-counter ‘top-up’ payments occur where the landlord and tenant understate the actual rent agreed between both parties to secure a rent supplement tenancy. The tenant and landlord must complete the rent supplement application form declaring that the information provided is accurate. It is therefore very difficult for the Department to identify these types of arrangements where both the tenant and landlord have confirmed the information provided.

Rather than increasing rent limits at this time and in recognition of the ongoing difficulties in the rented market, my Department continues to implement a targeted, flexible, case-by-case approach where rents may exceed the maximum limits. The Protocol arrangement in place with Threshold continues to operate in the areas where supply issues are particularly acute covering Dublin, Cork, Meath, Kildare and Wicklow and Galway City. Over 1,500 increased payments over the rent limits have been made this year to date.

The provision of flexibility above rent limits is providing a mechanism to address increasing rents, including those in ‘top-up’ payment arrangements. People in these situations are advised that their position can be regularised and that they should contact the Community Welfare Service for assistance.

The continued flexible case-by-case approach together with the recent reforms to the private rental sector, notably the cap in the Rent Pressure Zones, is providing increased certainty and security for rent supplement tenants.

I am continuing to keep these matters under review.

Brexit Issues

565. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the preparations made in her Department in the event of no agreement being reached

between the United Kingdom and the European Union on the terms of the UK's exit from the EU; if such preparations involve the drawing up of detailed and specific contingency plans in the event of a hard Brexit and a trade regime based on WTO tariffs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48776/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade with special responsibility for Brexit, Minister Coveney has responsibility for coordinating the whole-of-Government response to Brexit. In this capacity, he is working closely with his colleagues across Government to address the many challenges resulting from Brexit. This cooperation also involves the relevant State Agencies.

Work at Cabinet level is being prepared through cross-Departmental coordination structures. These represent a frequent and active channel through which all relevant Departments are providing their research, analysis and overall policy input to the Government's wider response to Brexit, including its priorities for the ongoing Article 50 negotiations between the EU and the UK.

As the outcome of the negotiations is not yet known, an important focus of the planning and preparation being undertaken through these structures is on deepening the Government's analysis and understanding of the exact consequences of a range of different possible scenarios. This represents an intensification of efforts to build on the Government's contingency planning.

In relation to the areas under my remit, the key area of concern is the impact of Brexit on the current reciprocal arrangements for social insurance (which includes pensions) and social assistance (means tested schemes linked to residency rights) and child benefit between Ireland and the UK, including Northern Ireland.

The Department is continuing its assessment of the implications of Brexit, including where no withdrawal agreement is concluded, on these areas on a scheme-by-scheme and client basis. This is part of ongoing Brexit analysis and scenario planning for input into larger Government deliberative processes and it is considered that all of these areas merit equal prioritisation as they fundamentally relate to the rights, entitlements and wellbeing of our citizens.

Departmental Staff Training

566. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the cost per year of providing external coaching or training services, or both, for staff development in her Department over the past five years and to date in 2017, in tabular form; the company that delivered the training courses; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48805/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department is very active in the delivery of learning and development to staff with the aim of assisting their ongoing continuing professional development. In addition to these external training supports, a comprehensive suite of training- the One DEASP Learning and Development Programme – is delivered internally by Departmental training staff to colleagues in frontline roles.

The Department's spend on external staff training, coaching and development and the companies that have delivered training from 2012 to date are as follows:

Year	Total	Supplier Name
2012	€785,848.00	Abbey Conference & Corporate
		Achilles Procurement Services Ltd.
		All Hallows College
		Auditware Training & Consultancy
		BearingPoint Ireland Ltd
		Bernard Hallinan T/A Safe Work
		Beverley Webster Workplace Rehabilitation
		bmf Business Services
		Brendan Casey
		Career Decisions Ireland
		Carr Communications Ltd
		Carraig Safety Consultants Ltd
		Caveo Information Systems Ltd
		Chartered Accountants Cork Society
		Chartered Accountants Ireland
		Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors
		Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development
		City of Galway VEC
		Clear & Critical Thinking
		CMD Group
		Communications and Natural Resources (786 FISH)
		CONSOLIDATED ENTERPRISES LTD.
		Construction Industry Training Ltd
		Crisis Prevention Institute Inc
		CSTDC TRAINING (307)
		Cutter Consortium
		Damar Consultancy Ltd
		DATA DISPLAY CO LTD
		Dublin City University
		Dermot O'Neill Consulting
		Desmond Walsh
		Dublin City Council Fire Brigade
		eCom solutions Ltd
		Energy Action Limited.
		Eustace Patterson Ltd
		First Aid & Medical Training Services
		Gartner Ireland Limited
		Gerard Dunne First Aid
		Gerard Mallon

Questions - Written Answers

	Henderson Fire & Safety Ltd
	IACT
	ICS Skills
	IEEE
	IIA Training Ltd
	Institute of Certified Public Accountants
	Institute of Public Administration
	IP Forensics Ltd
	Irish Academy of Computer Training
	Irish Centre For European Law
	Irish Computer Society
	Irish Management Institute
	Irish Red Cross
	Irish Times
	IRN Publishing Ltd
	Joseph Ganley
	Kearney Training & Consultancy (KTC) Ltd
	Keytrainer Ireland Ltd.
	Legal-Island
	Logic Earth Learning Services
	Martin Mc Hugo
	Martina Brennan
	Mazars
	Mediateam Ltd
	Mel Cousins & Associates
	Mental Health Ireland
	MNF Training & Business Consultants
	New Horizons Ireland
	NIFAST
	NUI Maynooth
	O’Herlihy Access Consultancy
	Olas Software Training & Development
	Oscailt
	PAI (Public Affairs Ireland) Publications Ltd
	Pathway
	PDP
	PFH Technology Group
	Phoenix Safety Ltd
	Plural Sight LCC
	Prodata Business Systems Ltd

		Professional Development Ltd.
		Right Coaching & HR Solutions
		Robert Carty,
		Sean O'Brien
		Second Sight Development & Training
		Sligo Park Hotel
		Social Justice Ireland
		Social Research Association
		StayAhead Training Ltd
		SureSkills Limited
		Taylor Bennett Partners LLP UK OUG
		The Business Analysts Association of Ireland
		Trigraph Professional Services Ltd
		Trinity College Dublin - School of Law
		Valerie Pierce t/a Valerie Pierce Business
		Waterford Chamber
		Western Management Centre
		Whyte Swan Developments Ltd
		Zinopy Ltd
2013	€728,835	Achilles Procurement Services Ltd.
		Age & Opportunity
		Aidan Browne
		Aiim International Ltd.
		Alistair Tosh
		All Hallows College
		Auditware Training & Consultancy
		Barnardo's
		Bibby Financial Services Ireland LTD
		Bridget Lawlor & Sheila O'Leary t/ aNua Training & Development
		BT Communications Ireland Ltd
		Carmel Farnan
		Central Health & Safety Services Ltd
		Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion
		Centre for Software Engineering
		Chartered Accountants Ireland
		Chartered Institute of Internal Audi- tors Ireland
		City of Galway VEC,

Questions - Written Answers

	Common Purpose Ltd
	Consolidated Enterprises
	Core International
	Crisis Prevention Institute Inc
	CTEC t/a Sectec Ltd
	Cutter Consortium
	Dublin City Council Fire Brigade
	EAP Institute
	E-Bridge Training Ltd
	Energy Action Ltd
	Eustace Patterson Ltd
	Exceltraining & Designs Ltd
	First Aid & Medical Training Services
	Frank Nugent
	Fusion Training & Development
	Galway & Roscommon Education & Training Board
	Gartner Ireland Limited
	Health Training
	Henderson Fire & Safety Ltd
	High Performance Training
	IACT
	ICS Skills
	IFAL
	IIA Training Ltd
	Independent Colleges
	Inspire Quality Services Ltd
	Institute of Certified Public Accountants
	Institute of Public Administration
	IP Forensics Ltd
	Irish Computer Society
	Irish Red Cross
	IRN Publishing Ltd
	ISL Academy
	Kelron Health and Safety
	La Touche Training
	Lean Sigma Systems Ltd
	Legal-Island
	Logic Earth Learning Services
	Margaret O'Dwyer
	Markisma
	Maynooth Campus Conference & Accommodation
	Mental Health Ireland

		Microsoft MIOL
		Mongey Communications
		National College of Ireland
		Netfort Technologies LTD
		New Horizons Ireland
		NUI Maynooth
		PAI (Public Affairs Ireland) Publications Ltd
		PDP
		People Resources
		Phoenix Safety Ltd
		Procad Technology Ltd t/a Training-Point
		Prodata Business Systems Ltd
		Professional Development Ltd.
		Professional Training Solutions Ltd
		Reading Development Institute
		Robert Carty
		Safetech Consulting and Training Ltd
		Safety Solution Ltd
		SMT Consultants Ltd
		Social Justice Ireland
		Social Research Association
		SQL Server Magazine
		SQS Software Quality Systems (Ire) Ltd
		SureSkills Limited
		Sureskills Ltd
		The Communications Clinic Ltd
		The Irish College of General Practitioners
		The Men's Development Network Ltd
		The Performance Partnership
		Trigraph Professional Services Ltd
		University College Cork
		University College Dublin
		Western Management Centre
2014	€815,388.00	Accenture
		Achilles Procurement Services
		All Hallows College
		Ashville Media Group
		Astro Computer Training
		Auditware Training & Consultancy
		Bibby Financial Services Ireland LTD

Questions - Written Answers

		Big Wave Media Training
		bmf Business Services
		BT Communications Ireland Ltd
		Carr Communications Ltd
		Carraig Safety Consultants Ltd.
		Centre for Software Engineering
		Centre for Software Engineering
		Chartered Accountants Ireland
		Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors
		Chris Mee Safety Engineering
		Common Purpose Ltd
		Common Purpose Ltd
		Computer Based Training (CB Training)
		CONSOLIDATED ENTERPRISES LTD.
		Core International
		CPL Training Ltd t/a Nifast
		Crosswood Development t/a Olive Safety
		Digital Marketing Institute
		Dublin City Council Fire Brigade
		Durrow Communications Ltd (CareersPortal)
		E-Bridge Training Ltd
		Eustace Patterson Ltd
		Frank Communication Ltd
		Frank Nugent
		FRS Training Ltd
		Gaelchultúr
		Galway & Roscommon Education & Training Board
		Galway County Council
		Gartner Ireland Limited
		Gartner UK Limited
		Geraldine Grady t/a Step Consulting
		Hartley People
		Harvest Training Resources
		Headway Ireland Ltd
		High Performance Training
		HONORABLE SOCIETY OF KING'S INNS
		IACT
		IBEC 1
		ICS Skills

	IIA Training Ltd
	IICP Education & Training Ltd
	Inspire Quality Services Ltd
	Institute of Certified Public Accountants
	Institute Of Project Management
	Institute of Public Administration
	Institute of Public Administration
	Institute of Public Administration
	Irish Computer Society
	Irish Red Cross
	Irish Times
	IRN Publishing Ltd
	IT & Electronic Services Ltd
	John Swan
	Kelron Health and Safety
	La Touche Training
	Legal-Island
	Logic Earth Learning Services
	Maire Halpin & Associates
	Marie Keating Foundation
	Markisma
	McMahon CSM Ltd
	Microsoft European Events
	National College of Ireland
	National Training Solutions NTS
	Neil Donaghy
	New Horizons Computer Learning Centres
	New Horizons Ireland
	NIFAST
	North West Mental Health Alliance
	NSAI
	Olas Software Training & Development Ltd
	Omniplex Group Ltd
	PAI (Public Affairs Ireland) Publications Ltd,
	PDP
	People Resources
	PFH Tech Group
	Phoenix Safety Ltd
	Procad Technology Ltd t/a Training-Point
	Professional Development Ltd
	Reading Development Institute

Questions - Written Answers

		Robert Carty
		Safetech Consulting and Training Ltd
		Seven - Psychology at Work
		Shannon and District Chamber of Commerce
		Smart Skills
		SMT Consultants
		Social Justice Ireland
		Social Research Association
		Step Performance Group
		The Finlay Consultancy
		The Imperial Hotel
		The Irish College of General Practitioners
		The Knowledge Academy Limited
		The Performance Partnership
		The Retirement Planning Council of Ireland
		Trigraph Professional Services Ltd
		University College Cork
		University College Dublin
		Western Management Centre

Tables contd.

2015	€551,346.00	Abbey Conference & Corporate
		All Hallows College
		Allone Corporate Solutions Ltd
		ANDREW DOYLE SAFETY CONSULTANTS LIMITED
		Ann Dinnigan t/a Mobile HR
		Apex Fire Ltd.
		Arcline Ltd.
		Auditware Systems Limited
		Auditware Training & Consultancy
		B Safe
		Baker Tilly Ryan Glennon
		Bernard Hallinan T/A Safe Work
		Bibby Financial Services Ireland LTD
		Big Wave Media Training
		bmf Business Services
		C.C.I.C.C. Ltd
		Career & Life Planning Ltd
		Carr Communications Ltd
		Carrigaline Court Hotel

		Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion
		Chartered Accountants Ireland
		CHRIS MEE SAFETY ENGINEERING
		College of Computing Technology
		Commercial Media Group
		Common Purpose Ltd
		Computer Based Training (CB Training)
		CONSOLIDATED ENTERPRISES LTD.
		Core International
		Deebert House Hotel
		Deloitte & Touche
		Dept Justice Equality & Law Reform (933 MNJX)
		Dublin City Council Fire Brigade
		Durrow Communications Ltd (CareersPortal)
		E-Bridge Training Ltd
		ERA Academy of European Law
		Frank Communication Ltd,
		Gerard Corrigan & Hugh O'Neill T/A Breakthrough
		Gerard Mallon
		Henderson Fire & Safety Ltd
		IACT
		IBEC
		ICS Skills
		IIA Training Ltd
		IICP Education & Training Ltd
		Institute of Certified Public Accountants
		Institute of Public Administration
		Irish Computer Society
		Irish Institute of Training & Development
		IRN Publishing Ltd
		Kelron Health and Safety
		La Touche Training
		LISA RAFFERTY
		Logic Earth Learning Services
		MACKIN CONSULTANCY LIMITED
		McGrath Barrett & Associates

Questions - Written Answers

		Mental Health Ireland
		Midas Training & Business
		National Adult Literacy Agency
		National Association for the Deaf
		National Council for the Blind
		New Horizons Computer Learning Centres
		New Horizons Ireland
		NSAI
		NUI Maynooth
		Oscailt
		PAI (Public Affairs Ireland) Publications Ltd
		PDP
		People Resources
		Phoenix Safety Ltd
		Procad Technology Ltd t/a Training-Point
		Professional Development Ltd
		Professional Training Solutions Ltd
		Pulse 8 Training
		Renaissance Contingency Services Limited
		Robert Carty
		Rossan College
		Safety Ireland First Response Ltd.
		SAS Institute Ltd
		Seven - Psychology at Work
		Smart Skills
		Social Research Association
		Step Performance Group
		The Honorable Society of King's Inns
		The Irish College of General Practitioners
		The Irish Computer Society
		The Learning Curve Institute
		The Rickter Company Ltd
		Total Focus Ltd
		Trigraph Professional Services Ltd
		University College Dublin
		Western Management Centre
2016	€768,977.00	Adapt Domestic Abuse Services
		Allone Corporate Solutions Ltd
		Ann Dinnigan T/A Mobile HR

	Anne Walsh T/A Abaltacht Services
	Apex Fire Ltd
	Arcnline Ltd
	Auditware Systems Ltd
	Ayrton Consultancy Ltd T/A Ayrton Group
	Baker Tilly Ryan Glennon
	Barnardos
	Bibby Financial Services Ire Ltd
	bmf Business Services
	Carr Communications Ltd
	Castlebridge Associates
	Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors
	Chartered Institute of Pers
	Chris Mee Safety Engineering
	Christopher O'Shea T/A PPA
	Christopher O'Shea T/A PPA Trading
	Clardex Systems Ltd
	CMIT Learning Ltd
	Commercial Media Group
	Common Purpose Ltd
	Connexus Recruit Ltd
	Consolidated Enterprises Ltd
	Cork Education and Training Board
	Crosswood Developments
	CSTDC Training
	DCM Learning
	Dept. of Justice Equality & Law Reform
	Dublin City Fire Brigade
	Durrow Communications Ltd
	e-bridge Training Ltd
	Eleanor Wogan T/A Work Wise
	ERA Academy of European Law
	European Academy for Taxes, Economics & Law
	Exceltraining & Designs Ltd
	Fire & Industrial Safety Training
	Fujitsu Services Shared Services Centre
	Gaelchultúr
	Global Knowledge Ireland Ltd
	Harvest Training Services
	Haywood Associates Ltd

Questions - Written Answers

	IACT
	IBEC
	ICS Skills
	ICS Skills
	IIA Training Ltd
	ILM
	Inspire Quality Services Ltd
	Institute of Public Administration
	InterAccess Ltd
	Irish Association of Pension Funds
	Irish Institute of Purchasing & Materials Management (IIPMM)
	Irish Institute of Training & Development
	Irish Times
	IRM Publishing Ltd
	Kelron Health & Safety
	Kerry County Council
	La Touche Training
	Legal-Island
	Liam O'Brien
	Logic Earth Learning Services
	Mackin Consultancy Ltd
	Maire Halpin & Associates
	Mental Health Ireland
	MGT Training Ltd
	Munster HR Associates Ltd
	National Association for the Deaf
	National Council for the Blind
	National Recruitment Federation
	NCU Ltd (northside centre)
	New Horizons Ire
	NUI Maynooth
	PAI (Public Affairs Ireland) Publications Ltd
	PDP
	Pluralsight LCC
	Professional Development Ltd
	Public Affairs Ireland
	Public Relations Institute of Ireland
	Pulse8 Training
	Queens University Belfast
	Renaissance Contingency
	Resolve Ireland
	Robert Carty

		Safetech Consulting & Training
		Safety Ireland First Response Ltd
		SAS Institute Ltd
		Smart Skills
		Social Research Association
		South West Counselling Centre
		St John of God Hospital Ltd
		Sureskills Ltd
		The Analytics Store
		The Honourable Society of King's Inns
		The Irish College of General Practitioners
		The Irish Computer Society
		The Retirement Planning Council of Ireland
		This Is Six Two Digital Ltd
		Torc Consulting
		Total Focus Ltd
		Trigraph Professional Services Ltd
		UCD
		Waterford Restorative Practice Network
2017	€1,168,084.00	Absolute Safety
		ADAPT Domestic Abuse Services
		Agile Networks Ltd
		Allone Corporate Solutions Ltd
		Anne Walsh T/A Abaltacht Services
		Arcline Ltd.
		Ardee Community Development Co Ltd
		Auditware Systems Limited
		Avtek Solutions Ltd
		Ayrton Consultancy Ltd t/a Ayrton Group
		Barnardos
		Barrow Consultancy & Training
		bmf Business Services
		BOSS Metric Ltd. T/A Connector
		Brady Johnston Ltd
		Bring Your Own Laptop Ltd
		Byrne Wallace
		Carr Communications Ltd
		Chartered Accountants Ireland

Questions - Written Answers

		CHRIS MEE SAFETY ENGI-NEERING
		Christopher O'Shea T/A PPA Train- ing
		CMD Group
		CMIT Learning Ltd.
		Common Purpose Ltd
		Connexus Recruit Limited
		Consolidated Enterprises
		Crosswood Development t/a Olive Safety
		CSTDC TRAINING (307)
		DataCamp Inc
		DCM LEARNING
		Dublin City Council Fire Brigade
		Durrow Communications Ltd (Ca- reersPortal)
		E-Bridge Training Ltd
		Employment For All
		ERA Academy of European Law
		Exceltraining & Designs Ltd
		Exertis Ireland Ltd
		Fire and Industrial Safety Training
		Fitzwilliam Institute
		Fujitsu Services Shared Services Centre
		G Holland Ltd t/a Holland TCS
		Gaelchultur
		Gerard Corrigan & Hugh O'Neill T/A Breakthrough
		Gerard ODonoghue Training Ser- vices
		Global Knowledge Ireland Ltd
		Heart Safety Solutions
		IACT
		IBEC
		ICS Skills
		IIA Training Ltd
		ILM
		INITIAL MEDICAL SERVICES
		Inspire Quality Services Ltd
		Institute of Public Administration
		Institute of Technology Carlow
		Internet interaction Limited
		Iquest
		Irish Association of Pension Funds

	Irish Management Institute
	Irish Times
	Kelron Health and Safety
	La Touche Training
	Legal-Island
	Logic Earth Learning Services
	Majih Ltd t/a Insight Statistical Consulting
	Mental Health Ireland
	Michael Gerard Farrell
	Michael O'Brien & Associates
	Munster HR Associates Ltd
	National College of Ireland
	NCU Ltd, (Northside Centre for the Unemployed)
	New Horizons Ireland
	Night Mountain Ltd T/A UX Training
	NSAI
	NUI Maynooth
	O'Dwyer Safety Services
	Olas Software Training & Development Ltd
	PAI (Public Affairs Ireland) Publications Ltd
	PDP
	People Resources
	PFH Tech Group
	Phoenix Minerva Ltd
	PUBLIC AFFAIRS IRELAND
	Public Relations Institute of Ireland
	Robert Carty
	Rossan College
	Safetech Consulting & Training
	Safety Ireland First Response Ltd.
	Safety Solutions Swift Ltd
	Servisource Healthcare Ltd
	Speechcamp
	SQT Training Ltd
	Sureskills Ltd
	The Analytics Store
	The Honorable Society of King's Inns
	The Irish College of General Practitioners
	The Marketing Institute Of Ireland

		The Whitepaper Conference Company
		Tom Ryder
		Transparency International Ireland
		Trigraph Professional Services Ltd
		Trinity College
		VX Company Forensic Analytics B.V.
		Western Management Centre

Departmental Functions

567. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the social partners or employment policy experts were consulted before the decision was made to transfer labour affairs functions from the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation to her Department; if her officials carried out an impact assessment of the transfer of functions; and, if so, whether she will publish it. [48823/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The transfer of labour affairs and labour law responsibilities to my Department was announced by An Taoiseach on 14 June 2017. The areas that transferred included Employment Rights and Minimum Wage policy, the Low Pay Commission, and lead responsibilities for EU policies around employment and engagement with the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.

This transfer aligns employee-based rights with the activation focus of my Department and is very much in line with how other European countries deal with these issues.

Carer's Allowance Applications

568. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will award a carer's allowance to a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48831/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I can confirm my department received an application from the person concerned on 28 September 2017. Her application is currently being processed and once completed, she will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Child Benefit Eligibility

569. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to reintroduce child benefit for 18 year olds attending secondary education in view of the unfairness inherent in the current situation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48901/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Child Benefit is a monthly payment made to families with children in respect of all qualified children up to the age of 16 years. The payment continues to be paid in respect of children up to their 18th birthday who are in full-time education, or who have a disability. Child Benefit is currently paid to almost 625,530 families in respect of some 1.2 million children, with an estimated expenditure of more than €2 billion in 2017.

Given the universality of Child Benefit it is not a payment which lends itself to a targeted approach, and the considerable costs associated with any adjustment to the payment can result in benefits being spread very thinly, rather than making a difference where there is most need.

Families on low incomes can avail of a number of social welfare schemes that support children in full-time education up to the age of 18 (and up to the age of 22 under certain circumstances), including:

- qualified child increases (IQCs) with primary social welfare payments;
- the working family payment (formerly Family Income Supplement) for low-paid employees with children;
- the back to school clothing and footwear allowance for low income families (paid at the full-time second-level education rate).

As part of measures under Budget 2018, the weekly payment for each qualified child will increase from €29.80 to €31.80. This is an increase of 6.7%, and will benefit over 400,000 children.

Also in Budget 2018 earnings thresholds for Family Income Supplement, to be re-designated as the Working Family Payment, were increased by €10 per week for families with up to three children. This measure will particularly benefit low-income working families.

All of the schemes described above provide targeted assistance directly linked to household income and thereby support low-income families with older children participating in full-time education.

Social Welfare Benefits

570. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a disability allowance or, in its absence, invalidity pension will be considered in the case of a person (details supplied); if the case can be examined with a view to alternatives; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48926/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Following a review of the entitlement of the person concerned to disability allowance (DA) his claim was disallowed as he was deemed to have means in excess of the statutory limit. A further review of entitlement was requested by the person concerned. The Deciding Officer reviewing this case upheld the decision to disallow payment as means are still in excess of the statutory limit. He was notified of this decision on the 2 November 2017, the reasons for it and of his right to appeal to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office.

Invalidity pension (IP) is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions.

The Department received a claim for IP from the person concerned on the 14 November 2017. The claim will be processed as quickly as possible and he will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

571. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a carer's allowance for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48932/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I confirm that my department received an application for carer's allowance from the person concerned on 26 October 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.

Departmental Communications

572. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the domain names registered to or owned by her Department or through a third party company. [48948/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The domain names owned by my Department are:

combatpoverty.ie

euresireland.ie (aliases: euresireland.com)

feadireland.ie

gov-id.ie

government-id.ie

governmentid.ie

govid.gov.ie

govid.ie

gro.ie

groireland.ie

intreo.ie

jobsireland.ie

labourmarketcouncil.ie

myaccount.gov.ie

mygov-id.ie

mygovid-nonprod.ie

mygovid.gov.ie

mygovid.ie

mywelfare-nonprod.ie

mywelfare.ie

onedsp.ie (aliases: 1-dsp.ie, 1dsp.ie, communitywelfare-service.ie, communitywelfare-service.ie, login-dsp.ie, logindsp.ie, my-dsp.ie, my-socialwelfare.ie, my-welfare.ie, mydsp.ie, my-socialwelfare.ie, one-dsp.ie, register-dsp.ie, register-welfare.ie, registerdsp.ie, registerwelfare.ie)

socialprotection.gov.ie

socialprotection.ie

watergrant.ie (aliases: water-grant.ie)

welfare.gov.ie

welfare.ie (aliases: dsfa.ie)

welfarepartners-nonprod.ie

jobpath.ie (aliases: jobpath.eu)

jobsplus.ie

Public Services Card

573. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason an adopted person must supply their adoption certificate when applying for a public services card; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48952/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): A Public Services Card may be issued to a person who has successfully completed a SAFE 2 identity registration. The person's Public Service Identity Dataset is verified as part of this process. Adopted people are treated in the same way as other individuals in terms of verification of identity. Name, date of birth, place of birth and mother's birth surname are generally verified from the birth certificate or, in the case of an adopted person, from an adoption certificate.

Generally, in the case of an adopted person, the details on the birth register will be different to those on the adoption register and not consistent with their current identity.

As my Department has access to the Irish Birth Register the above details can be verified without the need for the individual to physically present a birth certificate, providing that the record can be located on the Register.

However, in contrast, my Department does not have access to the Irish Adoption Register.

Accordingly, staff would not be aware of a customer's adoption status. In such circumstances the individual is asked to bring a copy of their adoption certificate. This requirement is stated clearly in SAFE 2 registration invitation letters and on my Department's website.

When a person presents for a SAFE 2 appointment without a birth certificate, and their birth registration details cannot be located on the Register, they are asked to contact the General Register Office to obtain same. This could be a birth certificate or an adoption certificate.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory)

574. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the way in which her Department is addressing the shortfall in pension payments to women retiring since 2012 after changes were made in calculating pension entitlements; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48967/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The current rate bands applying to the State pension contributory were introduced from September 2012, replacing previous rates introduced in 2000. The rate bands prior to 2000 were less generous, and the improved rate bands introduced in 2000 were a feature of the economic and political environment at that time. The economic crash changed the focus and while other payments were reduced as a result, the core rates of the pension, which many pensioners were solely dependent on, were maintained. Instead, the rates for people who had additional means and lesser PRSI contribution records were reduced.

The post-2012 rate bands more closely reflect the social insurance contributions history of a person than those in place between 2000 and 2012. The current rate bands still provide pensions to people which are not proportionate with their level of contribution. A person with only 20 years of contributions over nearly 50 years will still get an 85% contributory pension. Had all pensions been cut, regardless of means and contribution records, the hardest hit would have been pensioners with no additional income, those paid a State pension non-contributory, and widows and widowers living alone on only one pension payment.

People on the lower rate bands with other income, which meant they did not qualify for a non-contributory pension which is paid at a rate of over 95% of the contributory pension, are generally in a better financial position than those solely dependent on the non-contributory pension, as otherwise they could claim that payment instead. Changing these bands would give additional money to people who already have means. It is estimated that to revert to the previous bands from January 2018 would result in an annual cost of well over €70 million in 2018, and this annual cost would increase by an estimated €10-12 million each following year.

It is my intention to introduce a Total Contributions Approach to the calculation of the State Pension (Contributory) from 2020 onwards and I will bring forward proposals in this regard in the near future.

In the meantime, I have asked my officials to carefully examine approaches that may help to address the issue in relation to the averaging approach as it affects people with a short work period early in their career followed by a significant break to raise children, who retired after the 2012 changes but before the Total Contributions Approach has been implemented. We need to ensure that any proposed approach would not cause further anomalies or disadvantages to arise, or hinder the move to a Total Contributions Approach. We also need to determine, as best we can, the cost of any such approach and how that cost could be financed in the future. I would

like to re-emphasise that any change with a significant cost is unlikely to be viable before the provisions of Budget 2019 are in place.

Spending on State pensions has increased rapidly in recent decades. This year, the cost is €7.3 billion. This is estimated to increase by €1 billion every five years due to the increased number of pensioners. These projections mean that there are considerable sustainability and affordability challenges in the years ahead and we must start to address them now.

Accordingly, I want to ensure that any approach taken is fair and sustainable in the long term.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

575. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made on a carer's allowance application by a person (detail supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48983/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I confirm that my department received an application for carer's allowance from the person concerned on 10 April 2017. Carer's Allowance (CA) is a social assistance payment, made to persons who are providing full-time care and attention to people who have a disability such that they require that level of care and who satisfy a means test.

A person can be considered to be providing full-time care and attention where they are engaged in employment, self-employment or on training courses outside the home for a maximum of 15 hours per week, provided that they can show to the satisfaction of a deciding officer that adequate care has been provided for the care recipient in their absence.

The application for CA was disallowed on the grounds that person concerned was working outside the home for more than 15 hours per week and that full-time care and attention was not being provided.

The person concerned was notified on 24 July 2017 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

The person concerned requested a review of this decision and submitted additional evidence in support of her application. Following this and subsequent reviews the decision remained unchanged.

The person concerned requested a further review and submitted more detailed information on her hours of employment. Following a review of this information, CA was awarded to the person concerned on 17 November 2017, with effect from 13 April 2017 and the first payment will issue to her nominated bank account on 23 November 2017.

Arrears for the period 13 April 2017 to 22 November 2017 will issue shortly.

The person concerned was notified on 17 November 2017 of the revised decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance

576. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to the recent finding (details supplied) that the minimum essential standard of living cost for a single adult with vision impairment is €44.54 more than the cost for a member of the general fully sighted population; her plans with regard to reflecting this additional expenditure in disability payments for the visually impaired; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48987/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The recent report by the National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI) and Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice (VPSJ) on a minimum essential standard of living (MESL) for a single adult with vision impairment has been made available to my Department.

The research provides a useful addition to ongoing analysis by the Vincentian Partnership using their minimum essential budgets methodology. This broad approach estimates the level of income needed to meet an individual's / household's physical, psychological and social needs, and which is calculated by identifying the goods and services required by different household types in order to meet these minimum needs. The report's findings show that the cost of an MESL is estimated to be higher for a person with vision impairment than for members of the general population. Overall, it was estimated that the additional cost in 2016 for an individual with vision impairment was €44.54 more than the cost for a single adult in the main MESL (€241.22). I understand that the authors are conducting further work in this area in relation to the income and other supports available to persons with a vision impairment and it would be expected that this analysis would contribute further to the information available.

The Department provides a range of income support for people with a disability and their dependants. People with vision impairment who require income support can apply to my Department for a blind person's pension. There are currently some 1,280 people in receipt of a blind person's pension at a cost of some €13.5 million in 2017. Alternatively, the disability allowance payment can be claimed by a person with vision impairment which substantially restricts them in undertaking suitable employment. The current rate of payment for both the blind person's pension and the disability allowance is €193 per week for a single person. Budget 2018 provides an additional €5 per week for each of these payments, bringing the rate up to €198 per week next year.

Primary weekly social welfare payments are intended to enable recipients to meet their basic day-to-day income needs. While these payments make a very significant contribution to broader poverty and social inclusion goals, they are not designed to address some of the wider issues associated with the cost of disability. One of the difficulties of providing a cost of disability payment is that people with disabilities are not a homogeneous group and as such would have widely differing needs with the result that the extra costs of disability would not arise to the same extent in all cases.

However, some of these additional costs are addressed across schemes provided by a number of agencies such as the Health Service Executive and also the Revenue Commissioners through certain tax reliefs and other supports. For example, I understand that a person who is blind or who has impaired vision can claim from the Revenue Commissioners the blind tax credit potentially worth €1,650 per year for a single person. I also understand that the Health Service Executive operates a supplement scheme which is means-tested – the blind welfare allowance – for blind people receiving certain welfare payments, including the blind pension. The current rate of payment is €58.50 per week for a single person.

While my Department keeps all its schemes and supports under review, there are no specific plans to change income support payments for the visually impaired. Any further increases in the rates of payments to people with disabilities, including those with vision impairment, would have to be considered in the context of the annual budgetary process.

State Pensions Payments

577. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the pension being paid to a person (details supplied) is the correct amount; if the tax deductions are correct; and if an examination of the matter will be expedited. [48989/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned is in receipt of maximum rate of state pension (contributory), together with an increase for their qualified adult, also payable at maximum rate.

State pension (contributory) payments are not taxed but pension payments are regarded as income for income tax purposes. The income tax liability of a person depends on their overall financial circumstances. Any matters relating to the income tax affairs of the person concerned should be directed to the Office of the Revenue Commissioners.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Questions Nos. 578 and 579 answered with Question No. 564.

Fire Service Staff

580. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of retained firefighters who are in receipt of jobseeker's payments. [49000/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The identification of 'retained fire fighters' is dependent on the recipient informing the relevant IN-TREO office of their auxiliary profession.

On this basis, at the end of October 482 people who had identified themselves as a retained fire fighter were receiving a jobseeker's payment from my Department.

Maternity Leave

581. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an application for maternity leave for a person (details supplied) will be expedited. [49023/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Maternity benefit applications are processed in commencement date order and at present claims with a commencement date of 25 December 2017 are being processed.

The person concerned has submitted an application with a leave commencement date of 24 December 2017. This claim is already in process but cannot be finalised until confirmation of her UK contribution record is received. This record has been requested from the UK; once it is available a decision will be made and communicated to her.

Parliamentary Questions Costs

582. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the average costs associated with processing and answering written and oral parliamentary questions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49123/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) has always been committed to being as transparent and helpful as possible to all members of the Oireachtas. In this regard the Department has set up dedicated enquiry telephone lines and specific email addresses for each section in the Department solely for the purpose of dealing with queries from members of the Oireachtas in relation to individual social welfare cases/claims. This also helps reduce the costs of answering Parliamentary Questions (PQs).

DEASP receives one of the highest number of PQs of all Government departments. In 2017 to date, nearly 4,000 PQs were tabled to the Department. There were approximately 3,676 Written PQs and 316 Oral/Priority PQs. The majority of PQs refer to the status of claims by individuals in relation to the variety of schemes administered by the Department.

There are approximately 600 staff members of varying grades involved at some level in distributing, answering and submitting PQs for approval across the Department. The length of time spent on dealing with PQs can vary from a few minutes to a number of hours per week. As the processing of answering PQs is undertaken as part of the normal day to day work of the individual sections within the Department it is not possible to readily isolate the costs of processing PQs from the overall administrative costs of the Department.

Jobseeker's Allowance

583. **Deputy Maria Bailey** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason a person who is officially retired from the Department of Education and Skills, having completed the necessary 40 years' service for pension purposes and has been compelled to retire after 40 years' service is required to sign on for jobseeker's allowance even though the person is not actively seeking work; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49157/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): There is no statutory retirement age in the State, and the age at which employees retire is a matter for the contract of employment between them and their employers. Questions relating to the employment conditions, including retirement and pension arrangements, for public and civil servants are a matter for my colleague Pascal Donohoe T.D., Minister for Finance & Public Expenditure and Reform.

There is no obligation on a person to make a claim for any social welfare payment. Where a person exits the workforce before reaching State pension age they may apply for either the contribution based jobseeker's benefit or the means-tested jobseeker's allowance schemes.

Jobseeker's payments compensate for periods of involuntary unemployment only and for this reason social welfare legislation provides that all jobseekers must satisfy certain qualifying conditions in order to be entitled to an unemployment payment including being available for and genuinely seeking full-time work.

People in receipt of a jobseeker's payment must engage with my Department's activation measures and can face sanctions if they fail to do so. However, from January 2014 these criteria

were eased for people aged 62 and over, such that they are not obliged to engage with the activation process. They are still able to voluntarily avail of an array of supports, which are available from my Department if they wish to return to work, training or education.

Community Services Programme

584. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the percentage of community services programmes generating traded income of 30% or more; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49184/17]

585. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if it is policy to remove services and support from community services programmes which are unable to generate traded income of 30%; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49185/17]

586. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the socio-economic factors taken into consideration when granting or removing service and support for community services programmes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49186/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 584 to 586, inclusive, together.

The Community Services Programme (CSP) provides financial support to community companies that provide revenue generating services of a socially inclusive nature. The CSP works on a social-enterprise model. This means that it does not fully fund contract holders but requires that they generate revenue by charging fees or raising funds. All CSP recipients are obliged to meet these criteria. These social enterprises also remain responsible for their own budgets and financial liabilities.

It is not policy to remove services and support from community services programmes that are unable to generate traded income of 30% of overall annual turnover. Approximately 57% of all CSP supported enterprises meet the 30% guidance figure which, it should be noted, excludes fund-raising and donations.

CSP service providers are community businesses that operate using a social enterprise model of delivery, which means they are trying to become less dependent on state support. The defining characteristic of CSP services is that they are set up to provide social and economic value and are managed as going concerns with business and revenue targets set within a business plan. CSP investment is allocated through a co-funding approach, with a salary contribution provided towards the costs of employing a manager and/or a specified number of full time equivalent positions (FTEs) to community businesses that deliver services to, and create employment for, people from disadvantaged groups. Service providers are able to operate by generating sufficient traded income to cover their company and service operating costs (e.g. premises rent, vehicle costs, utilities, materials, etc.) as CSP support provides partial grant support towards the cost of each staffing position and does not cover operating costs.

Services must generate sufficient traded income to be viable and sustainable entities. Services that do not generate sufficient traded income are unlikely to be effective and risk the closure and loss of service to their local area. To identify and support organisations that are in difficulty, a review of each service provider's annual financial statements is undertaken by Pobal, who operate the programme on behalf of my Department. Any positive or negative trends in financial performance are noted. The figure of 30% of turnover for traded income provides

an early indicator of possible financial issues. It is also part of a 'rule of thumb' that includes CSP funding not being more than 50% of annual turnover. This acts as a guideline for organisations. Any decision to reduce or remove grant support is taken after a broader assessment of the contract holder in areas such as service performance, the need for each staff position and financial data. To this end, Pobal and my Department look at the contract holder's track record and performance. This includes an assessment of the capacity of work scheduled against the level of CSP allocation (including any spare capacity or under-utilisation in relation to the CSP funded positions in terms of the level of income generation) and whether it could be done under a relevant activation programme which, in some cases, can be much more effective and less of a cost to the organisation.

All CSP contract holders must periodically submit a business plan to Pobal for assessment. Pobal will then provide a recommendation to my Department for a decision on the issue of a future CSP contract. This business plan provides prospective new entrants and existing contract holders the opportunity to highlight relevant socio-economic information pertaining to their service and geographical area.

The purpose of the business plan is to encourage organisations to undertake a strategic review of their operations to ensure the services they provide match the continuing needs of the local population or sector of society being served. Secondly, as CSP support is sourced from public funds, a value for money determination is made. The information provided in the business plan is also necessary to demonstrate that CSP investment is meeting an evidenced need in a particular community. It is important for service providers to use available statistics such as the Pobal HP deprivation index in their business plan, supported by local research, to verify the need for the service and demonstrate that they meet the criteria of the programme. In summary, any decision to grant or remove CSP support does takes available socio-economic information into account.

I hope this clarifies the matters for the Deputy.

Invalidity Pension Eligibility

587. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a self-employed person who is paying class S PRSI and who is now incapable of working will be able to apply for invalidity pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49200/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Self-employed workers will be eligible to apply for invalidity pension from 1 December 2017. This is a major reform as self-employed people could have access to income support without having to go through a means test, if they become permanently incapable of work as a result of an illness or disability. The Department has commenced a national radio and print media campaign to ensure that self-employed people are aware of this significant development and to provide details of how to apply.

Since March 2017, self-employed people have access to the treatment benefit scheme which includes free eye and dental exams, and contributions towards the cost of hearing aids. This measure benefits over 300,000 self-employed workers and their dependants. From October 2017, treatment benefit entitlements have been extended so as to provide further dental and optical benefits for both the self-employed and employees.

I hope that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Dental Services

588. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if consideration is being given to give dental hygienists a dental treatment benefit contract in order to allow persons avail of a free scale and polish; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49207/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): In order to hold a contract under the Department's treatment benefit scheme, a practitioner must be entitled to operate in their own right. Dental hygienists cannot currently operate independently. Under the Irish Dental Council's code of practice, "Dental work carried out by a dental hygienist may only be carried out under the supervision of a registered dentist, who has first examined the patient and who has indicated to the dental hygienist the course of treatment to be provided." As a result, it is currently not possible for dental hygienists to hold a contract with this Department.

I understand that consideration is being given by the Department of Health to allow a range of health professionals, including dental hygienists, to operate in independent practice. This is under consideration as part of proposed new legislation to replace the Dentists Act 1985.

My Department is awaiting the outcome of these considerations.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Exceptional Needs Payments

589. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an exceptional needs payment will be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49214/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I refer to Parliamentary Question 48047-17. Following on from this PQ, application forms were sent to the person concerned by the designated person. According to the records of the Department these forms have not been returned and there has been no contact from the person concerned.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Eligibility

590. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will indicate eligibility for a carer's allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49216/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My department received an application for carers allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 12 December 2016.

The maximum rate of CA was awarded to him on 27 February 2017 and first payment issued to his nominated post office on 16 March 2017.

Arrears of allowance due from to 15 December 2016 to 15 March 2017 issued on 6 April

2017.

The person concerned was notified on 27 February 2017 of this decision, the reason for it and of his right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Employment Support Services

591. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if financial assistance can be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied) who wishes to undertake a carer's course; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49237/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): People engaging with the JobPath service receive intensive individual support to help overcome barriers on their journey back to full-time sustainable work.

Each person is assigned a personal advisor who assesses their skills, experience, challenges and work goals and agrees a personal progress plan (PPP) that includes a schedule of activities, including relevant training and educational programmes.

There are no barriers to any participants pursuing training, including further education and training courses, providing they are relevant to the agreed PPP.

Where a course is not available through an existing funded provision a client can be provided with financial assistance to secure suitable alternative training. This process is managed by the Job Path provider on a case by case basis.

In the case of the customer mentioned above, the JobPath provider has advised my Department that they have already sourced a fully funded course in her preferred area of work with the local Education and Training Board and will discuss with her at her next scheduled appointment.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Staff

592. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason that clerical officers within her Department have had to take on extra responsibilities in 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49242/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Clerical Officers in my Department are liable for any duties appropriate to their grade. Subject to this, and given the ongoing changes in the delivery of services by the Department, staff members at all grades may be required to undertake different work, either in their original business unit or in another business unit on reassignment.

Social Welfare Payments Administration

593. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her views on whether the business object model implementation, BOMi, system within

her Department is sufficiently accurate in its calculations; the procedures in place to assess the information inputted into BOMi; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49243/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Business Object Model Implementation (BOMi) system is my Departments primary modern technology platform for processing claims and payments across all schemes. The BOMi system has issued payments to customers of my Department from 2013 to date.

Accuracy of BOMi system calculations is achieved through the adoption of key measures that are built into every part of the system.

A comprehensive quality assurance process is in place to ensure that software based calculations performed by BOMi systems are accurate. This process involves multiple phases of system, user acceptance and regression testing prior to implementation of each software release. Testing phases are supported by a very large suite of automated tests which are constantly updated. Representatives of each business area also participate in a rigorous end-to-end acceptance test prior to each software release.

To further ensure accuracy of information, access to input data on BOMi system is controlled by role based security and only Officers assigned with the appropriate role can enter data on BOMi. All accesses to the BOMi system and all updates to the data therein, are recorded and are audited.

All aspects of the BOMi system - including system processes, operating procedures and information accuracy are also subject to regular independent audits.

JobPath Data

594. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of complaints made about participation in or interaction with the JobPath programme, by county, in tabular form; her plans to review the operation of this programme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49244/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): To date 131,986 Jobseekers have been referred to the service, with 421 complaints received in total – 0.32 per cent. 305 of these were related to Customer Service, 61 involved policy issues, 40 related to client not wishing to engage, 8 Data Protection queries and 7 related to Legislation.

As of 10 November, 366 of these complaints have been resolved to a satisfactory level; the remainder (55) are being investigated at present.

A breakdown of the number of complaints on a county by county basis is not currently available.

Each JobPath provider has a comprehensive Complaints Procedure which is advertised in every location. The procedure contains levels of escalation whereby complaints are dealt with at the appropriate level of authority and ensuring that matters are fully addressed. In the event a customer has availed of this procedure but remains dissatisfied with the response to their complaint, they may request my department to carry out a review.

The JobPath providers log and record all complaints they receive and submit the total twice monthly to my Department. Likewise, my Department log and record all complaints received directly in respect of the JobPath service and forward them to the JobPath provider in line with

their contract obligations.

JobPath is assessed on an on-going basis through regular inspections and performance reporting.

The inspections monitor compliance with the service level agreement and the contract generally, including the suitability and standard of accommodation, staffing levels, Irish language compliance, customer service and customer feedback, checking the client's Personal Progression Plan, Review Meetings compliance, the checking of Job Sustainment Fee Evidence Types and Exit Plans.

To date, 46 on-site inspections have been carried out at provider service delivery locations, 9 of which were un-notified.

My Department has begun publishing a performance report for the service on a quarterly basis. The most recent report was published on the Department's website in June and can be accessed at - http://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/JobPath_Performance_Report2017.pdf.

It is intended that a full econometric evaluation of the service will commence in early 2018.

In addition my Department commissions regular, independent, Customer Satisfaction Surveys to ensure that services are being delivered satisfactorily.

The outcomes of the customer satisfaction survey, also published in January, indicate that jobseekers are having a positive experience with the service. For example, jobseekers felt that they were receiving a good service (with 71 to 86% satisfaction vs. 5 – 8% dissatisfaction) and that the staff of the service made them feel valued (90+ %). Finally, the Department intends to commission a full econometric evaluation of the service towards the end of 2017, when a sufficient number of jobseekers will have completed their engagement period with the service and when a robust set of outcome data will be available to facilitate the analysis.

I trust this clarifies the matters for the Deputy.

JobPath Programme

595. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the way in which €71.2 million was allocated to and-or payments were made to contractors in the context of the JobPath scheme since 2015 to date in 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49257/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): JobPath is a payment by results model and all set-up and day-to-day operational costs are borne by the companies. The companies are paid on the basis of performance and with the exception of the initial registration fee; payments are made only when a client has achieved sustained employment. The registration fee may be claimed once a jobseeker has developed a Personal Progression Plan (PPP). Job Sustainment Fees (JSF) are payable for each 13 week period of sustained employment, up to a maximum of 52 weeks (i.e. 4 payments).

Consequently the contractors will not be able to fully recover their costs unless they help a sufficient number of jobseekers to secure employment and then support them to sustain that employment over a 12 month period.

The overall cost of JobPath will be determined by the number of people who participate in the programme and the number who get sustainable jobs.

The total amount paid in fees from the outset of the service in July 2015 up to the end of September 2017 is €71.2m, however it is not intended to publish the individual payments to the JobPath companies as these are commercially sensitive and to do so would place the State at a disadvantage both in terms of the contracts now in place and any future procurement that may be undertaken.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

JobPath Programme

596. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to set out the number of persons who have had sanctions imposed on their payments in the context of the JobPath scheme since inception to date in 2017; the number of persons disqualified from receiving payments for the same period; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49258/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As the Deputy will be aware, JobPath is a service that supports people who are long-term unemployed and those most at risk of becoming long-term unemployed to secure and sustain paid employment.

The service commenced operations in mid-2015, and reached full State-wide delivery of the service in July 2016.

In order to qualify for a jobseeker payment, a person must meet certain conditions, including the requirement to be available for, capable of and genuinely seeking full-time work. A range of sanctions, including disqualification, closure or disallowance of the jobseeker claim, may be imposed where a client fails to meet the stated conditions. A jobseeker claim may be reviewed at any time in order to establish continued entitlement.

Additionally, in relation to activation services, legislation provides that further sanctions/penalties in the form of reduced payments may be imposed by a Deciding Officer where clients fail, without good cause, to comply with activation measures. Activation measures include the requirement to attend group or individual meetings with case officers and/or avail of suitable education, training or development opportunities, or specified employment programmes, which are considered appropriate to a person's circumstances.

Where a person continues to fail, without good cause, to comply with activation measures, while on a penalty rate, he/she may be disqualified from receiving the personal rate of payment. The normal rate of payment may be reinstated at any time, if the jobseeker complies, as requested, with activation measures.

It is important to note that the rules and processes for the application of a reduced rate of payment are the same across all of the Department's activation services, whether they are delivered directly by the Department's own Intreo service or through its contracted services such as the Local Employment Service (LES) or JobPath service.

Only a departmental official - and not contractor's staff - can make a decision to apply a reduced rate of payment. Contractors have no role in the decision making process. The process with regard to such decisions includes written/verbal warnings from a departmental official and an opportunity for the jobseeker to re-engage with the services prior to the application of a reduced payment rate.

Up to the end of October 2017 approximately 9,000, or 6.9% of the total 129,000 clients who engaged with the JobPath service between July 2015 and October 2017 have had, at some point, a penalty rate applied to their payment: some of these clients may have had the penalty rate applied after finishing their engagement period with the JobPath service, so the actual numbers who have had a penalty rate applied while with the JobPath service will be lower.

To be clear, the application of penalty rates is entirely a matter for my department and officials involved will take into account all relevant factors including where appropriate non-engagement with externally provided activation services. In this regard, while I am happy to advise the Deputy on penalty rates applied to those who have engaged with the JobPath service, the factors to be considered in applying a penalty rate precludes me from making a definitive statement that the sole context involved would have been non engagement with JobPath.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

597. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied) will be expedited. [49327/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I confirm that my department received an application for carer's allowance from the person concerned on 18 September 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.

Illness Benefit Eligibility

598. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to set out the savings to the State annually when access to a sick leave payment changed from three days to six days; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49333/17]

599. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to outline her plans to make changes to the number of days off work required for a person to access a sick leave payment in view of the fact that the current situation leaves a person exposed in the event of sickness; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49334/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 598 and 599 together.

The projected full-year annual savings of extending the number of "waiting days" for Illness Benefit from three to six was €22 million when the measure was introduced in 2014.

I have no current plans to change the number of waiting days further. In the event that a person experiences financial difficulty during the waiting period, he/she may apply for the means tested supplementary welfare allowance scheme through the local Intreo service.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

600. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to explain the reason a person's actual PRSI contributions in the year the person reaches 66 years of age are excluded in the calculation of yearly average PRSI contributions for the purposes of the State pension, contributory; the benefit the person receives for those contributions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49370/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): State pension (contributory) entitlement is calculated by the 'yearly average' system, where the total number of contributions paid or credited is divided by the number of years of the person's insurance record. The maximum rate of pension is payable where a person has a yearly average of at least 48, and there are banded entitlements below that.

In calculating the yearly average, the number of full-rate contributions paid and/or credited is counted up to the end of the tax/contribution year before reaching pension age (66), and this total is divided by the number of tax/contribution years in their record up to that point. For example, if someone's record was from 1972, and they turned 66 on 1 July 2016, it would be the contributions they paid or were credited in the period to 31 December 2015, divided by 44 years (i.e. every year from 1972 to 2015). Taking the subsequent period into account to calculate the yearly average could only increase their contributions by a maximum of 26 contributions, and if their yearly average was already higher than that, this would have the effect of reducing their yearly average, rather than increasing it, as the amended total would be divided by 45. Given the fact that in most cases, this would result in a lower rather than a higher yearly average, it is to most people's advantage that the rule should apply as it does now.

However, the Deputy should note that the contributions can still be used to satisfy other pension conditions (notably the requirement to have a minimum of 520 contributions paid to qualify for State pension contributory).

It should be remembered that PRSI does not just fund the State pension contributory and enable people to qualify for that payment, but also working age benefits before they retire.

I do hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Supervisors

601. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to outline the position regarding the provision of a pension scheme for community employment scheme supervisors; when she expects this issue to be resolved; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49371/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Community Employment (CE) scheme supervisors are employees of private companies in the community and voluntary sector. 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, it should be noted that the issue of CE supervisors' pension provision is currently being examined by a Community Sector High Level Forum, chaired by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. My Department is represented on this group, as are IM-

PACT, SIPTU, Pobal and other relevant Government Departments. I understand their work is ongoing and that the Forum is due to meet again on 23 November 2017.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Public Services Card Data

602. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to set out the number of private companies that have access to social protection personal files and-or records of citizens in the context of the public services card; if she will provide a list of those companies; the reason each company has access to those records or files; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49380/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): In general, private companies do not have access to social protection data.

Section 263 of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act, 2005 (as amended) sets out the legal basis for the issuance and use of the Public Services Card (PSC). Use of the PSC is restricted to public service bodies specified in law (known as specified bodies) and their agents (i.e., organisations working on their behalf or performing one of their public functions under contract).

Section 262 of the Act provides that Public Service Identity data (i.e. the personal data held on the PSC) can only be used by a specified body or its agent for authenticating the identity of an individual with whom it has a transaction and in performing its public functions insofar as those functions relate to the person concerned.

While it is a matter for each specified body how the legislation is implemented for individual services, each of them and their agents are, in all cases, required to process and store data in accordance with the Data Protection Acts.

In the context of services provided by my own Department:

- the PSC is produced in Ireland by an Irish-registered company called BCS. It was a condition of the award of contract that all data and related services provision and operation be provided on-site in Ireland and subject to the jurisdiction of the Irish courts. Once PSCs are personalised (i.e., the data is put on the card), the data used to so personalise them is not retained by BCS but is destroyed as an automatic part of the personalisation process in accordance with advice provided by the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner.

- An Post is the only private organisation that reads the magnetic stripe on the PSC for the purposes of accessing the PPS Number. The PPS number is used by the Post Office to make welfare payments to customers in post offices.

- The Free Travel version of the PSC contains a contactless chip. This contactless chip allows the card to be used across the National Transport Authority's Integrated Ticketing System commonly known as LEAP. The application is designed to only interact with a ticketing system reader deployed by the National Transport Authority. No personal information on a customer is made available to any transport operator either inside or outside of the jurisdiction when the Public Services Card is used to interact with the ticketing system.

I hope this clarifies the matter for Deputy.

Disability Allowance Appeals

603. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a payment will issue for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49390/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Following a successful appeal, this lady has been awarded disability allowance with effect from 14 December 2016. The first payment will be made to her chosen payment method on 29 November 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.

Social Welfare Appeals Status

604. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will issue for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49391/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all of the available evidence, has decided to disallow the appeal of the person concerned by way of a summary decision. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officer's decision.

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

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

605. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in respect of a disability allowance application; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49392/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Following a successful appeal, this gentleman has been awarded disability allowance with effect from 1 February 2017. The first payment will be made to his chosen payment method on 22 November 2017.

Arrears of payment due, issued by cheque to this gentleman on 16 November 2017.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Wind Energy Guidelines

606. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Govern-

ment to state the expected start date of the public consultation process on wind energy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48710/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My predecessor as Minister, in conjunction with my colleague, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, announced an emerging “preferred draft approach” to the review of the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines in June 2017. A copy of the announcement is available on my Department’s website at the following link:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/guidelines/wind-energy/coveney-and-naughten-announce-key-development-review-wind-energy-development-guidelines>.

As part of the overall review, a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) will be undertaken on the “proposed draft approach” to the revised Guidelines before they come into effect. This is in accordance with the requirements of EU Directive 2001/24/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, the SEA Directive. SEA is a process by which environmental considerations are required to be fully integrated into the preparation of plans and programmes which act as frameworks for development consent, prior to their final adoption, with public consultation as part of that process. It is envisaged that the public consultation as part of the SEA process will be undertaken in early 2018.

When finalised, the revised Guidelines will be issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Planning authorities, and, where applicable, An Bord Pleanála must have regard to guidelines issued under Section 28 in the performance of their functions generally under the Planning Acts.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

607. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government to set out the number of persons under 18 years of age with severe physical disabilities who are living in the family home in which the family is in receipt of HAP or RAS payments in each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48758/17]

642. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 518 of 14 of November 2017 if persons with a social housing need remain entitled to RAS; if local authorities have a statutory obligation to approve a person for RAS once a landlord who is willing to enter the RAS has been identified; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49329/17]

643. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 518 of 14 November 2017 if the €134 million provided in budget 2018 to support a further 600 new transfers under RAS is for new RAS tenancies or for tenancies transferring out of RAS; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49330/17]

644. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 518 of 14 November 2017 if all sections of the legislation underpinning RAS have been commenced; the legal entitlement of persons in need of social housing support to access RAS; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49331/17]

645. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local

Government to outline the differences between RAS tenancies post-1 April 2011 and HAP tenancies; the differences between RAS tenancies that were in place prior to 1 April 2011 and HAP tenancies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49332/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 607 and 642 to 645, inclusive, together.

Section 229 of the Local Government Act 2001(as amended) provides local authorities with the statutory authority to enter into a contract with any person in respect of any matter arising in relation to the functions of the local authority. This provision allows local authorities to enter into contracts with property owners in order to secure properties for use as social housing support. The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 gives legislative recognition to rental accommodation availability agreements as a form of social housing support. Consequently, since 1 April 2011, all Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) tenants are considered to be in receipt of social housing support and should not generally remain on housing waiting lists for new applicants for social housing.

Chapter 4 of Part 2 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, relating to rental accommodation arrangements, has not been commenced to date because its commencement requires that section 31 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, as amended, is commenced. Section 31, which provides for the introduction of a national framework for social housing rents, has not been commenced. Considerable work has been carried out by my Department in developing a draft framework for a harmonisation of the approach to be taken by local authorities in regard to various aspects of rent schemes. These proposals were examined further in the light of the broader commitment given in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness to review the disparate systems of differential rents for social housing in place across local authorities. The review will be completed shortly.

In recognition that pre-2011 RAS tenants may have had reasonable expectations in regard to retaining access to traditional local authority rented accommodation, guidance issued by the Housing Agency in 2011 recommended that there should be a special transfer pathway provided for such RAS tenants to other forms of social housing support. The arrangement effectively allows these households to be designated as a ‘transfer’ applicant and to maintain their position for allocation as they had on the main waiting list. Post 2011 RAS tenant may seek a transfer to other forms of Social Housing Support in the normal manner.

With the commencement of the provisions in the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014, the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is considered to be a social housing support. Ministerial Directions were issued during the pilot phase of the scheme to ensure that, should they so choose, HAP tenants could avail of a move to other forms of social housing support through a transfer list. With the completion of the HAP roll-out and the ending of the scheme’s pilot phase on 1 March 2017, a further Ministerial Direction was issued, instructing local authorities to continue to offer HAP tenants access to other forms of social housing through the transfer list. The practical operation of transfer lists is a matter for each local authority to manage, on the basis of their scheme of letting priorities. The setting of such schemes is a reserved function of the local authority and, as such, is a matter for the elected members.

The assessment of applications for social housing support, and management of the lists of qualified households, including the recording of data on the number of applications refused, is the responsibility of the relevant local authority in accordance with the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and associated regulations. The assessment of individual applicants for social housing support is a matter for the individual local authority, and each application is examined on a case by case basis. It is a matter for the local authority to determine the hous-

ing solution that best meets the needs of the applicant, while taking into account the resources and type of housing available to the authority. Once a household has been deemed eligible for social housing support, it is a matter for the local authority to examine the suite of social housing supports available, including the HAP scheme and the Rental Accommodation Scheme, to determine the most appropriate form of support for that household. My Department does not have a breakdown of the number of households supported by RAS or HAP which include people with disabilities.

My Department has made resources available under a range of schemes to local authorities which allow them to seek the most appropriate housing solution available to meet the housing needs of those households presenting. In a situation where a tenant has been deemed eligible for RAS, and the landlord (providing the property meets the necessary standards, is registered with the RTB and is tax compliant etc.) is also willing to enter a RAS agreement, there is no obstacle to the authority progressing such an application.

I have provided €134.3 million in Budget 2018 to support the cost of RAS. Monies are provided on an Exchequer neutral basis to meet the costs of persons transferring from the Rent Supplement (RS) Scheme to the RAS. This funding will go towards supporting 600 additional RAS tenancies in 2018 and the ongoing costs of the 19,900 RAS contracts estimated to be in place at end 2017.

I continue to keep the RAS and HAP schemes under review. However, I am generally satisfied with the operation of both schemes and I see them as important tools in meeting the ambitious targets set under Rebuilding Ireland.

Septic Tank Grants

608. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government to set out the number of applicants to date for the domestic wastewater treatment scheme for domestic septic tanks, as announced by the previous Government in 2013; the number of grants that were approved for individual applications in County Donegal; the number that are awaiting approval; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49051/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (Financial Assistance) Regulations 2013, a copy of which is available in the Oireachtas library, brought into operation a grant scheme to assist with the cost of remediation of septic tanks and domestic waste water treatment systems which are deemed, following inspection under the Environmental Protection Agency's National Inspection Plan, to require repair or upgrading. The grant scheme ensures that the limited financial resources available are targeted towards householders, particularly those on lower incomes, who incur expenditure directly as a result of the implementation of the Water Services (Amendment) Act 2012.

The Regulations provide that, subject to the applicant meeting all qualification criteria, a local authority may pay a grant to a person who is required, following an inspection, to undertake repairs or upgrades to, or replacement of, a septic tank or other domestic waste water treatment system. Details of grants paid for domestic wastewater systems (including septic tanks) from January 2014 to November, 2017 are published on my Department's website at the following link:

http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/septic_tanks_grants_paid_2014-2017_14_nov_2017.pdf.

Householders who do not meet the eligibility criteria for the grant under the aforementioned Regulations and who wish to remediate or upgrade their on-site treatment systems may qualify for relief under the Home Renovation Incentive (HRI) Scheme introduced pursuant to Section 5 of the Finance (No. 2) Act 2013. The HRI Scheme covers main residence repairs, renovations and improvements, including the repair or replacement of septic tanks. The Scheme is administered by the Revenue Commissioners and full details are published on the Revenue Commissioners' website at www.revenue.ie.

As can be seen from the aforementioned figures, the total number of grants approved for individual applications in Co. Donegal was six in 2015 with a total amount of €15,281.26 paid in grants. There are no applications presently awaiting approval for Co. Donegal.

Planning Issues

609. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government to outline his plans to amend legislation on planning applications for companies that have been shown to engage in tax avoidance or poor building practices; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49151/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Section 35 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, enables planning authorities to refuse - subject to certain limitations - planning applications by any person who has not previously complied with a planning permission, with conditions attached to a permission, or who has previously carried out unauthorised development.

In the context of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2016 which is presently progressing through the Oireachtas, I have proposed a number of amendments to further strengthen the provisions of the 2000 Act. In this regard, section 11 of the Bill, as amended during consideration by the Dáil Select Committee, proposes to amend section 34 of the 2000 Act to require planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála, in deciding on planning applications and appeals, to have regard to previous developments by the applicant which have not been satisfactorily completed and also to any previous convictions against the applicant for non-compliance with the 2000 Act, the Building Control Act 2007 or the Fire Services Act 1981.

I have also tabled for consideration during the current Dáil Report Stage of the Bill an amendment to further strengthen the existing section 35 provisions on past performance to enable planning authorities to refuse planning permission in respect of proposed new developments, where a person has previously operated under a particular company name which has left estates unfinished and who subsequently applies for planning permission for a new development under a different company name.

As the overall purpose of the 2000 Act is to provide for proper planning and sustainable development and protection of the environment, it would not be appropriate to amend the Act to require planning authorities or the Board to have regard to matters outside the scope of the planning code, such as an applicant's record of tax compliance, when deciding on planning applications and appeals.

Local Authority Housing Rents

610. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the national rent scheme will be introduced to County Waterford; and if he will

make a statement on the matter. [48739/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): As the Deputy will be aware, the setting of social housing rents is a matter for each individual local authority.

Section 31 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, as amended, provided for the introduction of a national framework for social housing rents. Considerable work has been carried out by my Department in developing a draft framework for a harmonisation of the approach to be taken by local authorities in regard to various aspects of rent schemes. These proposals were examined further in the light of the broader commitment given in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness to review the disparate systems of differential rents for social housing in place across local authorities. This review will be completed shortly.

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

611. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government to outline his plans for the introduction of a new affordable housing scheme to assist those on modest incomes to buy a home; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48741/17]

627. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government to outline the options available for affordable housing for persons not eligible for social housing; the way in which to access these options; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49025/17]

629. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government to outline his plans to introduce an affordable housing scheme; the timeframe for its introduction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49046/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 611, 627 and 629 together.

The Government recognises the housing affordability pressures faced by households with low to moderate income, particularly in parts of the country where housing costs are highest. Therefore, housing affordability has been examined by my Department, in consultation with the Housing Agency, local authorities and other stakeholders as part of the targeted review of Rebuilding Ireland. The examination was carried out under the generally accepted premise that housing is deemed affordable where households, particularly low- or moderate-income households, are paying no more than a third of their disposable income on meeting their accommodation needs.

Through the Rebuilding Ireland programme, Government policy is clearly focused on increasing housing supply, particularly the supply of homes at more affordable price points. Recent housing activity reports, available on www.rebuildingireland.ie, show that strong supply-side measures introduced under Rebuilding Ireland are beginning to have a positive impact, with all output indicators showing positive upward trends:

- Planning permissions are up 49%: 19,246 new homes were granted planning permission in the year to end June;

- Commencement Notices are up by 49%: notices for 17,323 new homes nationwide were submitted in the year to end September; and

- ESB connections to the National Grid are up 26%, at 17,958 homes nationally in the year to end September, 8,177 of which are in the Greater Dublin Area.

Regarding those most challenged in terms of affordability, there were 91,600 households on the social housing waiting list in 2016. The Government is committed to meeting this need and that is why I have increased the overall target for new social housing delivery by 2021 under Rebuilding Ireland from 47,000 to 50,000 homes, with the total ring-fenced investment increasing from €5.35 billion to over €6 billion to 2021. In order to meet the overall social housing need, there is also a target to deliver 84,000 Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) tenancies. Over 19,000 households had their needs met in 2016, with a further 21,000 such supports due to be delivered in 2017.

The Government is also committed to ensuring there is a supply of affordable homes. A range of measures have been taken, for example, planning reforms to provide flexibility to deliver viable housing schemes and apartment developments in the right locations, and the provision of funding to service housing lands through the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF), to deliver new homes that are more viable and more affordable than would otherwise be the case.

In Budget 2018, the Government has removed significant obstacles to building more homes, more quickly, and at more affordable prices by:

- Investing more in direct house-building by the State;
- Removing the Capital Gains Tax incentive to hold on to residential land;
- Escalating penalties for land hoarding; and
- Providing a new, more affordable finance vehicle for builders through House Building Finance Ireland (HBFi).

In addition, as announced in the Budget, I am providing funding of €25 million, over 2018 and 2019, to unlock local authority-owned lands specifically for affordable housing, using models such as co-operative housing initiatives which have already proven to be successful but are now needed at greater scale. The criteria for accessing this new fund are currently being considered by my Department and I expect to be in a position to announce details in the coming weeks.

Residential Tenancies Board Data

612. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government to set out by county the number of persons registered under the Residential Tenancies Board. [48759/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department does not hold or collate the data referred to by the Deputy in relation to the number of persons registered with the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) on a county basis.

The Clerk of the Dáil has requested that arrangements be put in place to facilitate the provision of information by State Bodies to members of the Oireachtas. Following the issue of Circular LG (P)05/16 on 20 September 2016 from my Department, the RTB has set up a dedicated email address for this purpose, at OireachtasMembersQueries@rtb.ie.

Residential Tenancies Board

613. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government to set out the level of funding from the Residential Tenancies Board to Wicklow County Council in each of the years 2010 to 2016 and to date in 2017. [48760/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Strategy for the Rental Sector, published in December 2016, set out a series of measures to be introduced to ensure the quality of private rental accommodation by strengthening the applicable standards and improving the inspection and enforcement systems.

On 1 July 2017, updated regulatory standards, the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2017, came into effect. These Regulations focus on tenant safety and include new measures covering heating appliances, carbon monoxide and window safety. In August, my Department published a guidance document to assist and support local authorities in implementing the new Regulations.

All landlords have a legal obligation to ensure that their rented properties comply with these Regulations. Responsibility for the enforcement of the Regulations rests with the relevant local authority, supported by a dedicated stream of funding provided from a portion of the proceeds of tenancy registration fees, collected by the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB).

Since the establishment of the RTB, over €34 million has been paid to local authorities to assist them in the performance of their functions under the Housing Acts, including the inspection of rented accommodation. Over 185,000 inspections were carried out during this period. The Department offers a subvention to local authorities to carry out inspection of properties under the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations. Funding is currently dispersed on the basis of €100 per inspection carried out and €50 per follow-up inspection which achieves compliance.

Over the five years from 2010 to the end of 2014, a total of €442,115 was provided to Wicklow County Council for inspection purposes; €107,918 in 2010, €134,325 in 2011, €87,972 in 2012, €75,300 in 2013 and €36,600 in 2014. Pending the completion of ongoing engagement with Wicklow County Council in relation to its inspection and enforcement function, no funding has been provided to the Council in respect of 2015, 2016 or 2017.

Local Authority Expenditure

614. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government to outline the purpose of bodies (details supplied); the reason each local authority is required to pay funds to these organisations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48761/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): The Association of Irish Local Government (AILG) is a networking, policy development and training resource for the elected members of Ireland's local authorities. The Local Authority Members Association (LAMA) acts as a body for the representation of the interests of elected members of local authorities.

Section 225 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended, provides that a local authority may hold membership of an association of local authorities. Section 226 of the Act provides that each elected member of a local authority may in his or her own right hold membership of

LAMA. The Act provides that each local authority may make annual contributions to the funds of the AILG and LAMA. The decision to hold or to cease to hold membership of the AILG is a reserved function of the elected members of each local authority.

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) was established under the Local Government Act 1991 (Regional Assemblies) (Establishment) Order 2014. The functions and powers of regional assemblies are as set out under Part 3 of the Order. Article 57(11) of the Order provides that the expenses of a regional assembly incurred in accordance with its adopted budget shall be refunded to the assembly by the constituent local authorities within its regional area and in proportion to the populations of their respective functional areas.

Brexit Negotiations

615. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the preparations made in his Department in the event of no agreement being reached between the United Kingdom and the European Union on the terms of the UK's exit from the EU; if such preparations involve the drawing up of detailed and specific contingency plans in the event of a hard Brexit and a trade regime based on WTO tariffs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48780/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): As Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade with special responsibility for Brexit, Minister Cooney has responsibility for co-ordinating the whole-of-Government response to Brexit. In this capacity, he is working closely with his colleagues across Government to address the many challenges resulting from Brexit. This co-operation also involves the relevant State Agencies.

Work at Cabinet level is being prepared through cross-Departmental co-ordination structures. These represent a frequent and active channel through which all relevant Departments are providing their research, analysis and overall policy input to the Government's wider response to Brexit, including its priorities for the ongoing Article 50 negotiations between the EU and the UK.

As the outcome of the negotiations is not yet known, an important focus of the planning and preparation being undertaken through these structures is on deepening the Government's analysis and understanding of the exact consequences of a range of different possible scenarios. This represents an intensification of efforts to build on the Government's contingency planning.

My Department's priorities have, primarily, a domestic focus and the potential impact of agreement not being reached between the European Union and the United Kingdom on matters such as trade regimes and tariffs are not considered likely to greatly affect the Department's main areas of activity. However, my Department continues to work closely with other Departments through the structures established, monitoring the progress of the negotiations and responding as appropriate.

Departmental Staff Training

616. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the cost of providing external coaching and-or training services for staff development in his Department over the past five years and to date in 2017, by cost per year and in tabular form; the company that delivered the training courses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48809/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

The cost to my Department in providing external coaching and or training services for the years 2012 to 2016 and to date in 2017 is set out in the table. The providers of these courses comprise a wide range of educational institutes including but not limited to:

- Universities – TCD, UCD, DCU, UCC, NUIM, NUIG, UL.
- Other third level institutions: NCI, DIT, CMIT, IT Carlow, LIT.
- Other training providers: the IPA, PAI, Trigraph, IBEC, Irish Times Training, Carr Communications, CMG, Tiger Consulting, Beacon, BT.

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Annual Spend	€399,329.79	€313,733.55	€353,743.28	€332,528.36	€294,791.17	€325,899.00
						(To date)

Homeless Persons Data

617. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will provide a bibliography of all sources used to arrive at the conclusion that homeless figures here are low by international standards as per his recent public statement. [48827/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I have consistently indicated that the current level of homelessness is unacceptable and that it is essential that we continue to make every possible effort to address this. Nevertheless, in order to ensure that we are designing and implementing policy supports that are compassionate and effective, and in order to get a better understanding of which responses are working and which are not, international comparisons must be made. It is because of this very practice that we have moved to introduce Housing First here in Ireland. In this way we can better meet the needs of people who are experiencing a very traumatic time in their lives, by looking to other practices as well as our own and adopting the best response.

When commenting on comparisons between countries, my focus is on countries that are broadly similar in socio-economic and cultural terms, without any reference to developing countries where homelessness is often a major societal issue. Furthermore my comments are based upon the understanding that homelessness means people sleeping rough or those residing in emergency accommodation for homeless persons – i.e. ‘rooflessness’ and ‘houselessness’ – rather than incorporating all categories of housing exclusion, such as individuals living in overcrowded housing or adult children living with their parents; such individuals would be included in housing authorities’ waiting lists if approved for social housing supports. It is important that this separation is made.

There are a number of sources that indicate that the rate of homelessness per capita is higher on a pro-rata basis across most European countries than it is in Ireland. This assessment is evident in an OECD report published in July 2017, and while it does state that it should not be used as a league table, it does show trends in those countries presented, which are useful when analysed against our own. One of the most comprehensive EU comparisons ever carried out which was published by FEANTSA (European Federation of National Associations Working with the Homeless) in 2014, found Ireland to have one of the lowest rates of homelessness among the Member States analysed.

Of course, direct international comparisons cannot be precise because of the availability, quality and consistency of homeless data at the international level. Nevertheless, going beyond

these reports, both England (Department of Community and Local Government) and Scotland (Scottish Government) produce homeless statistics, which are available online, that are sufficiently similar to Irish statistics in terms of timeliness, quality and categorisation to allow direct comparisons be readily made in relation to those in emergency accommodation. An analysis of the latest statistics from both those jurisdictions demonstrates that a significantly higher number of households are accommodated in temporary arrangements in England and Scotland than is the case here in Ireland.

As indicated earlier, irrespective of international comparisons, I remain clear that the level of homelessness in this country is unacceptable and addressing it will continue to be a top priority for me and the Government.

Housing Data

618. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount paid in each of the years 2007 to 2016 and to date in 2017 to housing authorities and local authorities for the provision of dwellings, including houses, flats, maisonettes and hostels by the authorities; the amount paid for the improvement or reconstruction of dwellings provided by the authorities; the amount paid for the acquisition of land for the provision of dwellings, by location, by year and in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48919/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The information sought in respect of the funding provided over the period 2007 to 2017 is set out in the table. The figures encompass funding for the provision of social housing by local authorities and approved housing bodies, including land costs, and also the funding provided for the full range of stock improvement, energy efficiency, adaptation and regeneration works carried out over the period in question.

The breakdown of the data by programme and by local authority over the 10 year period is not readily available, and its compilation would involve a disproportionate amount of time and work.

2007 €m	2008 €m	2009 €m	2010 €m	2011 €m	2012 €m	2013 €m	2014 €m	2015 €m	2016 €m	2017 (to date)€m
1,288	1,435	1,126	799	471	385	287	292	397	486	477

Departmental Communications

619. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the domain names registered to or owned by his Department or through a third party company. [48946/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Details of the Domain Names registered to or owned by my Department or through a third party company are set out in the Table.

Domain Name
activecitizen.ie
activecitizenship.ie
bainistiochtdeigeandalaimora.ie

Domain Name
biodiversity.ie
boundarycommittee.ie
checktheregister.ie
comhshaol.ie
constituency-commission.ie
consultations.environ.ie
electoralcommission.ie
electoral-commission.ie
environ.ie
environmentshare.ie
fireireland.ie
Firesafetyweek.ie
hap.ie
ireland2040.ie
irishmeteorologicalservice.com
irishmeteorologicalservice.eu
irishmetservice.com
irishmetservice.eu
irishspatialstrategy.com
irishspatialstrategy.ie
lgreturnsuat.ie
lgreturns.ie
majoremergencymanagement.ie
mem.ie
met.ie
meteireann.com
met-eireann.com
meteireann.eu
met-eireann.eu
meteireann.ie
meteireann.info
meteireann.net
met-eireann.net
meteireann.org
met-eireann.org
meteoalarm.ie
metweb.ie
MyPlan.ie
nationalparks.ie
natureconservation.ie
naturereserves.ie
noac.ie
northmidlandseducationcentre.ie
Npad.ie

Domain Name
NPF.ie
nss.ie
nuclear.ie
presidentialelection.ie
rebuildingireland.ie
refcom.ie
referendum.ie
saoranachgniomhach.ie
seandalaiocht.ie
unfinishedhousing.ie
waterservices.ie
weather.ie
wexfordwildfowlreserve.ie
wfdireland.ie
wfdireland.net
wildlife.ie
Wsntg.ie

Rents Data

620. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the estimate for the various rent supports - RAS, HAP, rent assistance and so on - in each of the years from 2018 to 2021; if increases over and above the current levels of assistance are envisaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48968/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Budget 2018 has increased the Exchequer funding for the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme by €149m to €301 million. This will allow for the continued support of existing HAP households at end 2017 and also enable the additional 17,000 households targeted under Rebuilding Ireland to be supported by HAP in 2018, as well as supporting the roll-out of the HAP Place Finder Service across the country.

€134.3 million is provided in Budget 2018 to support the cost of the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS). Monies are provided on an Exchequer neutral basis to meet the costs of persons transferring from the Rent Supplement (RS) Scheme to the RAS. This is the same as the 2017 budgetary provision for the scheme.

I am satisfied that the resources allocated under Budget 2018 to each of these schemes provides sufficient flexibility to react to market demands. The allocations for current housing programmes, including HAP and RAS, from 2019 to 2021 will form part of the annual Estimates processes.

Rent Supplement is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund

621. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Gov-

ernment the prior assessment carried out when allocating LIHAF in respect of ensuring that housing is affordable; the definition of affordable in this regard; if the definition differs throughout the country; if so, the way in which it differs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48969/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

The overall aim of the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF) is to increase housing supply by removing infrastructural obstacles that were preventing the early development of key sites.

All proposals for funding under LIHAF were assessed in line with the criteria set out in the Call for Proposals (Circular PL 10/2016) which issued on 26 August 2016 which was further clarified in a notification which issued on 30 September 2016 (both documents are available at <http://rebuildingireland.ie/lihaf>).

The proposals received were allocated marks under five headings (1) Project proposal and link to housing delivery, (2) Innovation and Collaboration, (3) Strategic Fit, (4) Financial Package and Prudence and (5) Delivery. Projects were also required to submit a Multi-Criteria Analysis or Cost Benefit Analysis as appropriate. A LIHAF Advisory Committee, comprised of experts in housing & planning, evaluated and marked the proposals received and made recommendations to the LIHAF Management Committee who assessed the proposals and made the final recommendations for Ministerial approval.

34 proposals received preliminary approval in March 2017 and as required under the LIHAF scheme's criteria and conditions, local authorities were asked, inter alia, to obtain commitments from housing providers on associated sites in relation to housing delivery timelines and cost reductions commensurate with the State's investment on the sites. Local authorities were asked to ensure that a cost reduction was included in the local agreements to ensure that there is a proportionate dividend for the State's investment in infrastructure over and above the obvious benefit in terms of the overall market effect of increased supply of housing.

The objective of securing cost reductions is to make the housing more affordable than would otherwise be the case, as opposed to requiring that houses be priced under a certain ceiling. The level of the reduction is proportionate to the scale of the LIHAF investment in the enabling infrastructure which is different for each project.

Local authorities have used a range of mechanisms to meet the cost reduction commitment, tailored to the individual circumstances of each proposal. In some instances, the local authority itself owns some or all of the associated development lands and consequently has a high degree of control in terms of ensuring delivery of extra social and affordable housing over and above the 10% normally required under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

Where land is owned privately, providers of housing have entered into an undertaking with local authorities where, in recognition of the early delivery of the necessary public infrastructure, those providers have undertaken that housing will be delivered in accordance within an aligned timeframe of construction and with agreed cost reductions to be taken off the market price. This can be an agreed cost reduction across all units or a larger cost reduction across a specified number of units.

My Department is preparing summary details on each of the approved projects and intends to publish this on the Department's website as well as on the Rebuilding Ireland website shortly.

Foreshore Licence Applications

622. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will provide a copy of the screening reports for the environmental impact assessment for planning applications (details supplied); the names of the persons involved in the screening assessment for the applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48981/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): In respect of the Marine Institute (MI) foreshore licence application for an underwater fibre optic cable at Spiddal, Co. Galway (FS005751), the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report can be viewed on my Department's website under the Determination subfolder by selecting the following application link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/foreshore/applications/marine-institute>.

The assessment reports for this application were completed by my Department's Water and Marine Advisory Engineer, Mr Edwin Mooney.

In respect of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) foreshore lease application to develop a wave energy converter test site at Annagh, Belmullet, County Mayo (FS005726), the AA Screening Report and EIA Screening Report can be viewed on my Department's website under the Determination subfolder by selecting the following application link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/foreshore/applications/sustainable-energy-authority-ireland-seai>.

The assessment reports for this application were completed by the Chair of the Marine Licence Vetting Committee (MLVC), Dr. Terry McMahon.

Foreshore Licence Applications

623. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will provide a copy of the foreshore licence planning application and the subsequent foreshore licence granted pertaining specifically to the cameras and cable end equipment currently in use and attached to a project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48982/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): The cable, including the cable end equipment, constitutes the facilities under the first schedule of the licence for the Galway Bay Cable Project. This is a stand-alone project governed by the rights and obligations under the licence.

The licence application and subsequent licence granted is available on my Department's web-site at <http://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/foreshore/applications/marine-institute>.

Housing Assistance Payment

624. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the provisions in place to ensure that increases in rent that will occur during the year are met; the way in which the topping up of rent in cases in which rent is above the prescribed HAP limits will be treated; the way in which it will be ensured that this does not occur for persons in receipt of the HAP over the course of the year; the date on which the HAP rates will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48993/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is a flexible and immediate housing support that is now available to all eligible households throughout the State. Budget 2018 has increased the Exchequer funding for the HAP scheme by €149m to €301 million in order to meet the continuing costs of existing households and the costs of meeting the additional 17,000 households, targeted under Rebuilding Ireland, to be supported by HAP in 2018. The increased rent limits introduced by the Government last year, together with the additional discretion available to local authorities to exceed the maximum rent limit where necessary, are allowing HAP households to find suitable accommodation and willing landlords. On average in 2017, 350 additional tenancies are being supported by HAP each week, with over 29,800 households currently having their housing needs met under the scheme, and some 20,000 separate landlords and agents currently in receipt of monthly HAP payments.

Each local authority has statutory discretion to agree to a HAP payment up to 20% above the prescribed maximum rent limit in circumstances where it is necessary, because of local rental market conditions, to secure appropriate accommodation for a household that requires it. It is a matter for the local authority to determine if the application of the flexibility is warranted on a case by case basis. However, it is open to local authorities to take a consistent approach in relation to use of discretion in a given locality or in relation to a particular household type. Additional discretion of up to 50% above rent limits is available to assist in housing homeless households in the Dublin Region. The additional discretion available to homeless households recognises the difficulty this cohort of households face in sourcing and securing properties in a highly competitive rental market. Detailed guidance has been provided to local authorities in relation to the approach to be applied when assessing HAP applications. This guidance applies to new and existing households seeking HAP rental supports within local rent limits and in excess of rent limits, and in relation to the management of reported top-ups. The local authority must make a decision on what level of support to provide based on the tenant's current position and the needs of a household, as well as the market rents in that local area.

From available data, at the end of Q2 2017, 17.8% of the total number of households being supported by HAP were benefiting from the additional flexibility that was provided to local authorities to exceed the maximum rent limits. When the additional discretion available to homeless households in the Dublin Region is removed, 12.6% of households nationally were benefiting from the additional flexibility. In those cases, the average rate of discretionary payment being used was 14.7% above rent limits provided.

My Department is aware that some HAP recipients are making payments directly to their landlords, beyond the amount of HAP being paid on their behalf. There is no legislative provision precluding HAP supported households contributing towards the monthly rent to their landlord. Where a qualified household sources accommodation outside the maximum rent limits, it is important to highlight the responsibility falling on the household to ensure the landlord receives the full amount of rent charged for the property as set out in their tenancy agreement.

The Strategy for the Rental Sector, published in December 2016, recommended the introduction of a Rent Predictability Measure to moderate rent increases in those parts of the country where rents are highest and rising - where households have greatest difficulties in finding accommodation they can afford. The Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016 provided for the Rent Predictability Measure and for areas, called Rent Pressure Zones (RPZs), where rents can now only rise by a maximum of 4% annually for a period of three years.

This measure was implemented immediately in the four Dublin local authority areas and in Cork City as these areas already met the criteria for a Rent Pressure Zone in December 2016. A further 12 Local Electoral Areas (LEAs) were designated in January 2017, with the measure

further extended to Maynooth and Cobh LEAs in March 2017 and to Drogheda and Greystones LEAs in September 2017.

On 19 September 2017, I announced a number of improvements to the rental market as part of the rolling review of Rebuilding Ireland. One such change is that the RTB will be given additional powers and resources to take on a regulatory responsibility in the rental sector over the next two years. The changes needed in legislation and in the Board's financing arrangements will be explored and a two-year change management plan will be prepared that will see the RTB become the sector's regulator in that period. It will be an offence to implement rent increases that contravene the law and the RTB will be given the powers to investigate and prosecute landlords who implement such increases. The onus will no longer be exclusively on the tenant.

Increasing the HAP rent limits in particular local authority areas could have further inflationary effects on the private rented sector, which could have a detrimental impact on the wider rental market, including for those households who are not receiving HAP support. Based on the data outlined, I am currently satisfied that the maximum rent limits, together with the additional flexibility available to local authorities, are generally sufficient to meet the demand of the rental market in these areas.

I am satisfied that the HAP scheme is generally working well and that the additional measures in relation to the rental market under Rebuilding Ireland will provide further support for its operation.

Water Charges Administration

625. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the restriction regarding persons having to produce evidence that they have paid their water charges bill, notwithstanding that those who have paid are having their payments refunded, in cases in which a person is seeking to purchase their house from the local authority under the tenant purchase scheme will be lifted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48997/17]

626. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if it is a requirement that when a person is buying or selling a house in the private sector that they are expected to produce evidence that they paid the water charges bill in view of the fact that payments are being refunded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49021/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 625 and 626 together.

The Water Services Act 2017 (No. 29 of 2017), which was enacted on 17 November 2017, reflects the recommendations of the report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Future Funding of Domestic Water Services, which was published in April 2017 and approved by both Houses of the Oireachtas.

The Act provides for the discontinuance of domestic water charges for dwellings as set out in the Water Services Act 2014 and for the refund of domestic charges paid by customers. It also provides for the repeal of section 3A of the Water Services Act 2014, which provided that upon the sale of a property, a certificate of discharge was required from Irish Water to show that the relevant water charges had been paid. This repeal is provided for in section 5(1)(b)(ii) of the 2017 Act.

Question No. 627 answered with Question No. 611.

Housing Assistance Payment Expenditure

628. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount of discretionary enhanced payments each month in each county since HAP was established and which are used to top up rental rates above local authority rent limits, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49035/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Scheme plays a vital role in housing eligible families and individuals. There are currently more than 29,800 households having their housing needs met via HAP and over 20,000 landlords and agents in receipt of HAP payments. A weekly average of 348 HAP tenancies have been set up during 2017, and more than 420 a week averaged over the last 5 weeks.

Recognising the pressures in the rental market, the Government increased the maximum rent limits available under the HAP scheme across the country with effect from 1 July 2016. Furthermore, additional flexibility above the existing HAP rent limits was made available to all local authorities operating the HAP scheme from the same date. Each local authority has statutory discretion to agree to a HAP payment up to 20% above the prescribed maximum rent limit in circumstances where it is necessary, because of local rental market conditions, to secure appropriate accommodation for a household that requires it. It is a matter for the local authority to determine if the application of the flexibility is warranted on a case by case basis.

The increased rent limits introduced by the Government last year, together with the additional discretion available to local authorities to exceed the maximum rent limit where necessary, are allowing HAP households to find suitable accommodation and willing landlords. Particular additional targeted supports are available to homeless households in the Dublin and Cork City regions to assist them in finding accommodation in the private rental market, with the support of HAP. I recently confirmed that the Place Finder Service available in these local authorities will be rolled out to all other local authorities.

It should be borne in mind that the HAP scheme was implemented on a statutory phased pilot basis and rolled out across local authorities incrementally over the last number of years. The scheme became a national scheme on 1 March 2017, and the following table reflects the data available to my Department for all 31 local authorities at end of Q2 2017:

Local Authority Area	Number of HAP supported households at end of Q2 2017	Number of HAP supported households where additional flexibility was utilised by LA	%
Carlow County Council	515	36	7%
Cavan County Council	60	1	1.7%
Clare County Council	1,113	47	4.2%
Cork City Council	1,290	413	32%
Cork County Council	2,127	157	7.4%
Donegal County Council	1,540	3	0.2%

Local Authority Area	Number of HAP supported households at end of Q2 2017	Number of HAP supported households where additional flexibility was utilised by LA	%
Dublin City Council*	375	95	25.3%
Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council*	46	37	80.4%
Fingal County Council*	121	49	40.5%
Galway City Council	645	305	47.3%
Galway County Council	570	45	7.9%
Kerry County Council	194	27	13.9%
Kildare County Council	1,128	432	38.3%
Kilkenny County Council	800	14	1.8%
Laois County Council	88	3	3.4%
Leitrim County Council	42	-	0.0%
Limerick City & County Council	1,767	28	1.6%
Longford County Council	60	-	0.0%
Louth County Council	1,568	68	4.3%
Mayo County Council	624	408	65.4%
Meath County Council	856	315	36.8%
Monaghan County Council	360	12	3.3%
Offaly County Council	465	3	0.6%
Roscommon County Council	74	-	0.0%
Sligo County Council	347	2	0.6%
South Dublin County Council*	1,783	13	0.7%
Tipperary County Council	1,407	150	10.7%

Local Authority Area	Number of HAP supported households at end of Q2 2017	Number of HAP supported households where additional flexibility was utilised by LA	%
Waterford City & County Council	1,339	56	4.2%
Westmeath County Council	148	10	6.8%
Wexford County Council	192	8	4.2%
Wicklow County Council	164	10	6.1%
Total (Excl DRHE)	21,808	2,746	12.6%
*DRHE	1,428	1,391	97%
**Grand Total (including DRHE)	23,236	4,137	17.8%

*In Dublin City Council, DLR, Fingal and South Dublin County Councils, eligible homeless households are assisted under the Homeless HAP scheme operated by the DRHE, under which additional discretion is available in recognition of the difficulty that can exist in housing homeless households. These homeless HAP numbers are not included in the HAP numbers identified under each of these Dublin LA areas in the table.

**Tenancy numbers reflected above show all HAP tenancies set up at end Q.2 2017 where the rent was agreed. A further 607 HAP tenancies were set up at this point, but were awaiting final rent agreement.

The Department will monitor this data each quarter, taking into consideration other sources of data such as the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) Rent Index and Average Rent Index Reports, which are published on a quarterly basis. The Rent Index Report is compiled by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), and based on the RTB's own register of tenancies, the Rent Index reveals the actual rents being paid for rented properties.

This data together with the latest data on the use of discretion by local authorities, set out above, indicates that the current rent limits and the flexibility to exceed those rent limits provide local authorities with sufficient capacity to assist households in securing rented accommodation that meets their needs. I am satisfied with how the scheme is currently operating and I consider it to be a key vehicle for meeting housing need and fulfilling the ambitious programme under Rebuilding Ireland. My Department will, of course, continue to keep the operation of the HAP scheme under review.

Question No. 629 answered with Question No. 611.

Parliamentary Questions Costs

630. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the average costs associated with processing and answering written and oral parliamentary questions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49127/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The processing of individual Parliamentary Questions is undertaken as part of the normal day to day

work of individual Sections within my Department and no staff in my Department are assigned full time to dealing with Parliamentary Questions. The number and level of staff, and the time spent on individual replies, depends on the complexity and urgency of the issues raised, the ease of access to the required information, and the degree of cross-Divisional co-ordination required in preparing the reply. Each Question may have input from staff within Sections, the Principal Officers and equivalents leading those sections, the relevant Assistant Secretary, the Secretary General and his office staff and the Minister and staff in his office. The cost of answering Parliamentary Questions can vary considerably, therefore, and it is not possible to readily quantify the administrative costs associated with the processing of individual Questions.

Building Regulations

631. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the reason the Irish Agrément Certificate 04/0198 which was issued initially in 2004 and updated in 2007 with respect to the construction of medium rise timber frame homes has not been updated since; if his attention has been drawn to the requirement for agrément certificates to be reviewed every five years; and if he will request a review of this certificate to be carried out in view of the serious fire safety defects discovered in several medium rise timber frame developments since 2007. [49154/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The process of Agrément certification applies to those products and processes which do not fall within the scope of existing construction standards, either because they are innovative or because they deviate from established norms. The National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) Agrément assesses, specifies testing, and where appropriate, issues Agrément certificates confirming that new building products, materials, techniques and equipment are safe and fit for purpose in accordance with the Irish Building Regulations and with the terms of the certificate.

The NSAI is an autonomous body under the aegis of the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation. I understand that the issue raised in relation to Irish Agrément Certificate 04/0198 has been brought to the attention of the NSAI.

It is important to note that in accordance with the recommendations of the Timber Frame Housing Report, a standard in relation to timber frame construction was developed subsequent to the provision of the Agrément Certificate in question. Irish Standard 440: 2009/A1:2014 Timber Frame Construction, Dwellings and other Buildings (I.S. 440) specifies requirements for materials, design, manufacture, construction details, site work and quality control for platform timber frame construction. It requires that the responsibilities for the tasks involved in the planning, structural design, site erection and inspection be agreed and recorded prior to the commencement of each project. I.S. 440 also gives specific details relating to fire; including the construction of separating walls, horizontal and vertical fire stopping, cavity barriers and detailed fire stopping junctions for walls and floors and service penetrations. Manufacturers of timber frame buildings are assessed under an approval scheme operated by NSAI for compliance with I.S. 440 requirements including Factory Production Control (FPC) and a register of compliant manufacturers is available on the NSAI website at <https://www.nsai.ie/Our-Services/Certification/Company-Registration-Search.aspx>.

Local Area Plans

632. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to proposed developments at St. Catherine's Park, Leixlip, County Kildare; if directions have been issued to the three relevant local authorities involved (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49189/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): The Leixlip Local Area Plan 2017-2023 is currently being finalised under the provisions of section 20 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). I have made submissions to Kildare County Council in relation to the Local Area Plan in my role as a statutory consultee in the Local Area Plan preparation process.

The decision of Kildare County Council on the Leixlip Local Area Plan is awaited and it would therefore be inappropriate for me to comment further at this time.

Traveller Accommodation

633. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount of funding allocated and drawn down by all local authorities for Traveller accommodation in 2016 and to date in 2017; and his plans for improving the drawdown of local authorities in 2018 as a result of the funding increase announced in budget 2018. [49197/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, housing authorities have statutory responsibility for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers and the preparation, adoption and implementation of multi-annual Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) in their areas. My Department's role is to ensure that there are adequate structures and supports in place to assist the authorities in providing such accommodation, including a national framework of policy, legislation and funding.

The current round of TAPs were adopted in 2014, with the five-year rolling programmes running from 2014 to 2018. These programmes provide a road map for local authority investment priorities over the period. The allocations and recoupment profiles for capital Traveller accommodation projects can vary across local authorities given the local priorities, circumstances and project timelines as set out in the TAPs.

Housing authorities submit funding proposals for individual Traveller-specific projects and developments on an annual basis, which are assessed on a case-by-case basis in my Department in advance of allocations being made. In addition, further funding may be considered by my Department throughout the year, also on a case by case basis, in the light of progress across the programme generally.

Accordingly, the 2018 funding allocations will be finalised early in the New Year, and on a case-by-case basis as funding proposals are received throughout the year. There will be regular contact between my Department and those housing authorities who receive allocations in order to try to ensure maximum progress and drawdown. If it becomes clear that allocations or part thereof may be unspent, then those allocations will be diverted to alternative projects and developments.

The Programme for a Partnership Government commits to establishing a special working group to audit the current delivery and implementation of local authorities' Traveller Accommodation Programmes and consult with stakeholders on key areas of concern. This commitment was underpinned in Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, which provided for the commissioning by the Housing Agency, on behalf of my Department, of

an expert, independent review of capital and current funding for Traveller-specific accommodation for the period 2000 to date, having regard to the targets contained in the local authority TAPs and actual units delivered, the current status of the accommodation funded and the funding provided for accommodation maintenance and other supports.

This report was finalised and submitted to the National Traveller Accommodation Committee (NTACC) for consideration at its meeting on 28 August 2017. The NTACC is a statutorily-appointed Committee, comprising key stakeholders, including Traveller representative groups, to advise the Minister with responsibility in relation to Traveller accommodation matters. On foot of its considerations of the report, the NTACC collectively agreed to advise me to establish an Expert Group to examine and make recommendations on issues regarding Traveller accommodation policy, strategy and implementation. This is in keeping with the Programme for Partnership Government and I have agreed to proceed with the establishment of this Expert Group.

I have also agreed that a review of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 should be part of the work of the Expert Group. The composition, terms of reference and methodology of this Expert Group are currently being formulated with a view to it being in place as soon as possible.

The amount of funding allocated and drawn down by all Local Authorities for Traveller accommodation in 2016 and to-date in 2017 is set out in the Table.

County Council	Allocation 2016	Recouped 2016	Allocation 2017	Recouped 2017 to date
Carlow	130,000	0	207,905.41	71,449.98
Cavan	8,600	9,398	13,729.31	13,729.31
Clare	200,000	0	169,194.00	0
Cork	30,000	0	110,000.00	0
Donegal	82,000	74,532	147,612.81	0
South Dublin	63,000	26,397	1,024,289.00	0
Fingal	26,842	0	26,847.00	17,420.00
Dun Laoghaire/ Rathdown	419,095	129,552	1,500,000.00	1,823,999.72
Galway	117,000	123,816	625,000.00	0
Kerry	57,000	255,730	28,566.13	28,566.13
Kildare	200,000	0	80,000.00	0
Kilkenny	377,500	431,714	582,162.00	524,109.12
Laois	0	0	-	0
Leitrim	18,800	12,794	98,875.00	0
Longford	2,900	0	2,922.00	0
Louth	0	444,484	237,087.00	0
Mayo	0	0	-	0
Meath	120,000	76,877	129,000.00	5,750.00
Monaghan	0	0	-	0
Offaly	73,000	37,775	847,917.00	22,700.00
Roscommon	50,000	10,808	52,617.00	52,616.62
Sligo	0	0	161,249.00	0
Tipperary	900,000	1,399,370	327,492.00	399,337.00
Westmeath	208,000	48,000	-	0

County Council	Allocation 2016	Recouped 2016	Allocation 2017	Recouped 2017 to date
Wexford	96,000	87,695	6,880.00	0
Wicklow	46,000	0	52,648.00	43,773.00
City Council				
Cork	400,000	301,796	1,108,344.00	0
Dublin	1,405,198	762,342	414,829.00	140,038.59
Galway	40,000	0	209,000.00	0
Limerick City & County Council	81,000	21,209	69,576.00	0
Waterford City & County Council	263,000	13,545	545,000.00	0
TOTAL	5,500,000	4,267,831	9,000,000.00	3,143,489.47

Building Regulations

634. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the requirements that are imposed on hotels and other accommodation providers in relation to the installation and upkeep of carbon monoxide alarms on their premises; if there is a requirement for such an alarm to be provided in each bedroom; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49206/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): The Building Regulations (Part J Amendment) Regulations 2014 (S.I. 133 of 2014) and the accompanying Technical Guidance Document J – Heat Producing Appliances (2014), which came into effect on 1 September 2014, include requirements in relation to the detection and warning of carbon monoxide in new dwellings, and in existing dwellings where the replacement of certain heat producing appliances is proposed. These requirements are in line with best practice in other countries and Ireland is one of the first countries to have such a broad requirement for carbon monoxide alarms.

The requirements under Part J provide for the installation of carbon monoxide detectors in:

- new dwellings where open flue or flueless combustion appliances are being installed,
- existing dwellings where replacement open flue or flueless combustion appliances are being installed,
- habitable rooms where a system chimney attached to a heat producing appliance passes within or over such rooms.

While these regulations will give added protection to new dwelling owners, and to the owners of existing dwellings when heat producing appliances are being replaced, it is important to note that the key actions required to prevent carbon monoxide incidences are and continue to be:

- (1) the proper installation and commissioning of heat producing appliances and flues/chimneys,
- (2) proper air supply is maintained to combustion devices, and

(3) the proper maintenance and inspection of combustion appliances on a regular basis.

In this regard, an analysis of the incidents that have occurred in the UK [Part J 2014 RIA] indicate that the predominant area for carbon monoxide fatalities is in dwellings. This analysis would appear to suggest that non-domestic buildings would not be considered a high risk category having regard to the number of carbon monoxide incidences involved. Accordingly, the installation of carbon monoxide alarms in buildings other than dwellings is not required under the Building Regulations, either here or in the UK.

From the evidence of carbon monoxide incidents in the UK and abroad, the majority appear to occur with solid fuel and gas appliances, and the least with oil fuelled appliances. Open flue or flueless appliances, because they take the combustion air from a room, have a potentially greater risk than a balanced flue scenario.

In addition, Part L of the Building Regulations, which deals with the conservation of fuel and energy, has required all new and replacement boilers in dwellings to have an efficiency of 90% since 1 December 2011. This promotes the installation of room sealed boilers, which have a lower risk of the escape of carbon monoxide due to balanced flues.

Judicial Reviews

635. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the support available under the Environment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011 to fund a defence for a named party in a judicial review in relation to section 261A of the Planning and Development Act 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49268/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): There is no provision in the Environment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011 to fund a party's legal costs in a judicial review. However, Part 2 of the Act makes an exception to the general rule that costs follow the event, by providing in section 3 that, in general and regardless of the outcome of proceedings, all parties must pay their own costs in civil proceedings to which section 4 of the Act applies.

Section 3 also provides that the Court may determine that the costs of a successful applicant in such proceedings must be borne by one or more than one other party to the case in particular circumstances. It is also provided that the Court may award costs against a party in such proceedings in specified circumstances. Furthermore, section 3(4) provides that, notwithstanding these provisions, the Court may award costs in favour of a party in a matter of exceptional public importance and where, in the special circumstances of the case, it is in the interests of justice to do so.

Section 4(1) of the 2011 Act applies section 3 to civil proceedings - other than proceedings specified in section 4(3) - instituted by a person in respect of a failure to comply with, or enforce, a statutory requirement or condition or other requirement attached to a consent specified in subsection (4), where such failure is the cause of, or is likely to cause, damage to the environment. One of the consents specified in section 4(4) is a permission or approval granted pursuant to the Planning and Development Act 2000.

Under section 7 of the 2011 Act, a party to proceedings specified in section 4(4) may, at any time before or during the proceedings, apply to the Court for a determination that the cost rules in section 3 apply to those proceedings. The enactment also provides that, before the commencement of such proceedings or at any other time, the parties may agree that the cost rules in section 3 apply to those proceedings.

Section 50B of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, applies the cost rules in section 3 of the 2011 Act to judicial review proceedings in respect of a decision made, action taken or failure to take action pursuant to legislation giving effect to EU Directives on strategic environmental assessment (SEA), environmental impact assessment (EIA), and integrated pollution prevention and control (IPPC).

Planning Issues

636. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the way in which a person can claim compensation under section 261 of the Planning and Development Act 2010 in respect of a reduction in size of an original planning permission for a quarry and loss of income regarding same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49269/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Section 261 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, which introduced a once-off system of registration for most existing quarries, with the possibility of follow-up action in relation to an individual quarry by the planning authority concerned, came into operation on 28 April 2004.

Subsection (8) of section 261, as amended, provides for the making of a compensation claim in specified circumstances to the planning authority concerned arising from a decision made in respect of a quarry under section 261 by the authority, or An Bord Pleanála in the case of an appeal. It further specifies the types of conditions imposed on the operation of the quarry as part of such a decision in respect of which a compensation claim may not be made, including conditions preventing, limiting or controlling emissions from a quarry or requiring the re-instatement of the land on which a quarry is situated. Subsection (8) also provides that a compensation claim in respect of a relevant section 261 decision shall be made under section 197 of the Act, which relates to compensation claims arising from the discontinuance of an existing use of land or compliance with new conditions in continuing such use.

Part XII of the 2000 Act and Part 13 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, deal with compensation in relation to planning decisions generally. Section 183 of the Act provides that a compensation claim under section 197 must be made within 6 months of the discontinuance or compliance with the condition(s) in respect of which compensation is sought. Article 174 of the Regulations provides that a compensation claim shall be in writing and specifies the information to be included in the claim.

Rental Sector Strategy

637. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the expert group to develop plans for a cost rental model for housing has been established; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49319/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Strategy for the Rental Sector, published in December 2016, noted that the Programme for a Partnership Government contains a commitment to develop a “cost rental” option, taking account of work already completed in this area, including by the National Economic and Social Council and others.

In line with this commitment, Action 12 of the Strategy commits my Department to lead an Expert Group to develop a cost rental model for the Irish rental sector. This Group will ad-

dress issues such as funding mechanisms, the need to grow the necessary institutional capacity, particularly within the AHB and not-for-profit sector (whether through mergers, new entrants or strategic partnerships), rent levels, the households to be targeted and the appropriate regulation mechanisms.

The Expert Group will assess the benefits that a larger and more developed not-for-profit segment would bring to the rental sector and the housing system, by increasing supply of rental accommodation for low to middle-income households and ensuring new capacity is developed. Following the conclusion of the focused review of Rebuilding Ireland, it is my intention to establish this Expert Group in the coming weeks. A proposal regarding its membership and terms of reference is currently being finalised in my Department.

Housing Policy

638. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the review of Rebuilding Ireland has been completed; if so, if the findings of the review will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49321/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness was published in July 2016 and after one year of implementation, it was important to review overall progress and impact. The housing activity reports, available on www.rebuildingireland.ie, show that the strong supply-side measures introduced under Rebuilding Ireland are beginning to have a positive impact and all output indicators are showing positive upward trends, with:

- Planning permissions up 49%: 19,246 new homes were granted planning permission in the year to end June;

- Commencement Notices up by 49%: notices for 17,323 new homes nationwide were submitted in the year to end September; and,

- ESB connections to the National Grid up 26%, at 17,958 homes nationally in the year to end September, 8,177 of which are in the Greater Dublin Area.

The Review process itself has involved a comprehensive examination of key policies and programmes, taking account of stakeholder views and inputs. In this regard, a broad public consultation process was undertaken and 122 submissions were received. Arising from the Review, a number of themed announcements on specific policy areas have already been made.

The first set of measures, with a particular focus on homelessness, were presented following the Housing and Homelessness Summit with local authority Chief Executives which I hosted on 8 September 2017. Among the new and enhanced actions identified are to increase social housing build, with the target for 2018 of c. 3,000 newly built homes increasing by almost 30% to 3,800 new homes; the provision of additional emergency accommodation and family hubs to meet the short-term needs of homeless households; and the establishment of a new Homeless Inter-Agency Group. The full statement on additional measures for Homelessness can be accessed by clicking on the following web-link - <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/outcomes-from-review-of-rebuilding-ireland/>.

In relation to the rental market, new and enhanced actions identified include the designation of further areas as Rent Pressure Zones; an enhanced regulatory role for the Residential Tenancies Board; an awareness campaign to ensure wider awareness by tenants of their rights, an important measure in terms of homelessness prevention; and additional legislative and other

measures to strengthen the protections available to tenants and to address issues in relation to short-term lettings. A full statement on new and enhanced rental measures was made, coinciding with the release of the Residential Tenancies Board Q2 2017 Rental Index, on 19 September 2017 and can be accessed at the following web-link - <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/residential-tenancies-boards-rent-index/>.

Additional funding for housing and new tax measures relevant to housing were announced in Budget 2018. A full statement on the housing measures included in Budget 2018 can be accessed at the following web-link: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/minister-murphy-announces-housing-budget/>.

I have signalled my intention to bring forward further proposals on areas such as housing affordability and the delivery of apartment developments, particularly build-to-rent projects. As work on these issues is finalised, further announcements will be made.

All new actions emanating from the review will be progressed under the governance and reporting structures in place in respect of Rebuilding Ireland.

Housing Data

639. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of social houses built and occupied in each local authority area for the year to date in 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49322/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Through the supports made available under Rebuilding Ireland, funding is available to all local authorities to deliver additional social housing stock through new construction projects and through the acquisition of new and previously owned houses/apartments for social housing use, including through working with approved housing bodies.

Details on the number of properties purchased and built in all local authority areas, for letting to those on the social housing waiting lists, are available on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision>. Information on quarter three of 2017 is currently being finalised and will be published shortly.

Vacant Sites Levy

640. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of sites registered for the vacant site levy; the number of those which are under appeal with An Bord Pleanála by each local authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49323/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 introduced a new measure, the vacant site levy, which is aimed at incentivising the development of vacant, under-utilised sites in urban areas. Under the Act, planning authorities are required to establish a register of vacant sites in their areas, beginning on 1 January 2017, and to issue annual notices to owners of vacant sites by 1 June 2018 in respect of vacant sites on the register on 1 January 2018. The levy will be applied by planning authorities, commencing on 1 January 2019 in respect of sites which were vacant and on the vacant site register during the year 2018 and will subsequently be applied on an an-

nual basis thereafter, as long as a site remains on the vacant site register in the preceding year.

Planning authorities are presently engaging in the necessary preparatory work, prior to the application of the levy with effect from January 2019 in respect of sites identified on the register in 2018. As required under the Act, this includes the identification of specific vacant sites for entry on the register as well as the registered owners of the sites in question along with undertaking a site valuation. Vacant site registers were established by planning authorities in January 2017 and planning authorities have begun the process of entering sites on the register and notifying the registered owner.

My Department does not maintain a central register of vacant sites as each local authority administers the vacant site register in respect of their functional area. On foot of a review of the on-line vacant site registers, I understand that there are over 100 sites on the registers and 28 of these cases have been appealed to An Bord Pleanála as follows:

Local Authority	Number of Appeals
Dublin City Council	18
South Dublin County Council	2
Waterford City & County Council	8
Total:	28

My Department continues to monitor and engage with local authorities in relation to the implementation of the vacant site levy and, as recently as 8 November 2017, held a seminar with authorities in this regard.

Land Availability

641. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 514 of 14 of November 2017, the local authorities that have submitted plans for development of their sites; those which have yet to submit their plans; the timeframe for those plans to be published and implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49328/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): A key objective of the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness is to increase the supply of high quality social housing and homes at more affordable price points, on local authority lands as quickly as possible, particularly in areas where demand is greatest.

To this end, all local authorities are preparing Strategic Development and Management Plans for their housing lands, with particular emphasis on prioritising those sites with the most potential to deliver housing at scale, in the short to medium term.

Currently 22 of the 31 local authorities have submitted their Strategic Plans to my Department. The remaining 9 local authorities that have yet to submit their plans have been requested to do so without further delay. The local authorities that have yet to submit their plans are listed in the following table.

Local Authorities yet to submit Strategic Development and Management Plans as at 20/11/2017
Carlow County Council
Cork County Council
Longford County Council

Meath County Council
Tipperary County Council
Sligo County Council
Waterford City & County Council
Wexford County Council
Wicklow County Council

When all the plans have been reviewed and finalised, they will be made available publicly, both on the dedicated Rebuilding Ireland website, as well as on the website of the relevant local authority.

Questions Nos. 642 to 645, inclusive, answered with Question No. 607.

Defence Forces Properties

646. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the circumstances in which a non-Defence Forces organisation can record a film or video, etc., on a property or asset belonging to the Defence Forces; the procedure for seeking permission to do so; the process of assessment for such requests; the fees that may be charged; the number of such requests received in 2016 and to date in 2017, by month; the name of each requesting organisation; the location or asset requested for such purposes; and the amount paid in each case, in tabular form. [48690/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): With the exception of press invitations to military events, companies who wish to film on a property or asset belonging to the Department of Defence apply to the relevant branch of my Department. Requests are considered on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the relevant Defence Forces authority.

A number of factors are assessed in reaching a decision, including, but not limited to, the impact on Defence Forces operations, the film topic, the duration on-site, the appropriateness of the request, the benefits that could accrue to the Defence organisation, and the potential boost to local businesses, including the tourism industry. Approval of any request is subject to the company having adequate Public Liability Insurance in place indemnifying the Minister for Defence and signing an agreement stipulating the terms and conditions for filming on his property.

The rate charged for commercial filming on the Department's property in 2016 was €200 per day plus VAT @ 23%. The rate was reviewed in 2017 and the current rate is €500 per day plus VAT. On many occasions, this fee is reduced or waived where the filming is conducted by, or on behalf of, charitable organisations or community groups, or where there would be a benefit to the Defence Forces, in terms of recruitment for example.

The number of requests received for filming on Department's property was 32 in 2016 and 32 to date in 2017. These requests are broken down in the following tables.

2016 Filming Requests on Department's Property

Name of Organisation	Location	Month	Amount (ex. Vat)	Comments
Irish Orienteering Association	Curragh Camp	January	€0.00	Cancelled by company
Big & Beag	Curragh Camp	January	€200.00	

Shinawil for RTE	McKee Barracks	February	€0.00	Cancelled by company
Animo TV Productions - TG4	Gormanston Camp	March	€0.00	Waived
Liv O'Donoghue - Dublin Dance Festival commissioned by GPO	Baldonnel	March	€0.00	Cancelled by company
Maze Films DAC	Collins Barracks	April	€200.00	
Big O Media	Cathal Brugha	April	€0.00	Waived
Centenary Films DAC	McKee Barracks	April	€2,000.00	
RTE	Curragh Camp	May	€200.00	
RTE	Curragh Plains (Donnelly's Hollow)	May	€200.00	
RTE	Cathal Brugha Barracks	May	€200.00	
Big Mountain Productions for Channel 4's Ardal's Ireland	Curragh Plains	June	€200.00	
Boundless	Columb Barracks	June	€0.00	Refused
RTE	Curragh Plains	July	€200.00	
Seabed Productions for TG4 "Hollywood in Éirinn Series Two"	Curragh Camp & Curragh Plains	July	€200.00	
Open Eye Productions for TG4 Dúiche Series	Fort Davis	August	€0.00	Waived

2016 Filming Requests on Department's Property

Irish Orienteering Association	Curragh Camp	January	€0.00	Cancelled by company
Big & Beag	Curragh Camp	January	€200.00	
Shinawil for RTE	McKee Barracks	February	€0.00	Cancelled by company
Animo TV Productions - TG4	Gormanston Camp	March	€0.00	Waived

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Liv O'Donoghue - Dublin Dance Festival commissioned by GPO	Baldonnel	March	€0.00	Cancelled by company
Maze Films DAC	Collins Barracks	April	€200.00	
Big O Media	Cathal Brugha	April	€0.00	Waived
Centenary Films DAC	McKee Barracks	April	€2,000.00	
RTE	Curragh Camp	May	€200.00	
RTE	Curragh Plains (Donnelly's Hollow)	May	€200.00	
RTE	Cathal Brugha Barracks	May	€200.00	
Big Mountain Productions for Channel 4's Ardal's Ireland	Curragh Plains	June	€200.00	
Boundless	Columb Barracks	June	€0.00	Refused
RTE	Curragh Plains	July	€200.00	
Seabed Productions for TG4 "Hollywood in Éirinn Series Two"	Curragh Camp & Curragh Plains	July	€200.00	
Open Eye Productions for TG4 Dúiche Series	Fort Davis	August	€0.00	Waived

2016 Filming Requests on Department's Property Continued

Name of Organisation	Location	Month	Amount (ex. Vat)	Comments
Happy Endings Productions	Curragh Camp	August	€0.00	Refused
Kenny Whittle	McKee Barracks	August	€0.00	Refused
Irish Film Locations	Columb Barracks	August	€0.00	Cancelled
RTE	Baldonnel	September	€0.00	Waived
Moondance Films	McKee Barracks	September	€0.00	Waived

Name of Organisation	Location	Month	Amount (ex. Vat)	Comments
Niall Campion Annual Productions	Glen of Imaal	September	€0.00	Waived
RTE	Glen of Imaal	October	€0.00	Waived
RTE	Cathal Brugha, Dublin	October	€0.00	Waived
RTE	Dundalk Barracks	October	€0.00	Waived
RTE	Baldonnel	October	€0.00	Waived
RTE	Baldonnel	October	€0.00	Waived
Christchurch Productions DAC	McKee Barracks, Dublin	October/November	€4,500.00	
RTE	Curragh Camp	October	€0.00	Refused
Eoin Holohan - Location Manager	Curragh Camp	October /November	€0.00	Refused
Tilted Pictures	Unspecified location	October/November	€0.00	Refused
Tilted Pictures	Curragh Camp & Glen of Imaal	November	€0.00	Refused

2017 Filming Requests on Department's Property

Name of Organisation	Location	Month	Amount (ex. Vat)	Comments
Gordon Wycherley - Film Location Manager	Mullingar Barracks	January	€0.00	Refused
Muddy Pictures DAC	Kilbride Firing Range	February	€0.00	Cancelled by company
South Winds Blow Ltd	St. Bricin's Hospital	March	€0.00	Fee waived
Jack Martin	Aiken Barracks	March	€0.00	Refused
Muddy Pictures DAC	Kilbride Firing Range	March	€0.00	Cancelled by company
Niall Campion Productions	Cathal Brugha Barracks	April	€0.00	Fee waived
Ballyfermot College of Further Education	Curragh Camp	April	€0.00	Refused
Scannáin MMT CGA for TG4	Renmore Barracks	May	€500.00	
Blinder Films	Curragh Camp	May	€0.00	Refused

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Name of Organisation	Location	Month	Amount (ex. Vat)	Comments
South Winds Blow Ltd	Cathal Brugha Barracks	May	€0.00	Fee waived
Dean Leonardson	Curragh Camp	May	€0.00	Refused
Noel Brady Film Maker	Cathal Brugha	May	€0.00	Cancelled by company
Troy Studios	Sarsfield Barracks	May	€0.00	Date to be confirmed
Donnacha Brady	Cathal Brugha Barracks	May	€0.00	Refused
Ciara O’Gorman, Gaisce - RTE	Curragh Camp	June	€0.00	Fee waived
Hell’s Kitchen / Romulus Entertainment	Cathal Brugha, Athlone, Baldonnel Barracks and Gormonston Camp & Curragh Camp	June	€0.00	Cancelled by company
Crossing the Line Films for RTE	Curragh Plains	June	€0.00	Refused
Rocket Science Productions	Glen of Imaal	June	€0.00	Cancelled by company
2017 Filming Requests on Department’s Property Continued				
Name of Organisation	Location	Month	Amount (ex. Vat)	Comments
Niall Martin - Location Manager	Sarsfield Barracks	June	€0.00	Refused
Rocket Science Productions	Curragh Camp	June	€0.00	Refused
South Winds Blow Ltd	Remore Barracks	June/July	€0.00	Cancelled by company
Mick Swan - Location Scout	Kilbride Firing Range	July	€0.00	Dates suggested unsuitable due to military training - revised dates requested
New Decade TV Ltd for RTE	Curragh Camp	August	€0.00	Fee waived
Barrow Coakley Photography	Cathal Brugha Barracks	August	€0.00	Fee waived
DJI Spark - Peter Goulding	Finner Camp	October	€0.00	Fee waived

Name of Organisation	Location	Month	Amount (ex. Vat)	Comments
Mick Swan - Location Scout	Columb Barracks	October	€0.00	Time & date for visit requested but no response received
RTE	Glen of Imaal	October	€0.00	Cancelled due to bad weather - to be rescheduled
Dearg Films for TG4	Sarsfield Barracks	October	€0.00	Refused
Karl Daly - Location Scout	Curragh camp	October	€0.00	Refused
Framework Films Ltd	Collins Barracks, Cork	November	€0.00	Fee waived
RTE	Curragh Camp	November	€0.00	Fee waived
Motive Television Ltd for TV3	Curragh Camp	November	€0.00	Fee waived

2017 Filming Requests on Department's Property

Name of Organisation	Location	Month	Amount (ex. Vat)	Comments
Gordon Wycherley - Film Location Manager	Mullingar Barracks	January	€0.00	Refused
Muddy Pictures DAC	Kilbride Firing Range	February	€0.00	Cancelled by company
South Winds Blow Ltd	St. Bricin's Hospital	March	€0.00	Fee waived
Jack Martin	Aiken Barracks	March	€0.00	Refused
Muddy Pictures DAC	Kilbride Firing Range	March	€0.00	Cancelled by company
Niall Campion Productions	Cathal Brugha Barracks	April	€0.00	Fee waived
Ballyfermot College of Further Education	Curragh Camp	April	€0.00	Refused
Scannáin MMT CGA for TG4	Renmore Barracks	May	€500.00	
Blinder Films	Curragh Camp	May	€0.00	Refused
South Winds Blow Ltd	Cathal Brugha Barracks	May	€0.00	Fee waived
Dean Leonardson	Curragh Camp	May	€0.00	Refused

Questions - Written Answers

Name of Organisation	Location	Month	Amount (ex. Vat)	Comments
Noel Brady Film Maker	Cathal Brugha	May	€0.00	Cancelled by company
Troy Studios	Sarsfield Barracks	May	€0.00	Date to be confirmed
Donnacha Brady	Cathal Brugha Barracks	May	€0.00	Refused
Ciara O’Gorman, Gaisce - RTE	Curragh Camp	June	€0.00	Fee waived
Hell’s Kitchen / Romulus Entertainment	Cathal Brugha, Athlone, Baldonnel Barracks and Gormonston Camp & Curragh Camp	June	€0.00	Cancelled by company
Crossing the Line Films for RTE	Curragh Plains	June	€0.00	Refused
Rocket Science Productions	Glen of Imaal	June	€0.00	Cancelled by company
2017 Filming Requests on Department’s Property Continued				
Name of Organisation	Location	Month	Amount (ex. Vat)	Comments
Niall Martin - Location Manager	Sarsfield Barracks	June	€0.00	Refused
Rocket Science Productions	Curragh Camp	June	€0.00	Refused
South Winds Blow Ltd	Remore Barracks	June/July	€0.00	Cancelled by company
Mick Swan - Location Scout	Kilbride Firing Range	July	€0.00	Dates suggested unsuitable due to military training - revised dates requested
New Decade TV Ltd for RTE	Curragh Camp	August	€0.00	Fee waived
Barrow Coakley Photography	Cathal Brugha Barracks	August	€0.00	Fee waived
DJI Spark - Peter Goulding	Finner Camp	October	€0.00	Fee waived

Name of Organisation	Location	Month	Amount (ex. Vat)	Comments
Mick Swan - Location Scout	Columb Barracks	October	€0.00	Time & date for visit requested but no response received
RTE	Glen of Imaal	October	€0.00	Cancelled due to bad weather - to be rescheduled
Dearg Films for TG4	Sarsfield Barracks	October	€0.00	Refused
Karl Daly - Location Scout	Curragh camp	October	€0.00	Refused
Framework Films Ltd	Collins Barracks, Cork	November	€0.00	Fee waived
RTE	Curragh Camp	November	€0.00	Fee waived
Motive Television Ltd for TV3	Curragh Camp	November	€0.00	Fee waived
Total Number of requests: 32		Total amount:	€500.00	

Brexit Issues

647. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the preparations made in his Department in the event of no agreement being reached between the United Kingdom and the European Union on the terms of the UK's exit from the EU; if such preparations involve the drawing up of detailed and specific contingency plans in the event of a hard Brexit and a trade regime based on WTO tariffs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48774/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): As Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade with special responsibility for Brexit, Minister Coveney has responsibility for coordinating the whole-of-Government response to Brexit. In this capacity, he is working closely with his colleagues across Government to address the many challenges resulting from Brexit. This cooperation also involves the relevant State Agencies.

Work at Cabinet level is being prepared through cross-Departmental coordination structures. These represent a frequent and active channel through which all relevant Departments are providing their research, analysis and overall policy input to the Government's wider response to Brexit, including its priorities for the ongoing Article 50 negotiations between the EU and the UK.

As the outcome of the negotiations is not yet known, an important focus of the planning and preparation being undertaken through these structures is on deepening the Government's analysis and understanding of the exact consequences of a range of different possible scenarios. This represents an intensification of efforts to build on the Government's contingency planning.

The outcome of the vote of 23 June 2016 in the UK will have implications across all aspects of the business of the European Union. While the vote does not give rise to fundamental strategic issues for Defence Forces operations or for Ireland's continuing engagement within the

EU in the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), it is expected that Brexit will have an impact on future developments in the Defence sphere.

As the Deputy has previously been advised, on 19 January, 2015 Ireland signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Department of Defence, Ireland and the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence on enhancement on certain aspects of Security and Defence Co-operation. This provides a framework for developing and furthering bilateral co-operation and relations between the Department of Defence and the UK Ministry of Defence. The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding placed already existing co-operation arrangements in the Defence area between Ireland and the UK on a more formal and transparent footing, while fully respecting the differing policy positions and security arrangements of both States.

The MoU takes into account matters such as military forces training; exercises and military education; exchange of views on EU Common Security and Defence Policy; potential for joint contributions to UN Crisis Management Operations; joint procurement initiatives; pooling and sharing resources; general sharing on reform in defence services; potential for staff exchanges; joint contribution to Security Sector Reform and capacity building in crisis locations and the sharing of information.

Having regard to the bi-lateral arrangements already in place, and the fact Brexit does not give rise to fundamental strategic issues for Defence Forces operations or for Ireland's continuing engagement in the EUs Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), it is not considered that a detailed and specific contingency plan in the Defence sphere is necessary at this time. Such a requirement will be kept under constant review and all potential consequences in the defence sphere, arising on foot of ongoing negotiations will remain the subject of ongoing consideration by my Department throughout this process.

In that regard while the implications for the border will emerge during the course of the negotiations, it is this Government's stated goal to try to ensure that the current on-island border arrangements are maintained to the greatest extent possible. The fact of a UK exit from the EU does not of itself give rise to additional border security requirements at this time. Primary responsibility for the internal security of the State rests with the Department of Justice and Equality and An Garda Síochána. Responsibility for the security aspect of border control rests with An Garda Síochána while the Revenue Commissioners also have responsibilities relating to their particular mandate.

Among the roles assigned to the Defence Forces in the White Paper on Defence is the provision of Aid to the Civil Power which, in practice, means to provide assistance and support to An Garda Síochána when requested to do so. The Defence Forces also provide support to the Revenue Commissioners on request. The Defence Forces at all times keep operational plans under constant review. There is ongoing close liaison between An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces regarding security matters and regular coordination and liaison meetings take place.

The Government remains under no illusions about the complexity of these negotiations or the potential impacts that may arise on their conclusion. In that regard, I wish to reassure the Deputy that my Department is monitoring the ongoing situation and is engaged along with the Defence Forces in prudent planning to ensure that the Department and the Defence Forces are well prepared to address any potential issues or potential future threats arising in the defence area on foot of Brexit.

Departmental Staff Training

648. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the cost of providing external coaching and-or training services for staff development in his Department over the past five years and to date in 2017, by cost per year, in tabular form; the company that delivered the training courses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48803/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My Department is committed to supporting the ongoing learning and development of employees, to support them in delivering a high quality public service through targeted training programmes and by reimbursing fees where appropriate under the Refund of Fees Scheme. The following table outlines the information requested by the Deputy:-

2012

Cost	Company
€585.00	Achilles Procurement Services
€520.00	Alliance Francaise
€950.00	Carr Communications Ltd.,
€1,550.00	Civil Defence Services
€245.32	Civil Service Language Centre
€7,350.00	DCU
€8,856.00	Enovation Solutions
€31,646.11	IPA
€500.00	Kildare County Council
€1,650.00	Legal Training Services
€450.00	MAZARS
€1,400.00	Mr. Andrew McLaughlin
€300.00	National Learning Network Ltd.,
€1,190.00	O'Herlihy Access Consultancy
€7,665.00	Phoenix Safety
€520.00	Public Affairs Ireland
€600.00	Reading Development Institute
€495.00	Talent Fusion

Questions - Written Answers

€ 66,472.43	Total
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2013

Cost	Company
€1,066.50	Achilles Procurement Services
€811.29	AuditWare
€3,420.00	Baker Tilly
€4,400.00	CARR Communications LTD
€1,450.00	Civil Defence Services
€6,273.00	Enovation Solutions
€962.50	High Performance Training
€32,455.78	IPA
€1,166.50	Mr. Seamus O'Dwyer
€13,400.00	NUIG
€1,775.00	Phoenix Safety
€998.00	Professional Development Ltd.,
€590.00	Public Affairs Ireland
€1,200.00	Reading Development Institute
€552.50	Samson Training
€425.00	The Irish Times Ltd.,
€550.00	Western Management Centre
€ 71,496.07	Total

2014

Cost	Company
€4,280.00	Achilles
€3,336.11	Auditware
€7,194.00	Carr Communications

€450.00	Castle Mechanical Handling
€50.00	CISM
€1,150.00	Civil Defence Services
€400.00	Danish Emergency Management
€75.00	French Tuition
€1,260.00	IMA
€34,729.18	IPA
€1,875.00	Ipass
€650.00	Kildare Language Institute
€2,565.00	Legal Island
€405.00	Newbridge Fire Station
€215.03	Nottinghamshire NHS Trust
€13,400.00	NUIG
€2,944.75	Open University
€15,774.35	PAI
€975.00	Phoenix Safety
€1,040.00	Seamus O'Dwyer
€3,490.00	Western Management Centre
€1,500.00	Young Ireland
€ 97,758.42	Total

2015

Cost	Company
€1,810.00	Achilles
€5,675.00	Arcline
€1,364.70	BMF Business Services

Questions - Written Answers

€4,414.15	Carr Communications
€547.50	Chartered Accountant
€8,000.00	Common Purpose Ltd
€105.00	Construction Industry Federation
€3,500.00	Dept. of Justice
€50.00	Eventbrite
€2,463.00	French Tuition
€350.00	High Performance Training
€190.00	HV Safety Services
€783.70	ICISF Conference
€39,140.74	IPA
€2,771.80	Ipass
€440.00	IRN Publishing
€200.00	KYC
€1,265.00	Legal Island
€450.00	Mustdo Training
€750.00	Noel Tallon
€2,900.00	NUIG
€1,260.00	Octava Onlive
€2,825.00	Oiliuna
€6,116.80	PAI
€2,860.50	PDP Compliance Ltd.
€3,095.00	Pheonix Safety
€1,042.00	Seamus O'Dwyer
€950.00	Shane Martin

€1,000.00	William Conroy
€1,425.00	Young Ireland
€ 97,744.89	Total

2016

Cost	Company
€299.90	Accounting Technicians Ireland
€850.00	Achilles
€2,050.00	ALLONE Corporate Solutions
€1,482.15	Anthony Kerr
€2,730.00	Baker Tilly Ryan Glennon
€29,679.48	Becon Training
€1,250.00	BT Communication Ltd.
€95.00	Career Services
€1,700.00	Carr Communication
€2,418.77	CMG
€8,000.00	Common Purpose
€7,235.00	DCU
€360.60	DPER
€590.00	EAP Institute
€5,049.50	French Tuition
€3,362.64	GMIT
€315.00	Health & Mobility LTD
€21,409.96	IPA
€625.00	Irish Times Ltd.
€2,350.00	Kings Inn

Questions - Written Answers

€5,828.00	Legal Island
€5,000.00	NUIG
€3,350.00	Oiliuna
€10,549.86	Open University
€2,165.70	PAI
€200.00	Progressive Training
€5,900.00	RA Consulting
€3,220.00	Retirement Planning Council of Ireland
€399.00	Seamus O'Dwyer
€984.25	Shannon Consulting
€615.00	Turas Consulting
€650.00	Western Management
€175.00	Western Society
€2,950.00	Young Ireland
€ 133,839.81	Total

2017 - to date

Cost	Company
€4,025.00	ACCA
€2,115.00	Achilles
€1,740.00	Arcline
€6,324.67	Auditware
€180.00	Avanti Language Institute
€6,340.40	Beacon Training
€2,802.94	Byrne Wallace
€550.00	Carr Communications
€820.00	Chartered Accountant
€750.00	CMG

€950.00	CMSE
€8,000.00	Common Purpose
€2,850.00	Cork University
€1,680.00	Dept. of Justice
€2,600.00	DMS Personnel Consultants Ireland Ltd.
€4,051.28	DPER
€260.00	Dublin Rape Crisis Centre
€440.00	ECDL Ireland
€588.60	ERA
€1,428.00	French Tuition
€1,750.00	GMIT
€625.47	ICISF World Conf
€9,990.00	IMI
€21,230.00	IPA
€3,000.00	John O'Dowd Consultants
€4,700.00	Kings Inn
€7,265.00	Legal Island
€110.00	Mediators Institute of Ireland
€2,267.15	Mediavest
€1,647.16	Open University
€14,065.70	PAI
€1,270.00	Retirement Planning Council of Ireland
€1,513.86	RINA
€650.00	Safety Solutions
€53.28	SAI Global
€320.00	Seamus O'Dwyer

€9,245.00	Trigraph
€1,480.00	UCD
€8,450.00	University of Kent
€1,325.00	Western Management Centre Ltd.
€2,950.00	Young Ireland
€ 142,403.51	Total

Departmental Contracts

649. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the names of the companies renting a fixing and-or space on telecommunications and-or communications masts from his Department; the income received for each of the past five years for same, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48837/17]

650. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the income received by his Department from the renting to companies of space to use and-or take fixings from telecommunications and-or communications masts on site or on the roof of his Department, in each of the past five years, by location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48875/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 649 and 650 together.

In certain circumstances, the Defence Forces permit their telecommunications infrastructure to be used by private companies. On occasion, private companies are also permitted to erect infrastructure on military property. In both scenarios, rent is charged. Where a private company has erected infrastructure on military property the company may permit other companies to access their infrastructure. In these cases, the Department charges for access to the facility.

The income received by the Department of Defence in these circumstances is set out in the following table.

COMPANY	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
VODAFONE	€32,582.70	€43,532.70	€32,582.70	€32,582.70	€32,582.70
METEOR	€48,865.96	€24,741.45	€0.00	€13,370.10	€13,370.10
RTE	€10,000.00	€10,000.00	€10,000.00	€10,000.00	€10,000.00
EIRCOM	€12,300.00	€12,300.00	€12,300.00	€12,300.00	€10,000.00
O2	€10,000.00	€0.00	€20,000.00	€12,300.00	€12,300.00
TODAY FM	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€7,380.00	€3,690.00
AIRSPPEED	€3,517.50	€3,862.50	€3,690.00	€3,690.00	€2,767.50

DIGIWEB	€2,580.00	€922.50	€922.50	€922.50	€922.50
UPC	€153.73	€153.75	€0.00	€0.00	€307.46
TOTAL	€119,999.89	€95,512.90	€79,495.20	€92,545.30	€85,940.26

Defence Forces Properties

651. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the reason electricity bills have not been issued to some residents in the Defence Force building for the past six months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48902/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Electricity supplied to individual consumers in the Curragh camp cannot be billed directly from energy suppliers for technical reasons related to the distribution network in the camp. The individual meters are read on a bimonthly basis and bills for usage are issued from my Department. In early 2017, a review was undertaken of the basis on which charges were applied and a decision was made not to issue bills until this review was completed. However, this review is taking longer than anticipated due to the unique situation that prevails in the Curragh camp, as previously mentioned.

The process of issuing bills will recommence shortly. It is not intended to seek payment of arrears from any individual arising as a result of the non-issuing of bills over the course of the review. My Department will be in contact with individual electricity consumers in the Curragh in the near future.

Pension Provisions

652. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the pension being paid to a person (details supplied) is the correct amount; if the tax deductions are correct; and if an examination of the matter will be expedited. [48991/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The person concerned is in receipt of a Defence Forces occupational pension, the gross rate of which (i.e. before tax) is fully in accordance with the pension scheme rules applicable in his case. However, his Defence Forces pension is liable to income tax and the universal social charge on the same basis as applies generally. These are statutory deductions based on specific instructions issued by the Revenue Commissioners. The relevant PAYE and USC details are shown on his pension payslip.

Since October 2015, the processing and payment of monthly Defence Forces pensions on behalf of the Department of Defence is carried out by the Payroll Shared Services Centre (PSSC), which is part of the National Shared Services Office of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Instructions regarding the deduction of tax are sent directly to the PSSC by the Revenue Commissioners.

If the person concerned has any queries regarding the deduction of income tax or USC from his pension – including the reason his tax credits are changed during the course of a tax year – he is advised to contact his local Revenue office directly, the address of which is shown on his Tax Credit Certificate or on any correspondence received from Revenue.

Irish Red Cross Funding

653. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if funding for flood damage restoration and repair for a public amenity (details supplied) will be sanctioned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48992/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Government allocated a fund of up to €2m to the Irish Red Cross to be distributed as emergency humanitarian support to small businesses and community, sporting and voluntary bodies in County Donegal, which through no fault of their own have been unable to secure flood insurance and have been flooded following the exceptionally heavy rainfall on 22 and 23 August this year.

The purpose of the emergency fund, which was administered by the Irish Red Cross, was to provide a mechanism whereby those small businesses and organisations could apply to receive a once-off ex-gratia contribution towards the costs of returning their premises to their pre-flood condition. The scheme applies to buildings, contents, fixtures and fittings.

As the public amenity referred to by the Deputy does not fall into this category, it is not eligible for funding under the Irish Red Cross scheme.

Irish Red Cross Funding

654. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he will sanction funding for flood damage restoration and repair for a tourist facility (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49022/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Government allocated a fund of up to €2m to be distributed as emergency humanitarian support to small businesses and community, sporting and voluntary bodies in County Donegal which through no fault of their own were unable to secure flood insurance and were flooded following the exceptionally heavy rainfall of 22 and 23 August this year.

The purpose of the emergency fund, which was administered by the Irish Red Cross, was to provide a mechanism whereby those small businesses and organisations could apply to receive a once-off ex-gratia contribution towards the costs of returning their premises to their pre-flood condition. The scheme applies to buildings, contents, fixtures and fittings.

As the tourist facility referred to by the Deputy does not fall into this category, it is not eligible for funding under the Irish Red Cross scheme.

Departmental Communications

655. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the domain names registered to or owned by his Department or through a third party company. [49064/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The domain names registered to or owned by my department or through a third party company, are listed in the table.

Domain Name	Domain Name
asgard2.ie	irishmilitaryarchives.com
asgard3.ie	militaryarchive.ie
asgardii.ie	militaryarchives.ie
asgardiii.ie	ministerfordefence.com
civildefence.ie	ministerfordefence.net
defence.ie	ministerfordefence.org
defence.mobi	ministerofdefence.com
defenceminister.net	ministerofdefence.net
defenceminister.org	ministerofdefence.org
deptofdefence.com	necc.ie
deptofdefence.net	obdf.ie
deptofdefence.org	oep.ie
emergencyplan.ie	ombuddf.ie
emergencyplanning.ie	winterready.ie
irishmilitaryarchive.com	

Parliamentary Questions Costs

656. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the average costs associated with processing and answering written and oral parliamentary questions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49121/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The preparation of replies to Parliamentary Question is an integral part of my Department's business. It is not possible to separate out the cost of answering Parliamentary Questions from overall administration costs.

Some 660 Parliamentary Questions have been answered by my Department to date in 2017.

Defence Forces Museums

657. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the cost and budget from which the accommodation, laundry and breakfast costs, including costs of Defence Forces personnel carrying out catering and cleaning roles for a function (details supplied), was paid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49368/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): A private function was held in Dún Uí Mhaoilíosa on 10 November. This function did not give rise to any additional costs on the Defence Vote. The function was costed in advance and all costs are being met by the attendees.

Army Barracks

658. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the consideration given to making available unused barracks accommodation in order to assist in the homeless crisis. [49369/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The provision of housing accommodation is a matter in the first instance for the relevant local authorities. My Department is however committed to providing whatever assistance possible to support the implementation of the strategy on homelessness.

In this regard, my Department continues to engage with local authorities in relation to the acquisition of Departmental property that is no longer required for military purposes or housing. Discussions are ongoing in relation to the transfer of properties that could form part of the general housing stock available to local authorities, thus contributing to efforts in alleviating the problem of homelessness.

In addition, since 2014, part of St Bricin's military installation in Dublin has been made available to Dublin City Council as emergency accommodation for the homeless. The allocated area provides space for 27 beds.

Notwithstanding the above, it should be noted that particular issues arise in relation to providing accommodation to civilians within an operational military barracks, foremost amongst them being security. Furthermore, many vacant former housing units on barracks premises are in very poor state of repair. Their condition is inconsistent with the standard that would be required for living accommodation and a significant investment in both cost and time would be required in order to make them habitable and compliant with current health and safety legislation.