

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 7, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions Nos. 8 to 42, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 43 to 54, inclusive, answered orally.

Question No. 55 answered with Question No. 49.

Action Plan for Rural Development

56. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the work of the Action Plan for Rural Development specifically relating to the rollout of broadband and the revitalisation of towns and villages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1781/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Action Plan for Rural Development was published in January 2017 and contains 276 actions for delivery across a range of Government Departments, State agencies and other organisations to support the economic and social progress of rural Ireland.

One of the key objectives of the Action Plan is to bring high speed broadband to every premises in Ireland through the roll out of the National Broadband Plan. While the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment has overall responsibility for the National Broadband Plan, my Department is working closely with Local Authorities and other relevant bodies to prepare for the roll out of high speed broadband by identifying and resolving any local issues that might impact on the delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

My Department, through Minister Kyne, also co-chairs an Implementation Group with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Denis Naughten, to oversee 40 actions arising from the report of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce aimed at improving broadband and mobile phone coverage in the short-term. Quarterly Progress Reports on the Implementation Group's work are available on my Department's website.

The revitalisation of our rural towns and villages is also a key objective of the Action Plan for Rural Development. My Department has a number of initiatives in place which support this objective, including the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, the CLÁR Programme and the TidyTowns competition.

Since the launch of the Action Plan in January 2017 I have funded a wide range of projects under these initiatives, including 281 projects under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme,

with a total investment of €21.6 million being made over the next 15 months. The CLÁR programme provided funding of €7 million in 2017 for 231 projects, while I allocated €1.4 million to Tidy Towns Committees throughout the country to mark the 60th anniversary of the competition in 2018.

The second half-yearly Progress Report on the implementation of all of the measures in the Action Plan for Rural Development is currently being prepared by my Department and will be published shortly.

Leader Programmes Funding

57. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the funding provided in 2017 for the County Monaghan Leader programme; the value of the drawdown of this funding by the end of 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1615/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): LEADER is a multi-annual programme covering the period 2014-2020, with a total budget of €250 million over that period. €220 million of this funding has already been allocated to the Local Action Groups throughout the country which deliver the LEADER programme. The remaining €30 million is available for schemes which will be delivered at a national level.

The Funding Agreement for delivery of the LEADER Programme in the Monaghan area was signed on 8th July 2016, with funding of approximately €7.6 million approved over the lifetime of the programme. The allocation for each LEADER sub-regional area is provided for the duration of the programme, rather than on an annual basis. This provides greater flexibility to the Local Action Groups in managing their resources.

Expenditure for 2017 by the Monaghan Local Action Group amounted to €260,822. This expenditure relates to the costs of the Local Action Group in administering the Programme and engaging with potential applicants.

No project expenditure has yet been incurred in the Monaghan sub-regional area. However, as of 31st December 2017, 18 projects with a value of over €999,000 had been approved for funding by the Local Action Group. I understand that a further 4 projects, requesting over €260,000 in funding, are at various stages in the approval process. This funding will be drawn down as projects start to incur expenditure and submit payment claims.

I am confident that progress now being made by the Local Action Groups, along with the administrative improvements I made to the programme in 2017, will result in a continued increase in project approvals and substantial payments under the LEADER programme across all sub-regional areas over the coming months.

Dog Breeding Industry

58. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if his Department will review dog licensing and breeding legislation in view of a similar review now under way in the UK to provide tighter restrictions for breeding, living conditions and the sale of pups. [1677/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Responsibility for the Control of Dogs Acts 1986 to 2014, including the Dog Breeding Establishments Act

2010, transferred to the Department of Rural and Community Development in July 2017.

Under the Control of Dogs Acts, local authorities are responsible for operating and managing dog control and licensing services in their administrative areas. The Control of Dogs Act 1986 outlines requirements regarding the need to hold dog licences, and outlines the penalties for non-compliance. Given the requirements and the strict penal provisions for non-compliance that are already in place, I have no plans to amend the Control of Dogs Acts in respect of the requirement to hold dog licences.

Under the Dog Breeding Establishments Act, 2010, local authorities are responsible for the registration, inspection and regulation of dog breeding establishments within their areas. A public consultation process on the Dog Breeding Establishment Guidelines took place in 2017. The Department has completed its review of the submissions received and a draft final report is under consideration with a view to publication in the coming weeks.

I am aware of the plans announced by the UK Government to bring forward proposals for draft regulations relating to the licensing of dog-breeding and other animal-related businesses in England. This is the latest stage of a review process which began in the Summer of 2015. While the legislative framework in this country is different, I will have regard to the proposals being considered in the UK when considering possible next steps.

Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme

59. **Deputy Maria Bailey** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his plans and allocations for the continuation of the SICAP programme. [1697/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The previous Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme, or SICAP, ended on 31st December 2017, with the next programme rolling out for a 5 year period from 1st January 2018 to 31st December 2022. The new programme, as with the last one, was the subject of a public procurement process conducted by Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) under the remit of the Local Authorities. Tender results issued to all bidders on 24th November last.

The national annual budget allocation for the SICAP programme in 2018 is just over €38million. The programme has commenced in 47 of the 51 Lot areas. In four Lot areas, no tender was awarded and a negotiated procedure is now underway in each of the areas between the relevant LCDC and the Programme Implementer.

In areas where a negotiated process is taking place, my Department has extended the previous SICAP contract with the LCDC for a period of 3 months from 1st January 2018. The LCDCs are similarly extending their contracts with the existing Programme Implementers. This will ensure service delivery in the relevant areas is not affected. During this period funding for the contract extension will be provided based on the 2017 allocation for those Lot areas.

Dormant Accounts Fund

60. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the average net annual inflow of funds into the Dormant Accounts Fund over the past five years; the amount of unallocated funds in the fund at present; his plans to ensure that these funds are spent for the purposes of social, economic and educational disadvantage and on services for persons with a disability; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1215/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The most recent full-year information available to me on the Dormant Accounts Fund from the National Treasury Management Agency relates to 2016.

Over the five year period 2012 to 2016, the gross inflow of monies into the Dormant Accounts Fund totalled some €256 million. Over the same period, outflows from the Fund totalled just over €140 million.

The impact of these inflows and outflows was a net increase of €116 million in inflows to the Dormant Accounts Fund over the period 2012 to 2016. This equates to an average increase of €23 million per annum in inflows over the five year period.

The net value of uncommitted Dormant Accounts funds stood at €124.8 million at the end of September 2017, exclusive of a reserve for potential claims on the Fund by account holders, and commitments yet to be disbursed by the NTMA on foot of approvals to projects and programmes.

The legislation governing the Dormant Accounts Funds provides the framework for the disbursement of funds to measures solely targeted at socially, economically and educationally disadvantage people, and persons with a disability. The funding is allocated through a Disbursement Scheme, underpinned by annual Action Plans which set out specific programmes to be funded each year.

The 2017 Action Plan allocated funding of €40.4 million to 40 measures across a range of Government Departments and agencies. The Action Plan is available on my Department's website.

My Department will soon begin the preparation of a Dormant Accounts Action Plan for 2018 and will invite Departments to submit proposals for inclusion in the Plan. I will also be seeking an update on the balance in the Fund at the end of 2017 from the NTMA.

Charities Regulation

61. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he has met with or plans to meet with the members of the Charities Regulatory Authority; his views on the regulation of charity; his further views on the role of charity here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1784/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development (Deputy Seán Kyne): Responsibility for the Charities Regulatory Authority was assigned to the Minister for Rural and Community Development in July 2017 and was delegated to me, as Minister of State, in September last.

I met with both the Chairperson and the CEO of the Charities Regulatory Authority on the assumption of this responsibility. In addition, I am advised that there have been a number of familiarisation meetings between senior officials in the Department and their counterparts in the Authority. As part of the Department's oversight role, there are also scheduled governance meetings between the Chief Executive Officer and senior officials in my Department.

As the Deputy may be aware the Charities Regulatory Authority ("the Charities Regulator") was established on 16 October, 2014 pursuant to the Charities Act 2009. The Regulator is the State organisation responsible for registering and regulating all of Ireland's charities. The Charities Regulator is independent in the performance of its statutory functions.

Regulation of the charity sector is essential to enhance public trust and confidence in the governance, management and administration of charities in this country and to guard against exploitation of charitable causes by unscrupulous, unprincipled or unethical individuals. Better oversight of charities will secure the future of the charity sector which plays a key role in our civil society and helps to create and maintain vibrant communities.

Prior to the final delegation of functions at the Department I attended, with Minister Michael Ring, the launch of fundraising guidelines for charities. These guidelines aim to protect charities and promote public confidence in the organisations.

Dormant Accounts Fund

62. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he will report on the applications to the Dormant Accounts Fund in 2017; the amount of funding disbursed; the number of projects and initiatives supported through the fund in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1220/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The legislation governing the Dormant Accounts Funds provides a framework for the disbursement of funds for measures targeted at socially, economically and educationally disadvantage people, and people with a disability. The funding is allocated through a three-year Disbursement Scheme, underpinned by annual Action Plans which set out specific programmes to be funded each year.

My Department coordinates the preparation of the Disbursement Scheme and the Annual Action Plans across Government.

The Dormant Account Action Plan for 2017 was published by my Department in July 2017. The Plan allocated €40.4 million to 40 different measures across a range of Government Departments and agencies. Full details of the measures are contained in the Dormant Accounts Fund Action Plan which is available on my Department's website.

Monies in the Dormant Accounts Fund are managed by the National Treasury Management Agency, and requests for the draw-down of funds in respect of individual measures are made by the relevant Government Departments directly to the Agency. While the final draw-down information for 2017 is still being finalised, I understand that total disbursements from the Fund in 2017 were in the region of €16 million. This figure would include draw-downs in respect of some measures which were approved prior to 2017, under previous Action Plans.

An Annual Report will be prepared by my Department on the measures supported through the Dormant Accounts Fund in 2017.

National Planning Framework

63. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if his Department has made a submission on the draft national planning framework; if so, the general focus of the submission; if the submission includes issues such as the growth of towns and villages, the role of the regional economic and spatial strategies and community development structures among other issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1290/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The development of the National Planning Framework (NPF) is led by the Department of Housing, Plan-

ning and Local Government. Since the establishment of my Department in July 2017, my officials have participated on a Cross Departmental Steering Group led by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, to provide inputs to the NPF.

In the context of this Steering Group and bilateral engagement with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, my Department provided inputs to the draft National Planning Framework which was published in September 2017 for public consultation.

The general focus of the inputs included:

- the role of rural Ireland in the development of our country for the duration of the Plan and beyond;

- the central importance of our towns and villages in supporting sustainable economic and population growth nationally, and the role key settlements play in driving the development of each region;

- maximising the potential of rural Ireland through the diversification of enterprise sectors;

- the contribution which the Atlantic Economic Corridor can make in supporting regional development;

- ensuring the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies take account of regional and rural development concerns as they are developed by the Regional Assemblies; and

- having a stronger focus on the role of communities, community development, and local democratic structures.

The preparation of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies are provided for in the draft National Planning Framework.

I think these strategies will be very significant and I know work has already commenced on their drafting. I encourage all stakeholders to take part and contribute so that the strategies can reflect the strengths and needs of each region.

Also of important is how initiatives and projects which impact on more than one region are facilitated. One example is the AEC.

The overarching objective of the Atlantic Economic Corridor concept is to maximize the assets of the western region, from Kerry to Donegal and connect the economic hubs, clusters and catchments of the region a to attract investment, support job creation and contribute to an improved quality of life for those who live in the region.

My Department will continue to engage with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government as they work towards finalising the NPF.

Banking Sector

64. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if his attention has been drawn to recent publicity regarding an organisation's (details supplied) work here in relation to the establishment of a public banking network; if the organisation invited officials from the Department of Finance and his Department to participate in a field trip to Germany to examine the public banking network there; the technical assistance the organisation offered the Government in respect of the establishment of a public banking network here;

and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54711/17]

76. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the engagement his Department has had with organisations (details supplied) in respect of the establishment of a public banking system here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54716/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 64 and 76 together.

The Programme for a Partnership Government envisaged that An Post, the Irish League of Credit Unions and other interested stakeholders would be asked to investigate and propose a new model of community banking for Ireland, based, for example, on the Kiwibank model in New Zealand. The Programme for Government also includes a commitment to investigate the German Sparkassen model for the development of local public banks.

A project team comprising officials from my Department and the Department of Finance was established last year to progress this commitment. The project team carried out detailed research into the concept of a public banking model, with a particular focus on the Sparkassen model. In addition, a public consultation process, seeking views on the concept of a community banking model, ran for four weeks. A total of 16 replies from a range of stakeholders was received.

As part of their research, officials from both Government Departments met with representatives of the organisations referred to in the Deputy's question. The organisations in question put forward a proposal as to how a local public bank, based on the Sparkassen model, could work in Ireland. An invitation was extended to Irish officials to visit Germany to examine the public banking network there. However, the level of information provided by the organisations in their meetings with officials was sufficiently comprehensive to explain the model.

The Departmental officials have now finalised their report and have submitted their findings to the Minister for Finance and myself. The report will be brought to Government shortly for consideration.

Local Improvement Scheme

65. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the position regarding the local improvement scheme to local authorities throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1782/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Local Improvement Scheme supports improvement works on private, non-public roads, to improve access for people who live or work along those roads.

There has been very little funding available for this scheme in recent years due to constraints on public expenditure. However, I was very conscious of the underlying demand for the scheme in rural areas throughout the country.

I therefore announced the provision of €10 million to Local Authorities for a Local Improvement Scheme last September. Based on demand and the capacity of Local Authorities to complete works before the end of 2017, I announced an additional €7.4 million to Local Authorities for LIS roads at the end of November.

It is clear that there is a continuing demand for LIS funding in rural communities across Ireland, and I have therefore secured a further allocation of €10 million for the scheme in my Department's Estimate for 2018. I intend to announce details of the scheme shortly.

Action Plan for Rural Development

66. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he will report on the development of the Atlantic economic corridor; the work, including meetings, that have taken place since the establishment of his department; and if the inclusion of the AEC and its development has been sought by his department in the upcoming national planning framework and the capital plan. [1291/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Programme for Partnership Government and the Action Plan for Rural Development both contain a commitment to progress the concept of an Atlantic Economic Corridor. The concept was proposed in February 2016 by a group involving a number of Chambers of Commerce in the Western region and the American Chambers of Commerce of Ireland.

The overarching objective of the Atlantic Economic Corridor proposal is to maximise the assets along the western seaboard and connect the economic hubs, clusters and catchments of the region to attract investment, support job creation and contribute to an improved quality of life for those who live there.

The Atlantic Economic Corridor Taskforce was established by my colleague, Minister Michael Ring in March 2017 to progress the proposal. As Minister of State I chair the Taskforce which includes senior representatives from the business sector, key Government Departments, other public bodies, and Third Level institutions.

The Taskforce has met four times since it was established - most recently in Sligo - and will continue to meet on a regular basis. A number of sub-groups of the Taskforce have also been established to progress specific aspects of the overall proposal, such as examining infrastructure needs and enterprise property assets, and developing a communications strategy.

My Department has been working closely with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in the drafting of the National Planning Framework (NPF). The Atlantic Economic Corridor, and the need to improve access to the North-West in particular, is referenced in the draft Framework which was published for public consultation in September 2017.

My Department will continue to engage with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government as they work towards finalising the NPF. The forthcoming capital investment plan will be closely aligned to the NPF.

Action Plan for Rural Development

67. **Deputy Seán Canney** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the work undertaken on the development of the Atlantic economic corridor; his views on whether there are specific infrastructure projects which could form part of the corridor; and if his Department has sought the inclusion of the AEC in the national planning framework and the capital plan. [1289/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development (Deputy Seán Kyne): The Programme for Partnership Government and the Action Plan for Rural De-

velopment both contain a commitment to progress the concept of an Atlantic Economic Corridor. The concept was proposed in February 2016 by a group involving a number of Chambers of Commerce in the Western region and the American Chambers of Commerce of Ireland.

The overarching objective of the Atlantic Economic Corridor proposal is to maximise the assets along the western seaboard and connect the economic hubs, clusters and catchments of the region to attract investment, support job creation and contribute to an improved quality of life for those who live there.

My department colleague, Minister Michael Ring TD, established the Atlantic Economic Corridor Taskforce in March 2017 to progress the proposal and I now chair the Taskforce. The Taskforce includes senior representatives from the business sector, key Government Departments, other public bodies, and Third Level institutions.

The Taskforce has met four times since it was established and will continue to meet on a regular basis. A number of sub-groups of the Taskforce have also been established to progress specific aspects of the overall proposal, such as examining infrastructure needs and enterprise property assets, and developing a communications strategy.

Work on developing the AEC and identifying possible elements is ongoing. One project which I believe forms part of the AEC is the Western Rail Corridor which exemplifies what we are trying to achieve with the AEC in strengthening connectivity between growth centres. In my view the AEC would be strengthened with the continued development of the Rail Corridor, for example from Athenry to Claremorris, and the examination of other extensions such as a rail connection from Sixmilebridge to Shannon Airport.

On the AEC my department will continue to engage with stakeholders, including other Government departments, on its development.

Action Plan for Rural Development

68. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the labour training and support measures his Department will make available to rural communities in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1738/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): In January 2017, Realising our Rural Potential, the Government's Action Plan for Rural Development was launched. The Plan contains over 270 actions to be delivered by a range of Government Departments, State agencies and other bodies to support the economic and social development of rural Ireland.

The Action Plan contains measures across a range of policy areas which will help to maintain and revitalise rural communities across the country. A key component of the Plan is to support the creation of jobs throughout the regions to ensure that people who live in rural areas have increased opportunities for employment locally. The Plan aims to deliver 135,000 extra jobs outside of Dublin by 2020.

A number of actions in the Action Plan for Rural Ireland refer to SICAP and its role in supporting rural job seekers and disadvantaged groups.

The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) aims to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality through local, regional and national engagement and collaboration. It is managed and overseen by the Local Community Development Com-

mittees (LCDCs) in each Local Authority area, with funding coming from this Department, and co-funding from the European Social Fund under the Programme for Employability and Learning 2014-2020.

SICAP 2018-2022 came into operation on 1 January 2018. It remains the main social inclusion programme of Government supporting local community groups and individuals such as low income workers, young people not in education, employment or training, or who live in disadvantaged areas, through community development approaches to become less socially excluded. SICAP worked with 47,000 individuals in 2016, many of whom increased their work-readiness, received help in accessing employment or self-employment, or who received support to access a life-long-learning opportunity.

SICAP 2018-2022 was designed to reflect government policy and priorities, Ireland's changing social and economic landscape, and learning from the previous iteration of the Programme including the findings from an extensive consultation process, led out on by Minister Catherine Byrne, that was held in 2017, and also by the provisional findings from a series of evaluations by the ESRI on particular components of SICAP.

The next 6-monthly Progress Report on the implementation of the Action Plan will be published in February and I look forward to working with rural communities and our colleagues in other Government Departments and State agencies in continuing to drive the rural development agenda in 2018.

The Community Services Programme, which was transferred to my Department on 1 January, supports community organisations to provide local social, economic and environmental services through the application of a social enterprise model of delivery. One of the objectives of this Programme is to create sustainable jobs for those most distant from the labour market, in particular for those who are long term unemployed and from specific target groups. Some 425 contracts are in place with service providers nationally. The 2018 budget for the programme is €46.3m.

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme

69. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the funding stream that would be suitable for the upgrading of the surface of the Royal Canal tow-path from the western end of Mullingar to Kilpatrick bridge outside Mullingar; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1596/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Depending on the precise details of the proposal, a project such as the one described by the Deputy could be eligible for funding under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme which is administered by my Department.

The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme forms part of the Government's Action Plan for Rural Development and provides funding on a competitive basis for the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure, or the maintenance, enhancement and promotion of existing recreational infrastructure in rural Ireland. The scheme is implemented through the Local Authorities and has facilitated the development of greenways, blueways, walks, and other trails across the country in the last two years.

In 2016, I approved funding of €7.4 million for 117 projects under the scheme. I approved a further €11.4 million for 219 projects in 2017. I intend to launch a further round of the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme in 2018 to support important local, regional and national

projects and boost local economic activity.

Funding for this type of project may also be available under schemes operated by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport or Fáilte Ireland and the Deputy may wish to make enquiries directly to those bodies about any such schemes which they might administer.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

70. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the town and village programme allocations for 2017; and if he plans to continue with the scheme in 2018. [1485/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The 2017 Town and Village Renewal Scheme was launched in April last year, with a focus on improving the economic development of our rural towns and villages.

In October 2017, I approved funding of €21.6 million for 281 projects in rural towns and villages under the scheme. Details of the projects funded are available on my Department's website at: <http://drcd.gov.ie/subheader1/town-village-renewal-scheme/>.

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme forms an important part of the Action Plan for Rural Development and has the potential to stimulate economic recovery and job creation in towns and villages across rural Ireland. A number of the projects approved under the 2017 scheme focus on the development of enterprise centres and digital hubs which will have a positive impact on local economies.

I intend to launch a further round of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme in the first half of 2018, with an emphasis again this year on supporting projects which demonstrate strong economic impacts.

Departmental Expenditure

71. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the steps he will take to ensure a full spend of all the funds provided in the 2018 Estimate in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1216/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Revised Estimate for Public Services 2018 provides for gross expenditure of €231.5m, comprising €144m current expenditure and €87.5m capital expenditure in respect of the Department of Rural and Community Development.

My Department will continue to work with key stakeholders including local authorities, community and voluntary groups, and dedicated agencies to support job creation, attract tourism investment and contribute to sustainable economic development in rural Ireland. The Department will ensure that maximum use is obtained from the resources allocated and that value for money is delivered in respect of the 2018 allocation.

CLÁR Programme

72. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development

the extra measures it is planned to roll out under the CLÁR programme in 2018; his plans to introduce a measure to support group water schemes in CLÁR areas with the aim of ensuring that the last areas in the country that do not have access to either a public water supply or a high quality group scheme will get such a service at a reasonable cost; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1218/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The 2017 CLÁR programme provided total funding of just under €7 million for 230 projects across four Measures as follows:

Measure 1: Support for School and Community Safety Measures

Measure 2: Play Areas

Measure 3: Targeted Community Infrastructure

Measure 4: First Responder Supports

I propose to launch a further round of the CLÁR programme in 2018 and I will be considering the measures to be supported over the coming weeks.

Community Development Initiatives

73. **Deputy Maria Bailey** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the criteria for grant aid under the community facilities scheme. [1698/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The 2017 Communities Facilities Scheme was launched in March 2017. The scheme is administered on my Department's behalf by Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) under the remit of the Local Authorities.

Under the scheme community and voluntary groups can apply for grants for capital projects which benefit the local community. Applications must relate to at least one of the following key target group and thematic areas:

- Youth
- Older people
- Immigrants
- Refugees
- Travellers
- Ex-prisoners and families of prisoners/ex-prisoners
- Projects promoting cultural activity
- Projects promoting equality
- Community development projects
- Projects promoting integration
- Projects which are part of the Creative Ireland 2017-2022 initiative

Communities Facilities Scheme funding is only available for capital projects, or capital funded elements of projects. Further details on the 2017 scheme are available on my Department's website, at <http://drcd.gov.ie/community/communities-facilities-scheme/>

My Department is currently reviewing the Community Facilities Scheme to facilitate improvements for 2018. This review may result in some changes to the criteria that applied previously. Any changes will be communicated to all stakeholders on the announcement of the 2018 scheme.

Community Development Initiatives

74. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the initiatives to be put in place to support the community and voluntary sector in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1739/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department supports a range of initiatives in the community and voluntary sector and has lead responsibility for developing the relationship between the State and the community and voluntary sector. The Scheme to Support National Organisations which has been in place since 2008 is a key element in the State's support for the role of the sector in developing a strong and vibrant civil society. The scheme's objective is to provide multi-annual funding towards core costs of national organisations, focussed on organisations supporting disadvantage. Under a three-year funding programme which commenced in 2016, my Department will allocate €5.921m to the SSNO in 2018.

My Department also supports volunteer centres and volunteer information services nationwide, as well as a number of national organisations such as Volunteer Ireland and Young Social Innovators. The funding of these organisations is designed to strengthen and foster volunteerism in Ireland, building a support structure for volunteering locally from the bottom up. This is key to the Department's citizen engagement objectives and supports the spirit of participation in communities. A total of €3.5m was allocated to these organisations in 2017 and a similar amount will be available in 2018.

Furthermore, my Department supports Public Participation Networks (PPN) which have now been established in each local authority area. PPNs aim to enable the public to take an active formal role in relevant policy making and oversight committees of the local authority. Since 2015, funding of up to €50,000 has been provided by my Department to each PPN, with supplementary funding being provided by local authorities. Similar funding arrangements will continue in 2018 to support PPNs in terms of their continued operation and development.

My Department also provides funding to members of the Community and Voluntary Pillar to allow for input into the policy making process within the community and voluntary sector. This year my Department will allocate €0.565m to the Pillar.

Finally the Deputy will be aware that I launched a revised Seniors Alert Scheme last October. The objective of the Seniors Alert Scheme is to encourage community support for vulnerable older people in our communities through the provision of personal monitored alarms to enable older persons, of limited means, to continue to live securely in their homes with confidence, independence and peace of mind. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that, as a result of the revised scheme and a widespread publicity campaign, there has been a significant uptake by the targeted group. My Department will allocate €2.3m to the scheme in 2018.

Leader Programmes Funding

75. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the funding provided in 2017 for the County Cavan Leader programme; the value of the drawdown of this funding by the end of 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1616/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): LEADER is a multi-annual programme covering the period 2014-2020, with a total budget of €250 million over that period. €220 million of this funding has already been allocated to the Local Action Groups throughout the country who deliver the LEADER programme. The remaining €30 million is available for schemes which will be delivered at a national level.

The Funding Agreement for delivery of the LEADER Programme in the Cavan sub-regional area was signed on 8 July 2016, with funding of approximately €8.5 million approved over the lifetime of the programme. The allocation for each LEADER sub-regional area is provided for the duration of the programme rather than on an annual basis. This provides greater flexibility to the Local Action Groups in managing their resources.

Expenditure for 2017 by the Cavan Local Action Group amounted to €264,138. This expenditure relates to the costs of the Local Action Group in administering the programme and engaging with potential applicants.

No project expenditure has yet been incurred in the Cavan sub-regional area. However, as of 31 December 2017, 15 projects with a value of over €827,000 had been approved for funding by the Local Action Group. I understand that a further 3 projects, requesting over €59,000 in funding, are at various stages in the approval process. This funding will be drawn down as projects start to incur expenditure and submit payment claims.

I am confident that progress now being made by the Local Action Groups, along with the administrative improvements I made to the programme in 2017, will result in a continued increase in project approvals and substantial payments under the LEADER programme across all sub-regional areas over the coming months.

Question No. 76 answered with Question No. 64.

Dormant Accounts Fund

77. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his views on the recommendation that credit unions be brought under the aegis of the Dormant Accounts Fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1792/18]

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.

The legislation governing the Dormant Accounts Fund provides for schemes for the disbursement of funds that are unlikely to be reclaimed, for the purposes of supporting programmes or projects to assist specified disadvantaged groups. My Department coordinates these disbursement schemes.

Credit unions are currently not subject to the dormant accounts legislation. Dormant accounts in credit unions, and the practices surrounding them, are governed by Rule 22 of the Standard Rules for Credit Unions published by the Irish League of Credit Unions.

Detailed analysis and consultation would need to be carried out to establish the potential merits of adding dormant credit union accounts to the Dormant Accounts Fund. In practical terms, increasing the amount available in the Fund in this way would not necessarily allow for the introduction of new dormant accounts measures or programmes. Government Departments must source monies for dormant accounts programmes and measures from their Exchequer allocation in the same way as with all other funding programmes. It is only when monies are expended on dormant accounts measures that Departments can seek reimbursement from the Dormant Accounts Fund

Departmental Strategies

78. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Taoiseach if work has officially commenced on developing a comprehensive roadmap to double Ireland's global footprint; and if so, the expected date this work will be completed and published. [1509/18]

94. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Taoiseach his plans to publish a report on plans to double Ireland's global footprint; and the expected publication date of the report. [53968/17]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 78 and 94 together.

The aim of the *'Ireland's Global Footprint 2025'* initiative is to double the impact and scope of Ireland's overseas footprint in the period to 2025, enhancing our ability to advance our strategic international goals, and to promote our interests internationally.

A detailed process of engagement to advance the initiative is underway involving all relevant Departments and State Agencies.

A finalised plan will be ready for consideration by Government in the coming weeks, and it is envisaged that the initiative will be launched to coincide with the St. Patrick's Day period.

Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements

79. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he has met with the religious leaders recently. [1385/18]

The Taoiseach: On 31 August last, I held a formal meeting under the structured dialogue process with representatives of the Catholic Church, led by Archbishop Eamon Martin. I was accompanied at the meeting by the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation and by the Ministers for Education and Skills; Health; Transport, Tourism and Sport and Employment Affairs & Social Protection.

A wide ranging discussion took place on a range of important national and international issues including the World Meeting of Families in August 2018 and the possibility of a visit to Ireland by the Pope, education issues, the 8th Amendment of the Constitution, Northern Ireland, overseas development aid, social and justice issues. I was very pleased with the engagement that took place and found the exchange to be valuable. Churches and faith communities play an important role in Irish life and I think it is very beneficial that Government should engage with them in a structured way.

This was the first in a series of meetings that I will be holding with dialogue partners. I will be meeting with representatives of the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches in the coming week.

I also recently received a courtesy call from Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, as is traditional around Christmas time and the New Year.

Cabinet Committee Meetings

80. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach when Cabinet committee C - European Union including Brexit - last met; and when the committee will next meet. [1386/18]

The Taoiseach: I established Cabinet Committee C to cover issues relating to the European Union, including Brexit. It assists Government in its ongoing consideration of Brexit and also supports my participation as a member of the European Council.

Cabinet Committee C last met on 11 September. The date of the next meeting has not yet been confirmed.

Preparing for and dealing with Brexit in a way that delivers the best possible outcome for the country remains a top priority for the Government. Its potential consequences cut across very many areas of our national and economic life, and it is being dealt with in a whole-of-Government way, including through Cabinet Committee C, and also through Cabinet Committee A, which covers issues relating to the economy, jobs and competitiveness. There has been regular discussion of Brexit issues at full Cabinet meetings, including in the run-up to the December agreement between the EU and the UK, and at the all-day meeting in Cork last year.

Question No. 81 answered with Question No. 4.

Government Information Service

82. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach the Government initiatives in 2017 that promoted State services or welfare payments, public awareness on regulatory changes and public consultations that involved advertising and promotion on television, radio, newspapers and online, in tabular form; the level of expenditure for each such initiative; and if the strategic communications unit was involved in each initiative including the issuing of instructions and advice on promoting each such initiative. [54417/17]

83. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach if a public procurement tender process was carried out for each Government branded information initiative in 2017 that promoted State services or welfare payments, public awareness on regulatory changes and public consultations, in tabular form. [54418/17]

84. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach his views on confirmation by a person (details supplied) that the Government branded information initiative was conceived by the strategic communications unit; and if all local, national and online media information awareness campaigns on State services which were previously the responsibility of Government Departments will be under the Government brand henceforth. [54419/17]

88. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach the level of expenditure by his Department from 1 January 2017 to date on advertising of Government information campaigns published specifically in national and regional newspapers in addition to all online advertising for all such

Government information campaigns; the name of each such information campaign to which this expenditure related; and the amount in euro, in tabular form. [54432/17]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 82 to 84, inclusive, and 88 together.

The Strategic Communications Unit in my Department was involved in the Government initiatives in 2017 listed in the following table.

Initiative	SCU Involvement	Cost **
Back to School	Video support and sponsored posts on social media	Work completed, invoices to be received. Est costs €10,000 ex VAT
Treatment Benefits	Video support, sponsored posts on social media and provision of the Government of Ireland logo	€5,445.83 Further invoices due for social media spend
Winter Ready	Provision of Government of Ireland logo	NIL
Regional Development Fund	Video support, sponsored posts on social media and provision of the Government of Ireland logo	€7905.83
Budget '18	Video support, sponsored posts on social media and provision of the Government of Ireland logo	Work completed, invoices to be received. Est costs €15,000 ex VAT
Bliain na Gaeilge	Provision of the Government of Ireland logo - Rialtas na hEireann	NIL
Luas Cross City	Video support, sponsored posts on social media and provision of Government of Ireland logo.	Work completed, invoices to be received. Est costs €5,000 ex VAT
Healthy Ireland	Creative Production for Radio and Digital media campaign	€16,605 Further invoices to follow.

**These figures relate to expenditure incurred and to be incurred by the Strategic Communications Unit and do not include costs incurred by the relevant department on other media activity around each campaign.

There was no spend by my Department on advertising government Information campaigns in national and regional newspapers in 2017.

All contracts awarded by my Department are procured in accordance with standard public procurement rules through the Office of Government Procurement.

As part of the Government's simplification of communications for Irish citizens, one of the main projects under development is streamlining the myriad of Government identities into one unified Government of Ireland identity. International best practice has demonstrated that rationalising Government branding can create notable efficiencies, cost savings and significant improvement in clarity for citizens as to the work of Government.

Countries such as Canada, the UK and the Netherlands have successfully undertaken significant Government identity rationalisation projects in the last decade.

Building on the identity work developed as part of the Creative Ireland 2017 work programme - a streamlined identity “Rialtas na hÉireann” Government of Ireland, with the traditional Harp is now being piloted across Government.

Departmental Legal Cases Data

85. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Taoiseach the number of extant legal proceedings to which the Attorney General is a party or a notice party in which the constitutional validity or consistency of an enactment has been challenged; the enactments involved and the present stage of those proceedings; the number of those cases in which a Minister is not also a party; and the number of cases in which the Director of Public Prosecutions or another public authority is also a party. [54429/17]

The Taoiseach: The information sought by the Deputy is wide-ranging and its production would necessitate a manual audit of a significant number (c.10,000) of the litigation files open in the Offices of the Attorney General and the Chief State Solicitor. Current statistical reporting from the Offices’ Case Management System does not capture the particular aspects of the Deputy’s query, for example, information on the various enactments under challenge in any proceedings. Additionally, cases remain active on the system until all aspects of the matter are concluded, which may extend well beyond judgment or settlement in a case, if the taxation of costs arises.

Commencement of Legislation

86. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Taoiseach the Acts or parts of Acts awaiting commencement within his area of statutory responsibility; and the reason for the delay in commencement in each case. [54430/17]

The Taoiseach: There are no Acts, or parts of Acts under the Department of the Taoiseach awaiting commencement.

Departmental Expenditure

87. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach the level of expenditure by his Department or organisations under the aegis of his Department from 1 January 2017 to date on photography, advertising, communications advice, public relations, website development, media interview training and preparation; the events, campaigns or policies to which this expenditure related; and the company or person to which such payments were made, in tabular form. [54431/17]

The Taoiseach: The following tables detail expenditure by my Department on photography, advertising, communications advice, public relations and website development for 2017. There was no expenditure on media interview training and preparation.

No expenditure was incurred in these categories by the National Economic and Social Development Office (NESDO), the only body under the aegis of my Department.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Company	Detail	Amount
Frank Fennell Photography Ltd	Photography services for visit of UK PM Theresa May, including supply of images and distribution to media.	€695.25
K. Ziegler	Photography services for the Taoiseach's visit to Rome, November 2016	€357.00
Dowlings Pharmacy	Passport photos	€12.00
Dowlings Pharmacy	Visa photos	€12.00
Maxwell Photography Ltd	Photography services for the Department of the Taoiseach	€571.95
Maxwell Photography Ltd	Photography services: Ministers receiving their seals of office	€438.52
Donal Moloney	Photography for "Finite Lives" report	€5,675.00
Marty Katz Photography	Photography services for Taoiseach, Washington DC, St. Patrick's Day events.	€2,354.24
Tom Sandler Photography	Photography services for Taoiseach visit to Toronto, Canada Trade Mission	€594.62
Maxwell Photography Ltd	Photography services, appointment of ADC	€258.30

ADVERTISING

Company	Detail	Amount
FCR Media Ltd	Departmental entry in State Directory Section of Phonebook 2017/2018	€5,571.90
Cawley Nea TBWA Ltd	Production costs of videos for Regional Development Fund and Treatment Benefits including €2,000 for social media spend on RDF.	€13,351.55
Cawley Nea TBWA Ltd	Production for radio and digital media advertising: Healthy Ireland Campaign	€16,605.00

COMMUNICATIONS ADVICE/PUBLIC RELATIONS

Company	Detail	Amount
Q4 PUBLIC RELATIONS	PR and Communication Services for Data Summit 2017	€30,750

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT

Company	Detail	Amount
pTools	Development work on Dept. Taoiseach's website	€1,240.20
pTools	Development work on mer-rionstreet.ie website	€157.85

Question No. 88 answered with Question No. 82.

Brexit Negotiations

89. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on the planned meetings of Brexit sherpas in 2018. [54450/17]

The Taoiseach: The Second Secretary General in the Department of the Taoiseach acts as Ireland's Sherpa. In this capacity, he meets and exchanges views regularly with his EU counterparts on a range of EU issues, including those in relation to Brexit.

At this time, no formal meetings of Sherpas have yet been scheduled for 2018 however, communication is on going and regular.

Central Statistics Office Reports

90. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Taoiseach when the CSO will be in a position to publish figures bringing crime statistics up to date. [54451/17]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh): The publication of Recorded Crime statistics by the CSO is dependent on the provision of PULSE data by An Garda Síochána (AGS) to the CSO. AGS are currently reviewing the homicide data recorded in the PULSE system. The CSO recognises the importance of recorded crime statistics to users and have engaged with AGS to complete this review as quickly as possible. As AGS have indicated that the review process in relation to the queries raised by CSO should be completed in the near future, the CSO plans to recommence publication of recorded crime statistics within the first six months of 2018.

Consultancy Contracts Data

91. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Taoiseach the external consultant reports commissioned by his Department since March 2011; the costs per report; the company involved in each case; the title of each report; and the publication date, in tabular form. [54489/17]

The Taoiseach: The following table details the external consultant reports commissioned by my Department since March 2011.

Name	Costs	Date of Commission	Date of Publication	Consultant
Health and Safety Statement 2011	€1,270	2011	2011	QTS Ltd
Health and Safety Statement 2012	€1,270	2012	2012	QTS Ltd
Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan Assessment and Disabled Access Review	€307	2013	2013	QTS Ltd
Health and Safety Statement 2013 and Risk Assessment	€1,783	2013	2013	QTS Ltd
Local Diaspora Toolkit	€14,300	2015	2015	Clinton Institute UCD
Getting smarter about smart cities: Improving data privacy and data security	€14,058	2015	2015	Maynooth University
Dublin's North East Inner City	€11,800	2016	2017	Kieran Mulvey
Historical Research Project	€2,608	2017	2017	University College Dublin
Health and Safety Statement 2017 and Risk Assessment	€2,583	2017	2017	Quadra

Departmental Expenditure

92. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Taoiseach the photography costs for his Department in each year since March 2011, inclusive of costs incurred from use of the ministerial allowance; the list of occasions for which photographers were booked; the photographers used; the breakdown of costs associated with each occasion that a photographer was used in tabular form; and if there is a policy regarding the booking of photographers within his Department. [54492/17]

The Taoiseach: The information on photography costs for my Department for the period from March 2011 to December 2017, inclusive, is set out in the following tables. These tables include the cost, the name of the photographer and the occasions involved.

Photographers are engaged for official purposes only. Local photographers are used on

international visits, trade missions etc., to maximise cost efficiencies. Photography costs in my Department have reduced significantly in recent years. The 2017 expenditure of €10,969 represents a reduction of more than 85% when compared with expenditure of €83,398 in 2008.

Increasingly my Department utilises its own staff to take photographs in-house, thereby reducing costs.

PHOTOGRAPHY

2011

Vendor Name	Description	Amount
The Press Association	The Press Association, Nottingham	€ 139.30
Hackett's Reprographics	Visa photos for 1 of the Taoiseach's delegation for USA Mar 2011, 10 Mar 2011	€ 20.25
Maxwell Photography	1916 Commemoration 24/04/2011	€ 502.45
Maxwell Photography	SDLP 14/04/2011	€ 371.17
Maxwell Photography	Launch of Census 10/3/2011	€ 357.25
Maxwell Photography	Newly appointed Ministers 15/03/2011	€ 478.25
Maxwell Photography	Visit of Jesse Jackson 21/03/2011	€ 409.58
Maxwell Photography	Book of Condolence - Japan 22/03/2011	€ 401.42
Maxwell Photography	US Ambassador Dan Rooney 28/03/2011	€ 401.42
Maxwell Photography	Jpegs 1916 Commemoration 04/04/2011	€ 60.50
Maxwell Photography	Mass New Dail 09/03/2011	€ 508.50
Maxwell Photography	Taoiseach Office Photo Call 09/03/2011	€ 538.75
Maxwell Photography	Reception New Ministers 09/03/2011	€ 391.13
Maxwell Photography	New Cabinet Meeting 10/03/2011	€ 492.17
Maxwell Photography	New Ministers Appointments 09/03/2011	€ 780.75
Maxwell Photography	Dr. Garret Fitzgerald's Funeral 21-22 May 2011	€ 2,359.50
My Photobook.ie	27 May 2011 Photographic prints	€ 140.80
Maxwell Photography	President Obama Visit 23 May 2011	€ 4,537.50

Vendor Name	Description	Amount
Maxwell Photography	Taoiseach Enda Kenny & Church Leaders on 19 May 2011 at Government Buildings	€ 409.58
Maxwell Photography	British PM Visit to Gov. Buildings on 18 May 2011.	€ 629.50
Maxwell Photography	US Congressman on 16 May 2011. assignment covering attendance, taking colour, processing, digital contact sheet.	€ 280.42
Maxwell Photography	Hungarian Prime Minister 01-06-11	€ 409.58
Maxwell Photography	Excellence Awards 09/06/2011	€ 857.59
Maxwell Photography	North South Ministerial Council 10-6-11	€ 812.21
Maxwell Photography	President of European Council 17/6/11	€ 562.04
Maxwell Photography	President Obama Visit 23 May 2011	€ 260.15
Maxwell Photography	President Obama and Cabinet Ministers 23 May 2011	€ 740.52
Maxwell Photography	New Ambassadors 30-6-11	€ 332.75
Maxwell Photography	Chinese Delegation	€ 357.25
Maxwell Photography	Saudi Minister 14 June 2011	€ 280.42
Maxwell Photography	Richard Haass meets Taoiseach Enda Kenny on 01/04/2011	€ 371.17
LK Photo	Costs relating to St. Patrick's Day Visit to Washington 2011	€ 2,106.14
Maxwell Photography	New Sec Gen and Ian Paisley on 26/07/2011.	€ 318.84
Maxwell Photography	Meeting EU Parliament President 12 July 2011.	€ 696.05
Maxwell Photography	Strategy for International Services Industry 14-7-2011	€ 349.08
Hackett's Reprographics	7x5 Digital Prints	€ 30.76
J. Higgins Photos	Photos Taoiseach 4/5 May 2011 visit to New York	€ 303.30
Maxwell Photography	Arvato meeting with Taoiseach 21 Sept 2011.	€ 560.84
BANK OF IRELAND	19 November 2011 - www.gettyimages.com	€ 212.96
Maxwell Photography	Photocall Taoiseach & New SDLP Leader 09/11/2011.	€ 340.92

Questions - Written Answers

Vendor Name	Description	Amount
Maxwell Photography	Presidential Inauguration on 11/11/2011.	€ 3,956.70

2012

Company	Detail	Amount
Maxwell Photography	Taoiseach signs Book of condolence 20 Dec 2011.	€ 371.17
Maxwell Photography	Taoiseach - Christmas Media Meeting 22 Dec 2011.	€ 296.75
The Press Association	12 January 2012 - Photos of Prime Minister David Cameron with Taoiseach Enda Kenny 10 Downing Street.	€ 122.01
Maxwell Photography	British Irish Council 13/01/12	€ 531.05
Maxwell Photography	Taoiseach meeting with Deputy PM Nick Clegg	€ 377.30
Maxwell Photography	Blue Star Programmes on 07/02/2012.	€ 539.36
Maxwell Photography	EU Presidency Job winning logo on 02/02/2012.	€ 687.26
Maxwell Photography	Taoiseach & Tánaiste attend 'Progress to date' launch 07/03/2012.	€ 195.57
Frank Fennell Photography Ltd	Launch of the Stability Treaty Website, 19 April 2012.	€ 409.63
Frank Fennell Photography Ltd	Olympic Torch Photo-call at Govt Buildings on 06/06/2012.	€ 268.45
QiLai	Photographer for Taoiseach's visit to China 25/28 March 2012	2,817.49
Maxwell Photography	Carers Strategy Launch in the Italian Room on 19th July 2012.	€ 439.11
LK Photos	Taoiseach's visit to US 19-21 March 2012.	€ 1,774.78
Lafayette Photography Ltd	NSMC in Farmleigh on 15/06/2012	€ 174.24
Lafayette Photography Ltd	National Day of Commemoration 08/07/2012	€ 555.75
Lafayette Photography Ltd	Olympic Reception at Farmleigh 15/08/2012 - CD of photographs	€ 330.16

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Company	Detail	Amount
Lafayette Photography Ltd	Official Photography services for visit of Secretary of State Northern Ireland on 01 Oct 2012.	€ 87.66
Michael Hudson Photos	Taoiseach's Visit to Chicago, 17 March 2012	€ 302.35
Lafayette Photography Ltd	18hrs of photography over 4 days for the JPEGs for Who's Who on the Irish Presidency Website	€ 3,168.51

2013

Company	Detail	Amount
Frank Fennell Photography Ltd	EU Conference of Presidents, Dublin Castle on 31 December 2012	€ 116.85
Frank Fennell Photography Ltd	Presidency meeting of European Parliament Leaders, Dublin Castle 29th Nov 2012	€ 430.51
Maxwell Photography	Photography Prints for Convention Inaugural Meeting on 1st Dec 2012.	€ 1,763.46
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Family photo shot, post production touch up + prints (36 copies) for the EU Directors General Informal meeting (13-14/1/2013)	€ 512.62
Maxwell Photography	2 JPEG images of the Taoiseach/Cyprus President Nov 2005 - 28 Jan 2013.	€ 34.44
Lafayette Photography Ltd	Eucharistic Congress Reception Dublin Castle 1st July 2012	€ 171.01
Lafayette Photography Ltd	Visit of Secretary of State Northern Ireland on 01 Oct 2012, 18 images sent to media	€ 19.43
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Photocall for 40 years in the EU, Art Exhibition, 25 February 2013.	€ 318.54
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Informal Justice and Home Affairs meeting, Dublin Castle, 18/01/13	€ 1,471.99

Questions - Written Answers

Company	Detail	Amount
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	EU Council President Herman Van Rompuy visit, Dublin Castle, 9/1/2013	€ 1,645.47
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Informal Justice and Home Affairs meeting, session 2, Dublin Castle, 17/1/2013	€ 1,449.89
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Informal EU Affairs meeting, Dublin Castle 21/01/13.	€ 1,564.62
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Informal meeting of Employment 8th Feb. 2013 Dublin Castle.	€ 817.91
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Informal meeting of Employment 7th Feb. 2013 Dublin Castle.	€ 1,573.31
Levon Biss Photography Ltd	Prints of magazine cover 26/11/2012	€ 111.95
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	31st Dec 2012 for EU Flag Raising Ceremony attended by Taoiseach at Dublin Castle.	€ 669.09
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Visit of Presidents Barroso & Schulz at Government Buildings on 28/2/2013. - Post Production Fee	€ 257.43
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Informal meeting of Defence Ministers 13/2/2013, Dublin Castle.	€ 817.91
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Informal meeting of Development & Co-operation Ministers 12/2/2013, Dublin Castle.	€ 1,559.45
M M McNally Photographer	Taoiseach's visit to Downing Street on 11 March 2013.	€ 335.03
E Hill Photography	Taoiseach's visit to Enniskillen, 11 November 2012.	€ 700.60
Peter Cavanagh Photography	Who's Who for Presidency. 27/28 Sept. 2012 & 16 Oct 2012.	€ 1,600.00
Magnum Computers	Photos of Taoiseach's visit to Cleveland, Ohio. October 2012.	€ 192.41
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Gymnich meeting - 23rd March 2013.	€ 484.58

Company	Detail	Amount
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Prints, Presentation Folders, Envelopes relating to Host Photography for Informal Meeting of Energy Ministers at Dublin Castle 24 April, 2013	€ 1,181.62
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Prints, Presentation Folders, Envelopes relating to Host Photography for Informal Meeting of Environment Ministers at Dublin Castle 23 April, 2013	€ 1,307.04
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Informal Meeting of Environment Ministers at Dublin Castle on 22nd April 2013	€ 821.57
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Prints, Presentation Folders, Envelopes relating to Host Photography for Informal Meeting of Ministers for Trade at Dublin Castle 18 April, 2013	€ 1,535.67
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Hunger-Nutrition Conference at Dublin Castle 15 April, 2013	€ 968.41
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	ECOFIN Ministerial Informal meeting on 13/4/2013	€ 1,870.49
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Prints, Presentation Folders, Envelopes relating to Host Photography for Informal Meeting of ECOFIN Ministerial Informal 12 April 2013.	€ 4,126.55
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Hunger-Nutrition & Climate Change at Dublin Castle on 16th April 2013.	€ 817.91
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Commission College meeting Dublin Castle on 10 Jan 2013 - Prints & Digital Imaging	€ 2,042.61
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Health Informal Ministerial Meeting 4th March, Dublin Castle attendance	€ 276.75
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	EU Presidency Team Group Shot on 01 May 2013.	€ 302.58
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Health Informal Ministerial Meeting 5th March 2013- Dublin Castle.	€ 1,134.33

Questions - Written Answers

Company	Detail	Amount
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Gymich meeting 22 March 2013, Photography & Hi Res imaging	€ 1,570.00
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Ministerial Informal, Agriculture Ministers on 27th & 28th May 2013	€ 2,453.74
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Ministerial Informal - Competitiveness [Dept. DJEI] 2 May 2013	€ 817.91
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Informal meeting of Competitiveness - Council day on 03 May 2013.	€ 1,134.34
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Family photos of Presidency team at Government Buildings on 01 May 2013.	€ 31.38
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Presidency Liaison Officers Photos at Dublin Castle on 27 May 2013.	€ 162.01
Marty Katz & James Higgins	St Patrick's Day Visit, New York - 16-17 March 2013	€ 2,235.66
Maxwell Photography	North South Ministerial Meeting on 05/07/2013 at Dublin Castle Sundays F.T.P. images to Media outlets	€ 706.02
Maxwell Photography	EU Presidency staff event on 05/07/2013 at Dublin Castle - Upload of images to online gallery	€ 292.74
Maxwell Photography	Round table discussion with the Taoiseach and on Online Retailers on 06 Sept 2013.	€ 292.74
Maxwell Photography	Taoiseach's meeting with Bill Clinton at Government Buildings - 09/10/2013	€ 249.69

2014

Company	Detail	Amount
Maxwell Photography	Prints of the Queen & President Obama's visits, May 2011	€77.18
Maxwell Photography	Photography assignment, Taoiseach's Address of the Nation, 15th December 2014	€956.94

Company	Detail	Amount
Maxwell Photography	Photography Services for the Convention on the Constitution final plenary meeting 22-23 February 2014	€511.68
DNP Service	Taoiseach's visit to Japan, 3-4 December 2013.	€244.23
Maxwell Photography	Photography assignment for the visit of the Spanish PM on the 6th March 2014	€519.06
Maxwell Photography	Photography assignment for the visit of the German Prime Minister on the 7th March 2014	€396.06
Maria Photography	Taoiseach's visit to Abu Dhabi & Dubai, January 2014.	€2695.8
Dan Hallissey Photography	Taoiseach's visit to Boston, 16 March 2014.	€506.77
Marty Katz Photography	Photography for Taoiseach Enda Kenny & delegation's trip to Washington DC on 13 & 14 March 2014	€1740.64
Maxwell Photography	Official Photography at State Funeral of Albert Reynolds Aug 2014 at Mansion House and Donnybrook Church	€2841.3
James Higgins Photography	Photographs of the Taoiseach's visit to New York on 17 March 2014.	€252.71
Dowlings Pharmacy	Passport photos 04 Sep 2014	€6.00
Boots Chemist	Photo prints for Taoiseach's office 13 July 2014	€2.10
Getty Images International	EU, All About Jobs campaign, purchase of iStock photo subscription for 3 months, 7th Oct 2014	€207.87
Maxwell Photography	Photography for North South Ministerial Council on 3rd Oct 2014, Dublin Castle.	€547.35
CreativeShot Photography	United Irish Cultural Center - San Francisco 4 June 2014.	€753.07
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	EU - Photography of Minister Ged Nash at 2 events in Carlow 26th November 2014	€491.14

2015

Company	Detail	Amount
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	EU - 10 Low Resolution images from Minister Ged Nash events in Carlow 26 November 2014	€124.85
Getty Images International	EU 'All About Jobs campaign' purchase of monthly iStock photo subscription for January 2015	€207.87
Department of Foreign Affairs	Photographs of the Taoiseach Enda Kenny attending Youth Reception - Irish Consulate New York September 2014	€198.68
Mr John Kingman	Photography for Taoiseach's visit to New York, 22-24 September 2014.	€317.89
Getty Images International	All About Jobs - purchase of one year iStock subscription for stock photos for All About Jobs section of Merion St, 25 Feb 2015	€1,966.77
Dowlings Pharmacy	Dowlings Pharmacy - Passport photos 26 Feb 2015	€6.00
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Photography costs for the visit of Mr. Manuel Valls Prime Minister of France to Government Buildings 24 April 2015	€160.00
Mac Innes Photography Ltd	Photography costs for the visit of Mr. Manuel Valls Prime Minister of France to Government Buildings 24 April 2015	€181.50
Marty Katz Photographer	St. Patrick's Day 2015. Taoiseach's visit to Washington, DC, USA. 16-17 March 2015.	€2,459.34
Allison Shirref Photographer	Taoiseach's visit to Atlanta, USA, 13 & 14 March 2015.	€1,112.10
Lensmen & Associates	Minister J. Deenihan TD photoshoot with Sonia O'Sullivan on 30 April 2015 at Government Buildings	€553.50
Conor McKeown Photographer	Photographer for US Ambassador's visit to Castlebar - April 2015	€120.00

Company	Detail	Amount
Maxwell Photography	Photography costs for Data Protection Event on 2 July 2015	€447.72
Maxwell Photography	Photography Assignment for State Funeral of Thomas Kent - 18 September 2015	€1,475.80
Fotogioberti Studio	Taoiseach's photos with PM Renzi, 10 July 2015.	€488.00

2016

Company	Detail	Amount
Maxwell Photography	Supply of Jpeg Images of Ceann Comhairle with Queen, taking during her visit to Ireland in 2011 - January 2016	€17.22
Maxwell Photography	Photography for Flag-Raising Ceremony, 1 January 2016	€120.52
Ulster Bank Ireland Ltd	Photos from National Library for Press Office	€28.00
Maxwell Photography	Photography for Flag-Raising Ceremony, 1 January 2016	€524.00
Getty Images International	All About Jobs - purchase of one year iStock subscription for stock photos for All About Jobs section of Merion St, from February 2016 to February 2017	€1966.77
M. McNally Photographer	Taoiseach's visit to London, U.K. 9 November 2015.	€278.47
AM Photography	9 September 2015. Taoiseach's visit to Paris, France.	€250.00
Maxwell Photography	Photography for Commemoration Ceremony and Parade and Kilmainham Gaol Wreath-Laying Ceremony, Easter Sunday 27 March 2016	€2520.00
Maxwell Photography	Photography for Commemoration Ceremony and Parade and Kilmainham Gaol Wreath-Laying Ceremony, Easter Sunday 27 March 2016	€579.60

Questions - Written Answers

Company	Detail	Amount
Irish Gallery of Photography Ltd	Photograph presentation for State Reception Dublin Castle 27th March 2016	€4674.00
Lensmen & Assoc	Photography at Interfaith Ceremony and Unveiling of Remembrance Wall, Glasnevin Cemetery, Sunday 3 April 2016 (1916 Centenary event)	€430.50
Maxwell Photography	Photographs of new Cabinet at first meeting in Cabinet room, Government Buildings, 11 May 2016, and syndication to print and online media outlets	€873.76
British Irish Council	Official Photo of the British Irish Council Summit Dublin 2015	€782.04
MacInnes Photography Ltd	Photography services for Somme Centenary Commemoration Ceremony 9 July 2016	€1554.72
MacInnes Photography Ltd	Photography services for National Day of Commemorations, 10 July 2016	€1554.72
Maxwell Photography	Photography for Visit of VP Biden, 21-26 June 2016	€3047.94
Marty Katz Photographer	Taoiseach's visit to Washington DC, USA, 14-15 March 2016. St. Patrick's Day Visit.	€1405.36
Marty Katz Photography	Taoiseach's visit to Washington DC. USA. 17-18 May 2016. Ireland 100 at Kennedy Centre.	€1703.42

2017

Company	Detail	Amount
Frank Fennell Photography Ltd	Photography services for visit of UK PM Theresa May, including supply of images and distribution to media.	€695.25
K. Ziegler	Photography services for the Taoiseach's visit to Rome, November 2016	€357.00

Company	Detail	Amount
Dowlings Pharmacy	Passport photos	€12.00
Dowlings Pharmacy	Visa photos	€12.00
Maxwell Photography Ltd	Photography services for the Department of the Taoiseach	€571.95
Maxwell Photography Ltd	Photography services: Ministers receiving their seals of office	€438.52
Donal Moloney	Photography for “Finite Lives” report	€5,675.00
Marty Katz Photography	Photography services for Taoiseach, Washington DC, St. Patrick’s Day events.	€2,354.24
Tom Sandler Photography	Photography services for Taoiseach visit to Toronto, Canada Trade Mission	€594.62
Maxwell Photography Ltd	Photography services, appointment of ADC	€258.30

Public Relations Contracts Data

93. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Taoiseach the use of external public relations firms employed by his Department in each year since March 2011; the list of uses of the external public relations firm; and the internal departmental policy with regard to employing external groups. [54493/17]

The Taoiseach: The following table provides details of public relations companies engaged by my Department from March 2011 to date.

Year	Company	Purpose	Cost
2012 & 2013	Caroline Erskine, Media and Public Affairs Consultant	To assist in the implementation of the communications plan for Ireland’s Presidency of the Council of the European Union and Associated Projects	€56,383.20
2013 & 2014	Q4 Public Relations	Support for the Convention on the Constitution	€26,909.24
2017	Q4 Public Relations	PR and Communications services for the Data Summit, June 2017	€30,750

My Department ensures that it gets best value for money in the procurement of all goods and services and keeps to a minimum the engagement of public relations firms. In the cases set out above, the use of external public relations firms was limited to work carried out for Ireland’s EU Presidency in 2013, supporting the Constitutional Convention and in relation to the Data

Summit held in Dublin in 2017.

Question No. 94 answered with Question No. 78.

Departmental Properties

95. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Taoiseach the vacant properties and land not in use, owned, rented or leased by his Department or by bodies and agencies under the aegis of his Department by square footage for buildings and acres for land, in tabular form; the address and location of these properties; and the last date of occupancy or use of these properties. [55219/17]

The Taoiseach: The properties occupied by my Department and the National Economic and Social Development Office are provided and managed by the Office of Public Works. No property or land is owned, rented or leased by my Department or bodies under the aegis of my Department.

Departmental Reform

96. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he has spoken to the Minister for Justice and Equality regarding the external group to be appointed to oversee reform of the Department of Justice and Equality. [1465/18]

97. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the estimated timeframe to receive the report on the emails that were not sent to the Charleton tribunal from a person (details supplied). [1466/18]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 96 and 97 together.

Following consultation with the Attorney General, I appointed Mr. Michael Collins, Senior Counsel, to conduct an independent review of the practices and procedures employed by the Department of Justice and Equality in response to requests for documents from the Disclosures Tribunal. The Terms of Reference for the review were published on my Department's website on 13 December 2017. The review will involve a thorough examination of the actions taken by the Department in responding to such requests, relevant documents and records, the processes used within the Department, and communication to and from senior management and the Minister. The review will set out the facts as found, together with such observations or comments as are considered necessary. It may also advise on what further measures, if any, might be taken to address any concerns arising from the review.

Mr. Collins has been asked to use his best endeavours to report to me on or before 19 January 2018, or at the earliest possible date thereafter.

Work is currently underway to finalise arrangements for an independent and change implementation group to be established to:

- a) assess progress in implementing the recommendations of the Toland Report;
- b) review the culture of the Department, make recommendations for change, particularly in the light of evidence of a continued siloed and secretive culture and a failure to provide accurate information to me and the Oireachtas;
- c) examine in particular, the relationship between the Department and the Gardaí, to ensure

that the relationship is appropriately structured, is understood in both organisations and operates in such a way as to ensure accountability and better performance across the broader justice landscape;

d) draw on the expertise of the Policing Authority in conducting its work where appropriate;

e) provide continued external oversight of the implementation of the Toland Report and report to the Oireachtas on the implementation of these recommendations.

I expect that details regarding this matter will be announced by the Government shortly.

Strategic Communications Unit

98. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the number of departmental campaigns the strategic communications unit is managing; and the budgets for same. [1467/18]

99. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if the strategic communications unit is preparing a campaign for the launch of the national development plan; if there have been meetings to discuss same; and the estimated cost of this campaign. [1468/18]

100. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the savings planned in 2018 from the creation of the strategic communications unit; and the number of posts that will be redeployed in each Department. [1469/18]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 98 to 100, inclusive, together.

To date the Cabinet has approved the Strategic Communications Unit (SCU) in my Department to work on the following campaigns in the coming months: The 10 Year Capital Plan, Brexit, National Children's Hospital, Healthy Ireland, Creative Ireland, Rebuilding Ireland, Global Ireland and Rural Ireland. Further campaigns will be added to this list in due course.

The overall budget for the Unit for 2108 is €5 million, it is not possible at this stage to give a specific figure for spend on each individual campaign. The SCU is meeting with communications colleagues across departments to plan and develop a campaign for the national development plan so that citizens can be informed of its programme of integrated investments - economic, social, infrastuctural and environmental that will impact on their lives in the coming years.

It is intended that the Unit will drive savings across all Departments over time through efficiencies generated by:

- cross-Governmental collaboration on major campaigns,
- more efficient use of technology platforms,
- consolidated media buying,
- efficient third-party contract management,
- rationalising design projects,
- streamlining participation in national events,
- increased communication capacity within Departments.

Questions - Written Answers
Cabinet Committee Meetings

101. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if Cabinet committee E on health has met recently. [1470/18]

The Taoiseach: Cabinet Committee E (Health) last met on 23 November 2017.

Legislative Programme

102. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Taoiseach the projects undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation, including the cost, the duration, the number of staff required and if this process was carried out by his Department or outsourced in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [1572/18]

The Taoiseach: There has been no project to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation undertaken by the Department of the Taoiseach from 2007 to date.

Citizens Assembly

103. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Taoiseach the costs incurred by the Citizens' Assembly; and the remuneration levels of paid members. [1751/18]

The Taoiseach: The total costs incurred by the Citizens' Assembly to end 2017 is €1,809,454.

Year	Costs Incurred €
2016	274,321
2017	1,535,133

Members are reimbursed for expenses incurred in attending meetings, including travel costs and a contribution towards childcare. Payment is not made for attendance or any missed days of work either to members or their employees.

Departmental Staff Data

104. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Taoiseach the proportion of employees in his Department or in organisations under its remit registered disabled. [1864/18]

The Taoiseach: As at 31 December 2016, 4.08% of the staff of my Department and 5.5% of the staff of the NESDO voluntarily and confidentially disclosed a disability. This exceeds the minimum requirement of 3% for public sector organisations set down in the Disability Act, 2005.

Returns for 2017 on the proportion of employees in my Department and in organisations under its remit who disclose a disability are required under the Disability Act to be reported to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform by 31 March and to the National Disability Authority (NDA) by 30 June this year.

Recruitment to my Department is, in the main, undertaken through the Public Appointments Service.

My Department is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all staff. Staff are re-

cruited on the basis that they meet the requirements of the positions they are to fill. In addition to complying with the provisions of the Disability Act, 2005, we follow the guidelines set out in the Commission for Public Service Appointments' codes of practice for appointments to positions in the Civil Service and Public Service.

Departmental Communications

105. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach if his Department uses anti-profanity software on its email systems and online contact forms; if so, the level of human oversight that is applied to the monitoring of this software and its effectiveness; and his views on whether persons' legitimate right to petition Government may be blocked unintentionally by errors in the use of such software in determining that which qualifies as profanity being communicated in email and-or online contact forms. [2093/18]

The Taoiseach: All electronic interaction with my Department is through email. There are no online contact forms on my Department's website. An electronic mail filtering product has been programmed to implement my Department's email usage policy. This policy has a number of rules, including one on profanity. The policy is based on a central 'Profanity Dictionary' which my Department's HR Unit approved to provide protection to Departmental staff from abuse. Messages that fall under this rule are placed in a quarantine area. The quarantine is checked daily by staff in my Department's IT Unit and blocked emails are released when appropriate.

Ministerial Travel

106. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the use his Department has made of the Government jet since coming into office. [54490/17]

107. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the use his Department made of the Government jet from March 2011 to February 2016. [54491/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 106 and 107 together.

Information in relation to Ministerial Air Transport is available publicly via a link entitled Ministerial Air Transport Service (MATS) on the Department of Defence homepage at www.defence.ie. This information is updated on a monthly basis.

Defence Forces Pensions

108. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence further to Parliamentary Question No. 47 of 12 December 2017, if the issue of supplementary pension changes for post-2013 recruits was brought to the attention of the Defence Forces representative associations during the negotiations on the single pension scheme Act of 2012; and if not, if the negotiations centred solely on the career average earnings model of final benefit. [54527/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): As I indicated in my response to Parliamentary Question No. 47 on 12th December 2017, the occupational pension scheme terms of post-1 January 2013 new entrants to the public service, including the Permanent Defence Force, are governed by the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other

Provisions) Act 2012. All first-time new entrants to pensionable public service employment on or after that date are members of the Single Scheme. Under the 2012 Act, overall statutory responsibility for the Single Scheme pension terms and rules rests with the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

In the course of the development of the legislation, there was ongoing consultation with the Permanent Defence Force Representative Associations. This included engagement with PDFORRA and RACO through the Permanent Defence Force Conciliation and Arbitration machinery, as well as consultations and meetings directly with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The Representative Associations made written and oral submissions on their particular concerns around the Single Scheme Bill. However, at no stage prior to 2013 was the question of 'supplementary pension' cover for Single Scheme new entrants raised by the Representative Side as an issue or concern. The matter has subsequently been the subject of extensive discussions and correspondence with the Representative Associations.

A claim for payment of the Supplementary pension to new entrants post 1 January 2013 has been received under the Conciliation and Arbitration (C&A) Scheme for members of the Permanent Defence Force. The Deputy will appreciate that as discussions under the CandA scheme are confidential to the parties involved it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the matter at this time.

Defence Forces Funding

109. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the increased defence expenditure committed to by Ireland under PESCO has been factored into the State's capacity to fund longer-term projects, for example, the capital plan 2016 to 2021; and if that increased defence expenditure will necessitate cuts to long-term projects such as the capital plan. [54589/17]

110. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the increased defence expenditure committed to by Ireland under PESCO has been factored into the State's capacity to fund longer-term projects, for example, public sector pay increases; and if that increased expenditure will necessitate cuts to, or rowing back on, long-term projects such as public sector pay increases. [54590/17]

111. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the knock-on effects of increased defence expenditure committed to by Ireland under PESCO on other expenditure, for example, health, education and housing have been examined; and the Government's plan to ensure that no cuts under other expenditure headings will be necessitated by the commitment to increase defence spending. [54591/17]

112. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the detail of the Government's plans to raise the revenue necessary to finance the increased defence expenditure committed to by Ireland under PESCO without cutting other areas of public expenditure. [54592/17]

122. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he will provide a copy of the PESCO agreement, ancillary documentation and documents relevant to the primary agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54996/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take

Questions Nos. 109 to 112, inclusive, and 122 together.

Expenditure Allocations for all Departments, both current (2018-2020) and capital (2018-2021), were published as part of the Budget documentation. It is expected that any investment or expenditure on defence, including that arising from Ireland's participation in PESCO, will be met from within these allocations, in the same way as current investment in EDA projects is met. As such, PESCO will not result in a requirement for additional expenditure beyond the approved allocations nor is it expected to impact on any other areas of public expenditure.

Costs may arise in respect of participation in specific PESCO Project(s) similar to the case where the Defence Forces participate in EDA Projects. As the projects will relate to the ongoing development of Defence Forces capabilities for peace support and crisis management operations, such costs would be incurred in the normal course and will therefore be met from within the Defence Vote. It is expected that sharing the costs of capability development across a number of member States should prove cost neutral in terms of overall projected defence expenditure.

It is important to reiterate that there is no requirement on Ireland or any other EU member State to achieve any specific target in relation to Defence expenditure, nor is there any agreement at EU level in this regard. The Deputy will be aware that the Lisbon Treaty explicitly provides that it is entirely a matter for Ireland, or any other Member State, to determine the nature and volume of its own defence and security expenditure, as well as the nature of its defence capabilities.

I have made arrangements for the key PESCO documents to be lodged in the Dáil Library, as follows:

- PESCO Notification as signed by Member States on 13 November 2017
- Ireland's Notification Letter of 07 December 2017 and,
- Council Decision of 08 December 2017 establishing Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and determining the list of Participating Member States.

I will update the House on continuing developments on CSDP in the normal course, including in respect of Ireland's participation in PESCO.

Defence Forces Medicinal Products

113. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the qualifications of the medical experts consulted as part of the work of the working group on Lariam; and the medical qualifications of members of the working group. [54747/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): As previously advised the report of the Working Group on Malaria Chemoprophylaxis was convened in the context of current and potential litigation and is legally privileged, as is all the information about the group to include consultations and deliberations.

Departmental Funding

114. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the name and number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from his Department that have ex-

pending 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 amount of money they have spent on this particular campaign during that time; the number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from his Department that have expended resources seeking the retention of the eighth amendment; the amount of funding these organisations have received from the State in the past five years; and the amount of money they have spent on this particular campaign during that time. [54763/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My Department provides funding to a small number of organisations for specific functions. These funds are paid in accordance with public financial procedures.

No funding has been provided by my Department in relation to the Eighth Amendment.

Civil Defence

115. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the amount of funding allocated to the Civil Defence in the national budget in the past five years, in tabular form. [54986/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The amount of funding allocated to the Civil Defence in the national budget in the past five years is as follows:

Year	Budget (€)
2013	4.243m
2014	4.24m
2015	4.24m
2016	5.24m
2017	5.24m

Civil Defence

116. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the ratio of funding for the Civil Defence which comes from the national budget. [54987/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Civil Defence training and operations are funded by a combination of a central grant from the Department of Defence and a contribution from the relevant local authority on a 70/30 basis. The annual operational grant from the Department of Defence covers 70% of the running costs of Civil Defence each year, up to a set grant limit, and the Local Authority provides the remaining 30%. It is at the discretion of the Local Authority to provide additional funding over and above the required 30%.

Grants are also issued to the Local Authorities on application, from time to time, towards the purchase of vehicles and equipment.

Civil Defence

117. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the guidelines in place to ensure that Civil Defence vehicles are maintained; and the person or body

responsible for ensuring said maintenance is carried out. [54988/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Civil Defence vehicles are based within the local authorities throughout the country. These vehicles are operated under the control of the Civil Defence Officer who is an employee of the local authority. The Civil Defence Branch of the Department of Defence periodically gives guidance to Civil Defence Officers on best practice in this area.

Under the Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness Test (CVRT) regulations local authorities are legally required to have a vehicle management system in place. In addition, vehicles are subject to mandatory testing such as CVRT and NCT tests depending on the type of vehicle.

In addition to the above, a small number of vehicles are operated by the Civil Defence Branch of the Department of Defence. The Civil Defence Branch Technical Officer oversees the maintenance of these vehicles to ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

Civil Defence

118. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of personnel within the Civil Defence in each of the past five years, by unit, in tabular form. [54989/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): There is a Civil Defence Unit in each local authority area. The number of active personnel in each Unit over the past five years is set out in the following table.

Local Authority	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
CARLOW	70	61	56	60	63
CAVAN	271	262	269	213	225
CLARE	156	212	214	200	179
CORK CITY	102	77	82	94	95
CORK NORTH	89	67	67	70	76
CORK SOUTH	56	47	48	49	44
CORK WEST	107	109	86	82	86
DONEGAL	114	117	113	114	129
DUBLIN	637	584	524	399	434
GALWAY	443	484	277	307	311
KERRY	124	98	101	117	131
KILDARE	64	54	53	51	62
KILKENNY	51	42	42	51	23
LAOIS	96	85	77	79	89
LEITRIM	40	42	34	34	36
LIMERICK	205	203	181	201	157
LONGFORD	87	75	66	52	52
LOUTH	118	75	48	52	38
MAYO	116	129	64	74	78
MEATH	200	202	201	200	221
MONAGHAN	126	89	72	70	64
OFFALY	58	52	49	37	49
ROSCOMMON	116	127	140	136	87
SLIGO	130	120	109	114	107

Questions - Written Answers

Local Authority	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
TIPPERARY	291	251	240	208	182
WATERFORD	184	198	180	151	153
WESTMEATH	107	121	96	81	100
WEXFORD	175	159	128	138	121
WICKLOW	87	86	69	84	77
TOTAL	4420	4228	3686	3518	3469

Civil Defence

119. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the funding allocated in the past five years for purchasing new equipment for the Civil Defence, by unit, in tabular form. [54990/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Grant funding for equipment for Civil Defence is issued to the Local Authorities on application, from time to time. The funding allocated by my Department in the past five years for purchasing equipment is outlined in the following table. Each local authority is also issued with an annual operational grant and this funding may be used at local level for the purchase of equipment.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Carlow	0	30,681	36,900	30,000	5,696
Cavan	0	25,997	32,500	55,276	20,000
Clare	0	28,696	16,697	28,621	20,000
Cork City	0	17,637	34,144	0	0
Cork County	28,676	52,032	44,028	75,350	124,725
Donegal	0	3,000	20,000	51,126	8,000
Dublin	15,000	18,238	30,563	95,377	44,472
Galway	19,866	30,896	20,000	6,970	23,000
Kerry	5,500	22,896	22,334	9,323	28,840
Kildare	0	51,465	12,002	14,446	0
Kilkenny	13,990	18,000	65,750	71,049	18,345
Laois	4,000	12,871	20,000	73,520	45,274
Leitrim	0	28,000	21,260	15,446	45,450
* Limerick	0	6,000	45,000	30,474	18,000
Longford	0	21,048	2,994	0	0
Louth	0	2,861	35,350	22,718	0
Mayo	20,000	3,000	3,000	25,000	25,500
Meath	0	8,000	20,000	22,727	25,000
Monaghan	19,787	28,000	17,000	0	28,000
Offaly	0	22,985	21,145	22,650	0
Roscommon	0	3,000	29,000	39,720	16,400
Sligo	0	5,884	32,300	0	9,000
* Tipperary	45,200	8,896	20,000	79,072	25,500
* Waterford	0	28,060	60,000	53,950	0
Westmeath	0	11,994	47,248	27,505	39,500
Wexford	0	3,000	25,000	6,826	32,300
Wicklow	1,401	3,000	35,937	24,094	30,198

* Prior to 2014 there were two separate local authorities in each of these three counties. For the purposes of this table the figures for the two local authorities in these counties have been

combined for 2013.

Civil Defence

120. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of vehicles in the Civil Defence in the past five years, by unit, in tabular form. [54991/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The number of Civil Defence road vehicles per unit for the past five years is outlined in the following table.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
CARLOW	8	8	9	9	11
CAVAN	12	12	12	13	15
CIVIL DEFENCE HQ	5	6	7	9	7
CLARE	7	7	9	10	12
CORK CITY	9	9	10	10	12
CORK NORTH	9	11	11	12	12
CORK SOUTH	9	10	10	9	11
CORK WEST	9	7	8	9	10
DONEGAL	11	11	11	14	11
DUBLIN	69	69	72	83	92
GALWAY	22	25	26	31	33
KERRY	17	16	14	15	21
KILDARE	12	13	13	14	14
KILKENNY	8	8	8	7	11
LAOIS	17	15	15	16	18
LEITRIM	7	7	8	11	11
* LIMERICK	20	21	21	24	26
LONGFORD	7	7	10	11	14
LOUTH	11	13	11	10	11
MAYO	16	18	16	15	19
MEATH	15	16	16	18	20
MONAGHAN	7	9	9	9	10
OFFALY	10	11	11	12	14
ROSCOMMON	16	16	17	19	18
SLIGO	8	8	8	5	9
* TIPPERARY	30	28	28	26	27
* WATER-FORD	24	26	25	27	29
WESTMEATH	9	10	10	12	15
WEXFORD	13	12	13	15	17
WICKLOW	16	16	16	15	16

* Prior to 2014 there were two separate local authorities in each of these three counties. For the purposes of this table the figures for the two local authorities in these counties have been combined for 2013.

Civil Defence

121. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the budget allocated to each unit of the Civil Defence in the past six years, in tabular form. [54992/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The budget allocated by my Department to each unit of the Civil Defence in the past six years is outlined in the following table. Local authorities are also allocated grant funding for equipment from time to time, on application.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Carlow	50,689	49,856	49,770	42,685	49,770	44,845
Cavan	65,941	64,279	66,853	69,009	66,853	70,066
Clare	89,982	87,924	84,059	92,720	84,059	98,677
Cork City	73,608	76,229	69,874	76,055	69,874	66,738
Cork County	120,694	169,510	203,277	203,300	203,277	200,033
Donegal	75,908	74,826	76,369	78,533	76,369	83,913
Dublin City	360,661	352,983	383,282	376,801	383,282	385,218
Galway	80,696	80,289	78,790	84,635	78,790	90,765
Kerry	104,454	102,032	104,363	101,385	104,363	94,483
Kildare	85,302	84,936	84,746	86,371	84,746	93,327
Kilkenny	48,059	51,183	48,076	53,965	48,076	54,530
Laois	74,324	73,469	77,707	77,512	77,707	79,434
Leitrim	81,124	82,479	80,557	72,264	80,557	75,365
* Limerick	117,117	188,675	195,257	194,600	179,098	143,425
Longford	56,157	56,093	57,040	57,735	57,040	48,802
Louth	72,951	85,040	82,847	73,273	82,847	77,369
Mayo	76,383	76,316	76,685	78,288	76,685	85,679
Meath	116,407	112,250	115,087	117,536	115,087	114,116
Monaghan	81,274	80,138	80,725	79,616	80,725	76,383
Offaly	81,878	80,302	80,696	79,941	80,696	80,241
Roscommon	70,955	69,366	69,833	73,039	69,833	77,577
Sligo	73,769	72,569	72,402	72,336	72,402	76,089
* Tipperary	157,087	154,802	150,972	159,761	146,323	142,769
* Waterford	161,439	156,671	160,642	156,314	141,455	140,407
Westmeath	84,557	83,967	84,110	82,245	81,446	82,225
Wexford	97,191	94,306	98,467	99,888	101,573	102,146
Wicklow	74,743	73,794	74,373	76,957	78,493	82,314

* Prior to 2014 there were two separate local authorities in each of these three counties. For the purposes of this table the figures for the two local authorities in these counties have been combined for 2012 and 2013.

Question No. 122 answered with Question No. 109.

Defence Forces Remuneration

123. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if money owed to Army personnel for carrying out 24-hour duties will be issued as soon as possible in view of the fact that in many cases this money has not been issued since November 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55091/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): After a Security Duty is performed by a member of the Permanent Defence Force, the details of the duty are entered on the Defence Forces' Personnel Management System (PMS) at unit level, where certain unit personnel have responsibilities relating to the processing of such duties. If the relevant personnel are not available the responsibilities relating to Security Duty Allowance (SDA) can be assigned to other unit personnel.

Once claims are approved by an authorised officer at unit level, the process for the payment of SDA is that all approved claims are downloaded electronically from the PMS on the 10th of each month (or closest working day) and sent to the Department's Finance Branch from where they are forwarded electronically to the Department's payroll provider for payment in the next available payroll.

I have been advised by the Military Authorities that all Defence Forces units have been informed of their responsibilities in relation to the processing of Security Duty Allowances by the relevant date. The process is contained in an Administrative Instruction which sets out the responsibilities of all relevant appointment holders involved.

Approved SDA claims for enlisted personnel were sent by the Department's Finance Branch to the Department's payroll provider on 14 November and 4 December 2017 and were paid on 22 November and 21 December 2017 respectively. Approved SDA claims for enlisted personnel that were received on 10 January 2018 have been forwarded to the Department's payroll provider and are scheduled to be paid on 24 January 2018.

Air Corps

124. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the dates since 2000 of mandatory drugs testing carried out at the Air Corps, Casement Aerodrome; and the initials of surnames tested on each occasion. [55156/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The unique and challenging nature of military service requires that military personnel are free from the presence or influence of any controlled drug or substance. The Defence Forces conduct Compulsory Random Drug Testing of all employees with approximately 10% of Defence Forces personnel tested annually.

Such testing was introduced within the Defence Forces in 2002. The military authorities have informed me that collection of statistical data on the number of personnel tested in Casement Aerodrome did not commence until 2007.

The numbers tested, by year, in Casement Aerodrome are set out in the following table. For data protection and privacy purposes, the initials of personnel tested are not being released.

Year	Number Tested (AC)
2007	166

2008	0
2009	130
2010	9
2011	0
2012	43
2013	44
2014	113
2015	221
2016	48
2017	87
Total	861

Defence Forces Recruitment

125. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the expected number of recruits who will be taken into the Defence Forces in 2018. [55190/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): In accordance with the White Paper on Defence (2015), the Government is committed to maintaining the strength of the Permanent Defence Force at 9,500 personnel. Recruitment to fill vacancies will take place during 2018 and this will be informed by levels of turnover during the course of the year.

The Defence Forces will be conducting recruitment campaigns for General Service Recruits, Cadets, Apprentices and Direct Entry Officers during the year. At this point it is not possible to predict precise numbers that will be recruited, but it is anticipated that this will be in the region of 800 personnel.

Departmental Properties

126. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the vacant properties and land not in use, owned, rented or leased by his Department or by bodies and agencies under the aegis of his Department by square footage for buildings and acres for land, in tabular form; the address and location of these properties; and the last date of occupancy or use of these properties. [55209/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My Department has been engaged on an ongoing programme of barracks consolidation since 1998 and the entire property portfolio is under continual review.

The properties outlined in the following table are currently vacant and it is my Department's policy to dispose of properties that are surplus to military requirements.

There are no vacant properties rented or leased by my Department, or by bodies and agencies under the aegis of my Department, that are not in use at the current time.

Property	Address	Approx hectares	Date last used
Landing pier	Furious pier, Castletownbere, Co. Cork	0.4	not in use since 2000

Property	Address	Approx hectares	Date last used
Fort Shannon	Tarbert, Co. Kerry	0.81	vacated by the Defence Forces 1998
Former military barracks	Castlebar, Co. Mayo	2.43	Barracks closed in 2012. Disposal to Mayo County Council at an advanced stage and the Reserve Defence Force will be remaining in situ
Former military barracks	Nenagh, Co. Tipperary	1.09	In use up to 2013
Former military barracks	Mullingar, Co. Westmeath	9.61	Barracks closed in 2012. Portions currently occupied by various organisations.
		Approx sq footage	
9 vacant dwellings	Sydney Parade Collins Barracks Cork City	860 sq ft each	Vacant since 2007 and in need of major refurbishment
former married quarters	23 Orchard Park, Curragh, Co. Kildare	860	Vacant since 2016 and in need of major refurbishment
former married quarters	85 Orchard Park, Curragh, Co. Kildare	860	Vacant since 2016 and in need of major refurbishment
former married quarters	17 Cathal Brugha Apartments, Dublin 6	860	Vacant since 2013 in need of refurbishment
former married quarters	22 Cathal Brugha Apartments, Dublin 6	860	Vacant since 2009 in need of refurbishment
former married quarters	23 Cathal Brugha Apartments, Dublin 6	860	Vacant since 2009 in need of major refurbishment

Legislative Programme

127. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the projects undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation, including the cost, the duration, the number of staff required and if this process was carried out by his Department or outsourced in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [1562/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The legislation under the aegis of this Department consists primarily of the Defence Acts 1954 to 2015. There has been no project undertaken in the years 2007 to 2017 to consolidate these Acts.

In relation to the other Acts under the aegis of this Department, work is underway on the

preparation of a Red Cross Bill to update the Red Cross Acts 1938 to 1954. This work is being carried out by the Department's Legislation Branch as part of the duties assigned to that Branch. Records are not maintained in a manner which would facilitate the calculation of the costs of each task undertaken by the Department's Legislation Branch.

Naval Service

128. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans for investment in infrastructure at the naval base in Haulbowline in 2018; the investment for each project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1801/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Infrastructure projects are developed at military installations as part of the ongoing Defence Forces Built Infrastructure programme. The programme is designed to modernise and enhance the training, operational and accommodation facilities available to members of the Defence Forces. It is based on operational requirements and is compiled on a priority basis by my Department in conjunction with the Military Authorities.

The capital element of the programme focuses mainly on infrastructural projects comprising the construction of new buildings and the refurbishment of existing buildings and facilities.

The anticipated investment on built infrastructure capital projects at Haulbowline for 2018 is circa €2.8m. The most significant investment (some €2.4m) identified for 2018 is in respect of the fuel facility fire fighting installation. Other projects include the upgrading of the facility used by the military police and a PV solar installation at the base.

In addition to major capital projects, there are ongoing works required to ensure the upkeep and repair of buildings and provide facilities generally for personnel. These works are charged as current expenditure under the programme. Some €0.9m has been set aside at this point for these works in military installations in 2018.

Air Corps

129. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans for investment in infrastructure in Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnel, in 2018; the investment for each project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1802/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Infrastructure projects are developed at military installations as part of the ongoing Defence Forces Built Infrastructure programme. The programme is designed to modernise and enhance the training, operational and accommodation facilities available to members of the Defence Forces. It is based on operational requirements and is compiled on a priority basis by my Department in conjunction with the Military Authorities.

The capital element of the programme focuses mainly on infrastructural projects comprising the construction of new buildings and the refurbishment of existing buildings and facilities.

The anticipated investment on built infrastructure capital projects at Casement Aerodrome for 2018 is circa €3.5m. The most significant investment identified for 2018 is an accommodation project for use by personnel based at the aerodrome, estimated at under €3m. Other projects include the upgrading of the Firing Range and hardstanding areas at the aerodrome.

In addition to major capital projects, there are ongoing works required to ensure the upkeep and repair of buildings and provide facilities generally for personnel. These works are charged as current expenditure under the programme. Some €0.9m has been set aside at this point for these works in military installations in 2018.

Departmental Staff Data

130. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the proportion of employees in his Department or in organisations under its remit registered disabled. [1854/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Statistics are compiled by my Department and submitted to the National Disability Authority retrospectively during the first quarter of each year in respect of the previous year. The most recent statistics currently available relate to 2016 and are as follows:

Department of Defence - Civil Servants: 5.39%

Department of Defence - Civilian Employees: 4.31%

The Army Pensions Board is an independent statutory body established under the Army Pensions Act, 1927 whose secretariat is provided from within Department of Defence staff. The staff employed in the Office of the Ombudsman for the Defence Forces are included in Department of Defence staffing numbers.

Returns for 2017 will be compiled and submitted during the first quarter of 2018.

Departmental Communications

131. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if his Department uses anti-profanity software on its email systems and online contact forms; if so, the level of human oversight that is applied to the monitoring of this software and its effectiveness; his views on whether persons' legitimate right to petition Government may be blocked unintentionally by errors in the use of such software in determining that which qualifies as profanity being communicated in email and-or online contact forms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2083/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My Department uses an email filtering system which includes anti-profanity functionality.

Emails containing profanity may be quarantined. Where an email is quarantined for this reason, the intended recipient is notified that an email with inappropriate text has been received. The notification contains details of the sender and the subject. The recipient may then request for it to be released to them.

The email filtering system is monitored regularly by my Department's network administrators and configurations are updated where appropriate.

I understand that on occasions, a legitimate email may be quarantined by the filtering software. This is known as a "false positive".

I am satisfied that these measures provide the appropriate balance between facilitating effec-

tive communication and ensuring a safe and unthreatening working environment.

Government Information Service

132. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the Government's initiatives in his Department in 2017 that promoted State services or welfare payments, public awareness of regulatory changes and public consultations that involved advertising and promotion on television, radio, newspapers and online, in tabular form; and the level of expenditure for each such initiative. [2259/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The information requested by the Deputy in relation to such government initiatives in my Department in 2017 was as follows.

In 2017 the costs relating to the promotion of the "Be Winter Ready" Information Campaign, as a Government of Ireland initiative to promote State services and public awareness, came to a total cost of €40,180.

The "Be Winter Ready" Information Campaign is a coordinated annual government initiative launched each November through the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning with the relevant lead Government Ministers and their Departments and is considered as a Government of Ireland public information and awareness initiative carried out over the Winter months.

Separately, as a public consultation initiative, the Department of Defence spent €2267.15 with the Irish Independent publication inviting submissions on the Department's Irish Language Scheme. Other advertising costs incurred by the Department in 2017 included:

Campaign/Policy	Total
101st Anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising	€3,894.74
Rifle Range Warning Adverts	€31,683.58
Rifle Range Warning Adverts	€1,199.25
National Heritage Guide Advert	€630.00
Annual Perambulation of the Curragh Roads Advert	€369.00
Advertising the services of the the Ombudsman for the Defence Forces - 'Signal' Magazine – Autumn 2016 Edition	€977.85
Advertising the services of the the Ombudsman for the Defence Forces - 'Signal' Magazine – Spring 2017 Edition	€977.85
Advertising the services of the the Ombudsman for the Defence Forces - 'An Co-santóir' Magazine December 2017- January 2018 Edition	€934.80
Promoting Civil Defence	€300
Promoting Civil Defence	€2,084.85
Promoting Civil Defence	€984
Promoting Civil Defence	€344

The Defence Forces related expenditure in 2017 included:

	Total	PR, Comms Advice, Media Monitoring	Advertising Events, Merchandising Print	Photos/Videos	Comms Research & Training
Annual Budget	€129,000	€59,000	€50,000	€20,000	
2 x Recruitment Campaigns	€360,000		€130,000	€180,000	€50,000

European Council Meetings

133. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has spoken at EU Council meetings recently regarding the need for EU reform; and his priorities on same. [1471/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The debate on the future of Europe and what direction our Union should take has been gaining pace in recent months. The European Commission published a White Paper in March 2017 on the issue and followed it up with a series of Reflection Papers on EU finances, harnessing globalisation, defence, the social dimension and completion of economic and monetary union.

In the meantime, the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, has launched his ‘Leaders’ Agenda’, an ambitious work programme running until the European Parliament elections in 2019 which puts the European Council at the heart of the decision-making process. The Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar T.D., is actively engaged in this process and has already contributed to discussions on education and culture, migration and completion of economic and monetary union. An informal meeting in February under the ‘Leaders’ Agenda’ will look at institutional issues and the political priorities for the multi-annual financial framework. When the Taoiseach addresses the European Parliament in Strasbourg tomorrow he will be the first Head of Government to participate in a series of debates there on the future of Europe.

In November I joined the Taoiseach and the Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee T.D., in launching a citizens’ dialogue on the future of Europe and the Minister of State is currently taking this initiative forward with a series of regional consultations.

As the deputy may be aware, I set out the Government’s views on the future of Europe in a comprehensive address, ‘The Europe We Want,’ at UCD on 29 November.

Ministerial Meetings

134. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on his meeting with Mr. Michel Barnier on 12 December 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54381/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I met with the EU’s Chief Negotiator, Michel Barnier in advance of the General Affairs Council (Article 50) in Brussels on 12 December and took the opportunity to thank him and his team for their excellent work in securing a positive outcome for Ireland and for the EU27 as a whole dur-

ing phase 1 of the EU-UK negotiations, as reflected in the joint progress report of 8 December.

During our meeting Mr Barnier confirmed that he was in a position to recommend to the European Council that sufficient progress had been reached on all of the phase one issues. I welcomed this news and expressed my hope that discussions on the framework for a future EU-UK relationship, and on transitional arrangements, would begin as soon as possible, as they are hugely important both for Ireland and for the EU as a whole.

We spoke in detail on the Irish specific issues and I thanked him for his continued support for Ireland and the unique challenges that we face in the context of Brexit. I welcomed the text of the joint progress report on Ireland and Northern Ireland as it reflects our goals of maintaining the Common Travel Area, protecting the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts, including North South cooperation and the rights enshrined in the Agreement, and protecting the gains of the peace process, most notably guarantees on avoiding a hard border. We agreed that there is clearly still a great deal of work remaining on the Irish specific issues to ensure that all the commitments set out in this report are implemented and to that end I welcomed that this work will continue to be taken forward in a distinct strand of the negotiations in phase two. Our Permanent Representation in Brussels, my officials and I will remain in regular contact with Mr Barnier and his Taskforce to ensure that Ireland's interests continue to be advanced in the EU's position as the negotiations move to phase two.

Human Rights Cases

135. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to the situation in Urabá, Colombia, in which persons (details supplied) have been killed in the past two weeks; his plans to send officials to visit the region and assess the human rights situation; if the killings and the ongoing harassment and threats to human rights defenders in Urabá and Colombia in general will be condemned; and his further plans to raise the killings with his Colombian counterpart in view of worrying developments with regard to threats and intimidation of human rights defenders in Urabá. [54416/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am aware of the incidents to which the Deputy refers.

The climate of violence and intimidation which exists for social leaders and human rights activists in marginalised rural areas of Colombia like Urabá continues to be a matter of great concern to the Government.

I wish to express my sincere sympathies and condolences to the families of the victims and to the communities which have been affected by the violence.

As I have stated on previous occasions, this violence is entirely unacceptable and I condemn it unreservedly. I urge the Government of Colombia to ensure that all incidents, including those referred to by the Deputy, are thoroughly investigated and their perpetrators brought to justice.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has an ongoing commitment to support peace and human rights in Colombia. As well as exchanges with the Colombian authorities at Government level, officials of the Department engage with human rights defenders and civil society leaders active across Colombia, including those working in communities most impacted by the conflict.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade provides funding directly to the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights in Colombia to support its work in

promoting and protecting human rights, including in some of Colombia's most isolated and challenging regions, as well as to the Inter American Commission on Human Rights, which provides protection measures to community leaders and activists operating in Colombia.

Officials from the Embassy of Ireland in Mexico, which is accredited to Colombia, frequently visit the country and maintain regular contact with partners there, including to receive updates on the violence affecting communities.

As the Deputy will be aware, in October 2017 I announced Ireland's intention to open an embassy in Bogotá, Colombia. This will be a very positive development in Ireland-Colombia relations and clearly demonstrates Ireland's commitment to supporting peace and human rights in Colombia and the full implementation of the country's peace accord.

I firmly believe that Colombia's peace accord provides the framework in which the endemic violence and impunity which has afflicted Colombian society for decades can successfully be addressed. Historic strides have been made to date in its implementation, including the full decommissioning of FARC weapons by July 2017 and the transformation of the organisation into a political party.

However, as we know from our own experience, achieving peace can be complex and challenging and is far from straightforward. Ireland remains committed to supporting the full implementation of the agreement, which will ensure the eradication of violence in vulnerable communities and a more peaceful future for all Colombians.

Departmental Funding

136. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the name and number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from his Department 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 amount of money they have spent on this particular campaign during that time; the number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from his Department that have expended resources seeking the retention of the eighth amendment; the amount of funding these organisations have received from the State in the past five years; and the amount of money they have spent on this particular campaign during that time. [54767/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department is responsible for two votes - Vote 28 (Foreign Affairs and Trade) and Vote 27 (International Cooperation) and administers a number of funding schemes including under Ireland's official overseas development programme, Irish Aid. My Department has no particular scheme to fund programmes or projects seeking either the repeal of the eighth amendment or its retention. It is not possible to readily identify organisations which are in receipt of funding from my Department for particular projects and which may also have expended other resources available to them from other sources in this area. However, I refer the Deputy to parliamentary question 51438/17 which outlines the funding provided by my Department under a range of headings including sexual reproductive health services, capacity building on human rights and global justice issues for primary school teachers, J1 Visa Guide and promotion of reconciliation and combating sectarianism in Northern Ireland. These groups have self-identified as seeking the repeal of the eighth amendment.

Ministerial Communications

137. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade when he last used a private email address for Brexit related information. [54907/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): A number of messages I receive at my personal email address make reference to Brexit in some sense. However, the last substantive email on Brexit I have identified which was sent to or from my personal account involved late drafting changes to a Brexit speech delivered in Cambridge on 9 September 2017. This speech was later publicly made available on my Department's website.

Passport Applications

138. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade further to Parliamentary Question No. 128 of 5 December 2017, if a baptismal certificate is sufficient for a person who wishes to apply for an Irish passport, for example, the person has the baptismal certificate of his or her parents but not the birth certificate. [55129/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): As outlined in the Department's previous parliamentary question on this matter, all passport applications are subject to the provision of the Passports Act, 2008 which provides, among other things, that a person must be an Irish citizen before a passport can be issued to him or her.

Each person must demonstrate an entitlement to Irish citizenship by providing acceptable documentary evidence of this entitlement. In the case of a person claiming citizenship through an Irish born parent, a passport applicant must submit their own original birth certificate and the original birth certificate of one of their Irish born parents, through which they are claiming citizenship.

A baptismal certificate is not acceptable. Replacement original birth certificates are however acceptable. Further information on how to apply for a replacement original birth certificate can be obtained from the HSE-run website www.certificates.ie. Should the applicant wish to seek any further clarification on the matter, Nuala Ni Mhuircheartaigh at the Passport Service will be happy to assist. She can be contacted on 01 6733018.

Departmental Properties

139. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the vacant properties and land not in use, owned, rented or leased by his Department or by bodies and agencies under the aegis of his Department by square footage for buildings and acres for land, in tabular form; the address and location of these properties; and the last date of occupancy or use of these properties. [55213/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department does not own or control any vacant property or land. Any properties or land occupied by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in the State are rented and discharged by the Office of Public Works.

Climate Change Policy

140. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the amount of funding his Department is providing to the green climate fund in 2018; if this is his Department's only contribution to overseas climate adaptation and mitigation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1182/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): Established in 2010, the Green Climate Fund supports the efforts of developing countries to respond to the challenge of climate change. Irish Government contributions to the Green Climate Fund falls under the remit of the Department for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment.

In addition to Irish Government funding to the Green Climate Fund, Irish Aid, through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, funds climate adaptation and mitigation activities in some of the least developed countries, those often most impacted by the devastating effects of climate change. This funding consists of contributions to multilateral organisations, grants to NGOs, and programmes implemented through our Embassies.

We rigorously track our climate finance expenditure and report annually to the UN on our commitments under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. In 2016, Ireland was voted by Adaptation Watch the second most transparent donor in its reporting of climate finance.

That year, we provided €50.6m in climate finance as part of our Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) programme. The vast majority of these funds went to support adaptation to climate change in least developed countries, focusing on smallholder agriculture, social protection, reducing the risks of natural disasters, and the impact of climate change on women.

Under the Paris Agreement, Irish Aid also directly supports the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Ireland has committed to providing €1 million per annum to the LDCF, and €500,000 per annum to the LEG, for the 2016-18 period. We anticipate levels of expenditure on climate adaptation and mitigation to remain stable for 2017 and 2018.

Human Rights Cases

141. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has raised the detention of a person (details supplied) with the Israeli authorities. [1331/18]

142. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the detention of children by the Israeli authorities in the occupied Palestinian territories. [1332/18]

162. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will make a representation to the Israeli authorities in view of the incarceration of a person (details supplied); his views on the abuse of human rights and the illegal and extreme nature of the person's arrest in a midnight raid on the person's home; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1637/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 141, 142 and 162 together.

The overall human rights situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the treatment of children in detention, remains a matter of concern. Ireland has repeatedly drawn attention to concerns regarding the treatment of Palestinian prisoners. We have paid particular attention over recent years to issues related to the detention of minors. Ireland also provides financial support to Israeli and Palestinian NGOs who are active in bringing these issues to light.

During my visit to the Middle East last week, I again raised concerns about the detention of minors directly with the Israeli authorities.

Ireland has also raised these issues at EU level and in international fora. For example, Ireland raised the issue of the detention of minors in Israel's most recent Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council, where we recommended, inter alia, that Israel end the practice of night arrests of children.

My Department and I will continue to press on these issues in the relevant multilateral fora, and also, where appropriate, directly with Israel.

In relation to the specific case referred to by the Deputies, an Irish diplomatic representative was present at the person in question's hearing in Ofer military court in the West Bank on 20 December, along with other international representatives. My Department will continue to monitor that case and others.

Ministerial Travel

143. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on his recent trip to the Middle East; the meetings that he attended; the issues that were discussed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1464/18]

145. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on his recent visit to the Middle East; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1500/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 143 and 145 together.

Last week I undertook a four-day working visit to the Middle East, where I met with my counterparts as well as a range of other contacts in Cairo, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Ramallah and Gaza.

In Cairo, I discussed with Foreign Minister Shoukry issues including our bilateral relationship, enhancing our trade, human rights, the Middle East Peace Process, and other regional issues. I also met with the Secretary General of the Arab League, Mr. Aboul Gheit, to discuss the Middle East Peace Process and regional conflicts including Syria and Yemen. Finally, I met with the President of Egypt's National Council for Women, and with leaders in the business community.

In my second trip to Israel and Palestine as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, I met with key representatives of the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, as well as leaders of other Israeli political parties, and partners in international and non-governmental organisations. In all of these meetings I conveyed the importance the Irish people attach to the resolution of the Middle East Peace Process, something that has been a priority for me personally since I took office.

In my meetings with the Israeli authorities, I expressed Ireland's concerns about the impact of the continuing occupation, including settlement construction and the effects on minors who are detained. I had a frank discussion with Prime Minister Netanyahu about the prospects for returning to negotiations between the parties, and how Ireland and the EU can play a constructive role in the MEPP. I set out the urgent need to break the downward spiral of the situation in Gaza, which is clearly unsustainable, and talked about ways in which it could be alleviated. I put on record my view that to bar individuals from Israel, on the basis that they hold views critical of the Government's policies, is not the way to deal with criticism.

I also had the opportunity to meet with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, and Foreign Minister Malki, with whom I discussed the challenges facing the Palestinian people, and the prospects for reinvigorating the effort towards peace in the Middle East. They set out their thinking on ways to prepare for a Palestinian State. I also heard about work to restore the Palestinian Authority to its role in Gaza, giving Palestinians a unified Government, an effort that I encouraged and supported.

In Gaza, I met with Palestinian Authority officials, officials from UNRWA and the OHCHR, as well as representatives of civil society organisations. I saw at first hand the effects of the blockade, and the effects that this is having on young people's prospects and hopes, leading to a dangerous sense of despair. I reaffirmed Ireland's commitment to working to end this situation.

European Parliament Elections

144. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he or his Department has been informed by Mr. Donald Tusk or his offices regarding a consultation process on possible changes to European constituencies before the 2019 European elections take place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1474/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Neither my Department nor I have received correspondence from Mr Tusk or his offices regarding possible changes to the European constituencies before the 2019 European Parliament elections. Changes to the European Parliament constituencies would require consideration by my colleague, the Minister for Housing Planning and Local Government, from the perspective of electoral administration and from my Department in the context of European Union affairs.

However, in light of population change in Member States and having regard to the proposed withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU, there may be a need to adjust the distribution of seats in advance of the next elections to the European Parliament in 2019. This work is being undertaken on the initiative of the European Parliament.

In this context, the European Parliament's Committee on Constitutional Affairs, in early September 2017, published a draft report on the composition of the European Parliament for 2019-2024.

It is anticipated that the European Parliament will vote in plenary on this matter later this year after which a proposal will be brought to Council.

Question No. 145 answered with Question No. 143.

Northern Ireland

146. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on recent efforts to re-establish the Executive in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1501/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): As co-guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement, the Government, working with the British Government, has spared no effort in supporting and facilitating talks on the formation of a new Executive, over many months. However, devolved power-sharing government can only operate on the basis of an agreement reached between the two largest parties, while the other parties represented in the Assembly also have a critical role to play here.

I am disappointed that, after several phases of negotiations in different formats, we still do not have an agreement to form an Executive. The issues under discussion go to the heart of the divisions in society in Northern Ireland and agreement on them was always going to be challenging. However, I have always believed that it is possible to reach an agreed outcome which ensures implementation of previous agreements and reflects the core principles of the Good Friday Agreement and power-sharing itself - partnership, equality, and mutual respect.

Important progress has been made over the past number of months and I believe that the prize of devolved power-sharing government is achievable and can be secured for the benefit of all of the people of Northern Ireland.

I met with the newly appointed Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Karen Bradley, in London on 12 January. We discussed how both Governments, as co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement, can support the parties in resolving the outstanding issues and moving ahead to form a new Executive.

The Secretary of State and I agreed that there remain challenges for the parties in reaching that agreement, but we also noted the wish of each of the parties to see the devolved power-sharing institutions continuing to operate.

Both Governments remain strongly committed to ensuring that all possible efforts are made in the period ahead to support a move forward by the parties that will ensure the continuation of devolved power-sharing government in Northern Ireland. I will meet with Secretary of State Bradley again later this week, to discuss the further engagement by both Governments to this end.

The Government has consistently affirmed our unwavering commitment to the Good Friday Agreement, and our determination to secure the effective operation of all of its institutions. The Executive and Assembly are at the heart of the Agreement, and it is imperative that they operate to deliver representative and accountable government in Northern Ireland, in accordance with the principles of partnership, parity of esteem and mutual respect.

The Taoiseach and I will continue to engage with the British Government and the parties in Northern Ireland in the period immediately ahead to support the urgent formation of a new Executive by the mandated political parties.

United Nations

147. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of Ireland's efforts to gain a seat on the UN Security Council; and if he will

make a statement on the matter. [1502/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Ireland is seeking election to a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council in June 2020 for the 2021-2022 term. Ireland's candidacy was announced in 2005.

The UN provides the foundation of an orderly, rules-based international system, which is essential for a small and globally trading country like Ireland. We have a responsibility to participate to the fullest extent possible in the work of the UN, and to champion its role and values.

Ireland is competing with Norway and Canada for one of two seats in what is likely to be a very tightly fought election. Both countries have, like Ireland, strong records of engagement at the UN. In order to be elected to the Security Council, Ireland will need to secure the support of two-thirds of the UN membership – approximately 129 votes of the 193 Member States.

The campaign leading up to 2020 is already well under way. While I cannot provide specific details on sensitive bilateral contacts which are being made in relation to Ireland's Security Council candidature, I am using every opportunity to press the value of Ireland playing our role on the Council. In addition, my Department's diplomatic staff in Ireland, our Permanent Representation to the UN in New York, and our entire Embassy network have been actively presenting our case and seeking support.

This week my Department is convening a Heads of Mission conference, which will see Ambassadors and senior diplomats from across our Mission network return to Dublin to discuss foreign policy priorities for the period ahead. The Security Council candidature will permeate all aspects of our discussions, setting the agenda for 2018 and beyond.

Ireland's previous terms on the Security Council have provided an opportunity to give firm practical expression to the principles underlying Irish foreign policy, principles which are widely held across the Oireachtas. A strong and vigorous effort will be needed to secure election in 2020, and this is the objective of the campaign. Should we succeed, our election will allow Ireland to again bring our values of peace, justice and human rights to bear in directing the work of the Security Council.

EU Issues

148. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of recent EU efforts to address issues relating to the rule of law in Hungary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1503/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): On 7 December 2018, the European Commission announced that it was referring Hungary to the Court of Justice of the European Union in relation to three ongoing infringement proceedings. The first, also involving Poland and the Czech Republic, relates to the mandatory relocation issue and the failure to take refugees in accordance with the September 2015 Justice and Home Affairs Council Decision. The other two referrals relate to the laws on higher education (the "Lex CEU") and on NGOs adopted in 2017. In the case of these latter two issues, Hungary is considered to have failed to address EU concerns about these laws or amend the legislation to bring it in line with EU standards.

The Taoiseach also raised concerns over rule of law issues with Prime Minister Orban during their meeting on 4 January last.

It is my hope that Hungary and the European Commission will engage on these important issues and that, ultimately, a resolution may be achieved.

EU Issues

149. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of recent EU efforts to address issues relating to the rule of law in Poland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1504/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Dialogue has been ongoing between the European Commission and Poland regarding the Rule of Law since January 2016.

The Commission on 20 December 2017 adopted three complementary measures (i) a proposal to the Council under Art. 7(1) TEU on the risk of a serious breach by a Member State of EU values (ii) a 4th rule of law recommendation identifying concrete actions Poland should take including two new measures relating to recently adopted laws, (iii) referral to the Court of Justice of the EU the law on the ordinary courts which introduced different retirement ages for male and female judges and gives the Minister of Justice discretionary power to extend their retirement ages. The Commission has invited the Polish authorities to address the issues within three months. The Commission has also said that it is ready to pursue a constructive dialogue with the Polish Government to this end.

Commission President Juncker and Polish Prime Minister Morawiecki met in Brussels on 9 January last where they addressed a broad range of issues of common interest, including the Rule of Law. They agreed that they will meet again to pursue the discussion with a view to making progress by the end of February.

I hope that a solution can be reached through this further dialogue.

Foreign Conflicts

150. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the situation in Syria and recent European Union and international efforts to find a lasting and sustainable solution to the conflict; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1505/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): As we enter a new year, the situation in Syria continues to be one of utmost concern. The conflict, which is now almost eight years old, has cost an estimated half a million lives. Over 13 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria, including close to 3 million people trapped in besieged and hard-to-reach areas. Over 5.5 million have fled to neighboring countries and the wider region. An end to the violence is urgently needed in order to relieve the suffering of the Syrian people. The UN is leading political negotiations to end the conflict based on the 2012 Geneva Communique and UN Security Council resolution 2254, which calls for an end to violence; release of political prisoners; formation of a transitional governing body with executive powers and a constitutional reform process. The eighth round of these talks is currently underway in Geneva. Ireland fully supports this process and the work of UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura. The EU provides direct assistance to the UN-led Geneva peace talks and has launched, in coordination with the UN, an initiative to develop political dialogue with key actors from the region to identify common ground. The EU Syria Peace

Process Support Initiative aims to facilitate the peace process, build the capacity of opposition parties and contribute to dialogue with civil society in support of the efforts of the UN Special Envoy for Syria.

Ireland and the EU also provide support, including financial support, to a broad range of mechanisms to ensure legal accountability for all war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Syria as part of a sustainable peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Since 2012 Ireland has contributed over €90 million to the international humanitarian response to the Syria crisis, including €25 million in 2017. This is our largest contribution to a single crisis in recent years. Through our annual contributions to the EU institutions Ireland also supports the EU's humanitarian response to the crisis. The EU and its Member States have together mobilised more than €9.5 billion for humanitarian and resilience assistance to support Syrians inside the country and in neighbouring countries, making the EU the largest single donor to the effort. The EU will host a donors' conference for Syria in 2018.

Overseas Development Aid Expenditure

151. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if a review is currently under way on Ireland's overseas development aid and the 0.7% gross national product target; the meetings held and those consulted to date relating to this review; the expected date that the review is set to be completed and published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1506/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Government is strongly committed to Ireland's overseas development cooperation programme and to its place at the heart of our foreign policy. Our policy for International Development, "One World, One Future", clearly articulates our commitment to the UN target of providing 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) in Official Development Assistance (ODA), as economic conditions allow. The current Programme for Government reinforces this commitment.

The international development context has evolved significantly over the past five years. As announced by the Tánaiste we will produce a new White Paper on international development policy in 2018. The White Paper will build on our existing aid programme and allow us to take stock of the implications of a fast-changing global environment and prioritise our role in fulfilling the ambitious international development policy agenda.

Progress towards achieving the 0.7% UN target needs to be made in a sustainable and manageable way. This will build on Ireland's recognised role as a reliable and effective partner in contributing to ending global poverty and hunger, and in providing humanitarian assistance. Reaching this target will involve significant increases to the ODA budget and requires careful planning and consultation with other Government Departments and stakeholders.

The new White Paper on Ireland's development assistance programme will inform an ambitious pathway towards making greater but sustainable progress on the UN target. Internal preparations and analysis are already underway. Internal and external stakeholders will be involved in a consultation process following DPER guidelines. The White Paper will also build on the independent work of the review of the Irish Aid programme currently being undertaken by the Oireachtas Joint Committee for Foreign Affairs and Trade (JCFAT).

Departmental Projects

152. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if Brexit-related research is under way in his Department; if so, the research under way; if his Department will publish the research and expected publication dates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1507/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): As Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade with special responsibility for Brexit, I have responsibility for coordinating the whole-of-Government response to Brexit. In this capacity, 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. 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, including one in which no Withdrawal Agreement is concluded. This represents an intensification of efforts to build on the Government's previous contingency planning.

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 on which will of course be decisive in determining the shape and effects of Brexit. This work is led by the European Union Division in co-operation with the Ireland and United Kingdom and Americas Division, the Legal Division, the Political Division and the Trade Division. 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 but it would not be helpful or appropriate to publish detailed material which is heavily informed by confidential discussions with other Member States and the EU Institutions.

The Department is also analysing the possible impact of Brexit on policy areas within its remit, notably the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy and the EU's policy on international development.

My Department also works closely with the European Commission and European Parliament Offices here in Dublin and with civil society organisations including the Institute for International and European Affairs and European Movement Ireland. With funding from this Department, the IIEA is undertaking research on the future shape of the EU and the new strategic alliances that Ireland will need to develop within the EU after Brexit. The analysis will also consider the macro-economic effects of Brexit and the EU institutional implications of Britain's withdrawal from the EU. This work will build on the extensive analysis being undertaken by a range of organisations, both in Ireland and further afield, and will be presented in a series of public research papers over the coming months and years.

Consular Services Data

153. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of staff working in Irish embassies and consulates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1508/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Ireland's diplomatic network of missions around the world is critical to the achievement of our foreign policy and trade goals. These include to ensure the efficient delivery of passport and consular services to our citizens, support to emigrant organisations and outreach to the diaspora and other networks of influence. Our Embassies and Consulates are contributing directly to safeguarding our interests in negotiations on the UK exit from the European Union and they are helping to ensure that Ireland plays a full part in shaping the future development of the European Union. The work of my Department in promoting a more just, fair, secure and sustainable world continues through mission engagement with multilateral institutions and agencies, including those of the United Nations, and via implementation of the Irish Aid programme in partner countries. Our staff in Embassies and Consulates also make a strong contribution to job creation, exports, tourism and education in Ireland by assisting Irish businesses overseas in close cooperation with State agencies as set out in the "Ireland Connected – Trading and Investing in a dynamic world" Strategy. The information on DFAT staff in Missions abroad is set out in the following table.

Mission	Staff numbers as at 31 December 2017
Abu Dhabi	2 staff posted from HQ6 locally recruited staff
Abuja	2 staff posted from HQ5 locally recruited staff
Addis Ababa	5 staff posted from HQ5 locally recruited staff
Ankara	4 staff posted from HQ4 locally recruited staff
Athens	3 staff posted from HQ5 locally recruited staff
Atlanta CG	1 staff posted from HQ2 locally recruited staff
Austin CG	1 staff posted from HQ3 locally recruited staff
Bangkok	2 staff posted from HQ7 locally recruited staff
Beijing	8 staff posted from HQ13 locally recruited staff
Berlin	7 staff posted from HQ12.6 locally recruited staff
Berne	2 staff posted from HQ3 locally recruited staff
Boston CG	2 staff posted from HQ5 locally recruited staff

Questions - Written Answers

Brasilia	2 staff posted from HQ4 locally recruited staff
Bratislava	1 staff posted from HQ2 locally recruited staff
Brussels Embassy (incl PFP)	4 staff posted from HQ4 locally recruited staff
Brussels (Permanent Representation of Ireland to the EU)	67 staff posted from HQ7 locally recruited staff
Bucharest	2 staff posted from HQ5 locally recruited staff
Budapest	2 staff posted from HQ4 locally recruited staff
Buenos Aires	1 staff posted from HQ4 locally recruited staff
Cairo	3 staff posted from HQ6 locally recruited staff
Canberra	3 staff posted from HQ8 locally recruited staff
Chicago CG	2 staff posted from HQ3.4 locally recruited staff
Copenhagen	2 staff posted from HQ4.9 locally recruited staff
Dar-es-Salaam	5 staff posted from HQ4 locally recruited staff
Edinburgh CG	2 staff posted from HQ1 locally recruited staff
Edinburgh BIC	1 staff posted from HQ
Freetown	3 staff posted from HQ 4 locally recruited staff
Geneva PMUN	6 staff posted from HQ 5 locally recruited staff
Hanoi	5 staff posted from HQ 6 locally recruited staff
Helsinki	2 staff posted from HQ3 locally recruited staff
Holy See	1 staff posted from HQ1.75 locally recruited staff
Hong Kong CG	3 staff posted from HQ2 locally recruited staff
Jakarta	2 staff posted from HQ5 locally recruited staff
Kampala	4 staff posted from HQ5 locally recruited staff
Kuala Lumpur	2 staff posted from HQ4 locally recruited staff
Lilongwe	4 staff posted from HQ 5 locally recruited staff

Lisbon	2 staff posted from HQ4 locally recruited staff
Ljubljana	2 staff posted from HQ3 locally recruited staff
London	35 staff posted from HQ24.6 locally recruited staff
Lusaka	3 staff posted from HQ4 locally recruited staff
Luxembourg	1 staff posted from HQ2.5 locally recruited staff
Madrid	3 staff posted from HQ10 locally recruited staff
Maputo	5 staff posted from HQ8 locally recruited staff
Mexico	3 staff posted from HQ6 locally recruited staff
Moscow	5 staff posted from HQ9 locally recruited staff
Nairobi	3 staff posted from HQ5 locally recruited staff
New Delhi	3 staff posted from HQ7 locally recruited staff
New York CG	4 staff posted from HQ12.5 locally recruited staff
New York PMUN	11 staff posted from HQ5 locally recruited staff
Nicosia	1 staff posted from HQ3 locally recruited staff
Oslo	2 staff posted from HQ3 locally recruited staff
Ottawa	3 staff posted from HQ6 locally recruited staff
Paris	7 staff posted from HQ13.2 locally recruited staff
Paris OECD	1 staff posted from HQ4 locally recruited staff
Prague	2 staff posted from HQ6 locally recruited staff
Pretoria	5 staff posted from HQ8 locally recruited staff
Ramallah	2 staff posted from HQ4 locally recruited staff
Riga	1 staff posted from HQ2 locally recruited staff
Riyadh	1 staff posted from HQ9 locally recruited staff
Rome	3 staff posted from HQ9.42 locally recruited staff

Questions - Written Answers

San Francisco CG	2 staff posted from HQ4 locally recruited staff
Sao Paulo CG	2 staff posted from HQ2 locally recruited staff
Seoul	2 staff posted from HQ4 locally recruited staff
Shanghai CG	3 staff posted from HQ4 locally recruited staff
Singapore	2 staff posted from HQ4.3 locally recruited staff
Sofia	1 staff posted from HQ4 locally recruited staff
Stockholm	2 staff posted from HQ3.62 locally recruited staff
Strasbourg Council of Europe	2 staff posted from HQ3 locally recruited staff
Sydney CG	1 staff posted from HQ4 locally recruited staff
Tallinn	1 staff posted from HQ4 locally recruited staff
Tel Aviv	2 staff posted from HQ3 locally recruited staff
The Hague	3 staff posted from HQ5.8 locally recruited staff
Tokyo	3 staff posted from HQ7 locally recruited staff
Valletta	1 staff posted from HQ3 locally recruited staff
Vienna Embassy	3 staff posted from HQ5 locally recruited staff
Vienna OSCE	2 staff posted from HQ2 locally recruited staff
Vilnius	1 staff posted from HQ3 locally recruited staff
Warsaw	3 staff posted from HQ5 locally recruited staff
Washington	9 staff posted from HQ7 locally recruited staff
Zagreb	1 staff posted from HQ2 locally recruited staff

Overseas Development Aid Data

154. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the cost of reaching the 0.7% overseas development aid gross national product target from its current base of approximately 0.3% in incremental steps, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1510/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán

Cannon): The Government is strongly committed to Ireland’s overseas development cooperation programme and to its place at the heart of our foreign policy. For 2018, the Government has allocated just over €707 million for ODA, the third consecutive year ODA has increased. Based on current estimates, it is anticipated this level of allocation will see ODA amount to approximately 0.3% of GNI in 2018. The current Programme for Government sets out our ambition to meet the UN target of providing 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) in Official Development Assistance (ODA), as resources permit. The intention is to reach the target by 2030, the timeframe for UN Sustainable Development Goals. Progress towards the 0.7% target will need to be made in a sustainable and manageable way, building on Ireland’s recognised role as a reliable and effective partner in combatting global poverty and hunger, and in providing humanitarian assistance. In order to prepare that managed progression towards the UN target, a new White Paper on Irish overseas development assistance will be produced this year. Reaching the 0.7% target will involve significant increases to the ODA budget. Where these increases might be best focused and how they can be managed prudentially and effectively will require careful planning and consultation, including with other Government Departments and stakeholders more generally. The White Paper process will give direction in this regard, as will the current work of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Defence looking at Irish Aid.

The following table sets out a sample stepped scenario for meeting the UN target of spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA by 2030, with interim targets of 0.4% in 2022, 0.5% in 2026 and 0.6% in 2028.

Year	Total ODA In € millions	ODA as a % of Projected GNP
2018	707.10	0.30%
2020	906.37	0.35%
2022	1,109.29	0.40%
2024	1,323.96	0.45%
2026	1,560.65	0.50%
2028	1,986.83	0.60%
2030	2,459.13	0.70%

As GNI is calculated in arrears, forecasts for Gross National Product (GNP) are used as a proxy for GNI in the above calculations.

Emigrant Support Services

155. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the current expenditure on the emigrant support programme; the full-year cost of increasing expenditure by 5%, 10%, 15% and 20%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1511/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The budget for the Emigrant Support Programme in 2018 is €11.595 million and is unchanged in recent years. An increase of 5% on the 2018 budget would cost €579,750 An increase of 10% on the 2018 budget would cost €1,159,500

An increase of 15% on the 2018 budget would cost €1,739,250

An increase of 20% on the 2018 budget would cost €2,319,000

Overseas Development Aid Expenditure

156. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the current expenditure on the trust fund for Africa; the full-year cost of increasing expenditure by 5%, 10%, 15% and 20%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1512/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The *European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa* is an element of a comprehensive package of EU initiatives to support stability across the North, East (Horn of Africa) and West (Sahel / Lake Chad) African Regions, contributing to the tackling the root causes of instability, forced displacement and irregular migration. This Trust Fund was launched at the EU-Africa Summit on migration in Valletta, Malta, on 11-12 November 2015 and will operate until 2020. Almost €3.2 billion has been pledged for the Trust Fund by the EU and EU Member States.

At the time of its launch, Ireland made a commitment to provide a bilateral contribution of €3 million over the period covered by the Trust Fund, 2016 to 2020 (€600,000 per annum). This commitment is earmarked for the Horn of Africa region.

At the meeting of the European Council of 19-20 October 2017, and in response to a call by President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, for further pledges to meet pressing needs, the Taoiseach pledged additional bilateral Irish funding of €3 million by 2020, doubling Ireland's total commitment to the Trust Fund.

To date, Ireland has provided €600,000 to the Trust Fund in 2016, €600,000 in early 2017, and a further €400,000 in December 2017 in line with the additional pledge. Ireland's total bilateral contribution to the Trust Fund to date therefore stands at €1.6 million. A further €1 million will be provided in 2018, with the remaining balance of €3.4 million to be disbursed over 2019 and 2020.

Ireland also makes an assessed contribution, along with other EU Member States, to the European Development Fund (EDF) which in turn supports the Trust Fund (€2.29 billion pledged by EDF).

Incremental increases of the type set out in the Deputy's question are not planned.

Consular Services Data

157. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the full-year cost of running an embassy and a consulate, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1513/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The work of our embassy and consulate network around the world continues to be important in Ireland's economic development and the enhancement of our international reputation. Our network promotes Ireland's political, economic and cultural interests and values, provide services to our citizens, develop strategic stakeholder relationships and represent Ireland in international organisations. Our Embassies' work in support of Ireland's interests includes:

- Promoting Ireland as a source of high-quality exports, a destination for investment, research, study and tourism to targeted audiences and contacts.

- Supporting trade missions and other trade-focussed high-level visits, record numbers of

which have taken place in the last five years.

- Directly assisting Irish companies with advice, introductions and working to resolve regulatory or market access issues, in partnership with Enterprise Ireland.

- Providing frontline consular and passport services to Irish citizens overseas.

- Influencing and negotiating for Ireland on issues that could impact our interests and priorities.

The cost of operating an embassy and consulate can vary significantly depending on its location, the type and range of services provided and the overall size of the embassy. The larger embassies/consulates would cost in the region of €1m to €5m per annum to operate. Smaller single diplomatic officer embassies/consulates would cost in the region of €0.5m per annum to operate.

Passport Services

158. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of staff employed in passport offices and in the passport online service; the cost of running the passport service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1514/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff permanently employed by my Department and currently assigned to the Passport Service is 322. In addition, the Passport Service has received sanction for 210 Temporary Clerical Officers (TCOs) this year to respond to the seasonal demand for passports, which is normally between February and September annually. All sections in the Passport Service are monitored closely to ensure they are sufficiently resourced to meet demand. The number of these Passport Service staff working on the online passport application service varies depending on the volume in the system. The Deputy should be aware, however, that in addition to the team processing these applications, staff assigned to other duties such as those in the Communications Unit deal with queries arising in connection with all passport applications, including queries from online passport applicants. The cost of running the Passport Service in 2017 was €33.7 million. This figure excludes accommodation costs as any properties occupied by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in the State are rented and maintained by the Office of Public Works. The figure includes the Passport Reform Programme which is delivering major upgrades to the passport service technology platforms and business processes as well as significant customer service improvements.

Peace and Reconciliation Programme

159. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the expenditure on the peace and reconciliation fund; the full-year cost of increasing expenditure by 5%, 10%, 15% and 20%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1515/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Reconciliation Fund, which is administered by my Department, was established in 1982 to support civil society organisations in creating better understanding between the people and traditions of the island of Ireland, and also between Ireland and Britain. Over €48 million has been allocated to over 2,000 projects during this time. As part of the 2014 Stormont House Agreement, the Government committed to the continued allocation of €2.7 million annually to the

Reconciliation Fund. If funding were increased by the percentages indicated by the Deputy, the allocation would amount to:

-	Cost
Plus 5 per cent	€2.835 million
Plus 10 per cent	€2.97 million
Plus 15 per cent	€3.105 million
Plus 20 per cent	€3.24 million

Any significant increases in funding would also need to take account of the level of staffing resources required to ensure the continued effective operation of the Reconciliation Fund.

More information on the Reconciliation Fund and details of the application process are available on the Department's website:

<https://www.dfa.ie/about-us/funding/reconciliation-fund/>.

Brexit Negotiations

160. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the Brexit negotiations; his plans for Ireland's involvement in these negotiations and plans through 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1553/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The additional Guidelines on the Article 50 negotiations adopted by the European Council on 15 December 2017 represented a very significant step in the Brexit negotiations. These Guidelines welcomed the joint progress report agreed between the European Commission Taskforce and the UK. On this basis, it was agreed that sufficient progress has been made in phase 1 of the negotiations and that the negotiations can move to phase 2. In phase 2, a Withdrawal Agreement covering the issues addressed in phase I will be negotiated. The aim is that this agreement will include provision for transitional arrangements, discussions on which are to begin shortly. The framework for the EU's future relationship with the UK will also start to be discussed in a few months. As concerns the exit issues, I welcome that the Guidelines underline that negotiations in phase two can only progress as long as all commitments undertaken during the first phase are respected in full and translated faithfully into legal terms as quickly as possible. This includes the commitments on protecting the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts and avoiding a hard border, as well as on maintaining the Common Travel Area. A key focus in the coming weeks and months will therefore be on completing work on the withdrawal issues and on drafting the relevant parts of the Withdrawal Agreement. It will also be important to maintain a clear focus on the unique challenges faced by Ireland and I welcome that all aspects of the Irish specific issues will continue to be worked on in a distinct stream of work in phase 2.

As concerns transitional arrangements, I welcome that these have been identified as an early priority in phase 2 and that the European Commission Taskforce proposed additional negotiating Directives on transitional arrangements on 20 December. These draft Directives, which propose a 'status-quo' transitional arrangement, are currently being discussed by the EU27 Member States with a view to their agreement later this month at the General Affairs Council (Art. 50). Once these additional negotiating directives are agreed by the Council, the Commission will be in a position to begin negotiations with the UK on this issue.

In the Guidelines of 15 December, the European Council also invited the Commission and

the Council to continue preparations for the negotiations on the framework for the EU-UK future relationship with a view to agreeing additional Guidelines at the European Council on 22-23 March 2018. In this regard, I welcome that the Guidelines reaffirm the EU's desire to establish a close partnership with the UK. This is in line with Ireland's objective of having the closest possible relationship between the EU and the UK, including on trade. It is now important for the UK to provide further clarity on what it wants for the future relationship with the EU. The EU remains open to all options, in line with the principles agreed by the European Council.

In the coming weeks and months, Ireland will continue to work closely with its EU partners and the European Commission Task Force, and with the UK, to ensure the commitments made in phase one are delivered in full and that Ireland's interests are advanced in the EU's position for the negotiations on transitional arrangements and the future relationship.

Legislative Reviews

161. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the projects undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation, including the cost, the duration, the number of staff required and if this process was carried out by his department or outsourced in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [1566/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department has not undertaken any projects to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018.

Question No. 162 answered with Question No. 141.

Human Rights

163. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the move by the Israeli state to blacklist and ban members of human rights groups, including a group (details supplied) in an undemocratic and aggressive manoeuvre to prevent them from entering Israeli-occupied Palestine; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1638/18]

164. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to the fact that 20 human rights advocacy groups are now on an official Israeli state blacklist and that an organisation (details supplied) has been included on this list; his views on the creation of this list and Israel's decision to block human rights activists from travelling to Israel and Israeli occupied Palestine; and if he will raise his concerns directly with his Israeli counterpart. [1663/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 163 and 164 together.

The Government does not support a policy of "Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions", or BDS, in relation to Israel. I firmly believe that such an approach is counter-productive, and that it will not help to increase ordinary Israelis' understanding of the sound basis for international concern about the impact of occupation.

In relation to the decision taken by Israel to exclude members of certain groups, I believe

that this action also does not help to build a better mutual understanding or to move the situation forward.

Israel is of course entitled to decide who it allows into its territory, as is any other state. However, I believe that excluding people simply for critical opinions they hold is not the usual practice of a democracy. Moreover, such exclusions also have the effect of denying people access to the occupied Palestinian territory which Israel controls. While the Government does not support a policy of “Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions”, it is a legitimate and non-violent political viewpoint, albeit one regarded in Israel as hostile.

During my visit to the Middle East last week, I raised this issue directly with Prime Minister Netanyahu. I told him that I believe it is counterproductive and mistaken to exclude, from Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, individuals belonging to groups which have a deep interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I hope that Israel will reconsider this decision.

Human Rights Cases

165. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to the killing of a person (details supplied) in northern Peru on 30 December 2017; his plans to ensure Ireland supports efforts to protect human rights defenders and political activists in the country in view of the fact that Ireland recently signed a memorandum of understanding with Peru; and if he will raise this case with his Peruvian counterpart. [1664/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am aware of the case to which the Deputy refers and my condolences are with the family of the victim. Such violence is entirely unacceptable, and I urge the Government of Peru to fully investigate the case and bring the perpetrators of this violence to justice. Ireland is committed to supporting the advancement of human rights in Peru. Most recently, Ireland used the occasion of the 28th Session of the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council in Geneva on 8 November, 2017, to express its concern in relation to harassment, intimidation and attacks against human rights defenders in Peru. Ireland also noted the great dangers faced by those working to advance environmental rights, in particular.

Ireland’s statement also said that Peru should take further steps to foster a safe, respectful, enabling space for civil society, and introduce a comprehensive public policy recognising the role of human rights defenders. It should provide mechanisms for their effective protection, and conduct thorough and impartial investigations into all cases of attacks, harassment and intimidation committed against them.

Ireland’s statement on Peru at the Human Rights Council is available for review on the Department’s website: <https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/alldfawebsitemedia/ourrolesandpolicies/int-priorities/humanrights/upr/Peru-8-November-2017.pdf>

A memorandum of understanding establishing a mechanism for political consultations to take place between Ireland and Peru was signed in February 2017. Ireland-Peru political consultations, coupled with the EU-Peru Human Rights Dialogue, the procedures of formalisation for which were also finalised in February 2017, will provide a constructive framework in which a better understanding and exchange of best practices on shared values regarding human rights can be developed.

The Government remains committed to raising issues relating to the protection and defence of human rights in Peru both at EU and UN level.

Human Rights

166. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the former president of Peru, Alberto Fujimori, who was serving a 25 year sentence for human rights violations, has been pardoned by the current Peruvian President and released from jail after only serving eight years (details supplied); his views on the statement of 28 December 2017 of a group of UN human rights experts; and if he will raise these concerns with his Peruvian counterpart. [1665/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am aware of recent developments in Peru regarding the pardoning of former President Alberto Fujimori, and I note the statement on the matter which was made by a group of United Nations human rights experts on 28 December. While Ireland does not have a resident Embassy in Lima, officials at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade are following the situation in Peru closely, in consultation with EU partners with a presence on the ground. Ireland is committed to supporting and encouraging Peru to fully embed a culture of human rights.

Most recently, on 8 November 2017, Ireland made a statement on Peru at the 28th Session of the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, which included a series of recommendations urging improvements in the country's human rights infrastructure. The full text of Ireland's statement can be viewed on the Department's website: <https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/alldfawebsitemedia/ourrolesandpolicies/int-priorities/humanrights/upr/Peru-8-November-2017.pdf>

Furthermore, in February 2017, procedures formalising a Human Rights Dialogue between the EU and Peru were concluded. This dialogue aims to provide the framework in which a better understanding and exchange of best practices on shared values regarding human rights between EU Member States and Peru can be developed.

Peru has made many strides in its political and social development over the past decade and both the country and society have been transformed since the gradual cessation of armed conflict from 1998 onwards.

However, overcoming the legacy of human rights crimes committed during the conflict is essential to Peru's future development, and Ireland will continue to urge the Government of Peru to address historical impunity at all levels.

International Election Monitoring

167. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if developments in Honduras are being monitored (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1666/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The developments in Honduras following elections which took place there on 26 November are being closely monitored by officials at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. I condemn unreservedly, as I have previously done, the loss of human life in violent circumstances in the aftermath of the elections and I convey my sincere condolences to the families of the victims.

It is imperative that all sides in Honduras act responsibly and work together within the political system, that violence is avoided at all times, and that freedom of expression and the right to demonstrate peacefully are fully respected.

Facilitated by the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade, Ireland contributed one long-term observer and one short-term observer to the EU Election Observer Mission to Honduras, beginning in October 2017. Officials of the department conducted a thorough debrief with the observers last week.

I would urge the Government of Honduras to take on board and adopt any recommendations made by the mission when its final report on the election is issued in the coming months. Implementation of the mission's recommendations could help to restore much-needed public confidence in future electoral processes.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will continue to follow the situation in Honduras closely and to engage with human rights defenders and civil society organisations working in that country.

The Government remains committed to raising issues relating to the protection and defence of human rights in Honduras both at EU and UN level.

Human Rights Investigations

168. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will raise concerns regarding the arrest and treatment of the person with the Indian government. [1667/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am aware of the case referred to by the Deputy, and I am concerned by the allegations of torture made in relation to Mr Jagtar Singh Johal. The promotion and protection of human rights is an integral part of Ireland's foreign policy. Ireland works closely with Human Rights Defenders to protect the work they do and to promote the value of civil society space. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights sets out that every person has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This means that people are free to hold opinions without interference and may share these opinions through the media without fear of reprisal. I want to reiterate that Ireland is fully committed to the prevention and eradication of torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including through our work in the EU and in other international fora such as the United Nations, the International Criminal Court, the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

As Mr Jagtar Singh Johal is a British citizen, consular assistance in this case is being provided by the United Kingdom. I have requested that the Irish Embassy in New Delhi monitor the case for further developments.

Ministerial Meetings

169. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade when he plans to meet with the German Foreign Minister; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1803/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I have the opportunity at the monthly Foreign Affairs Council meetings to meet with my fellow foreign ministers, including my German colleague. Germany is of course a very important partner for Ireland and our bilateral relationship is excellent. To ensure that we are doing all we can to maximize the potential of the relationship I recently announced a Comprehensive Review of

our relations and I expect that to be completed in the coming months. As the Deputy will be aware, the formation of a government is ongoing in Germany following last year's elections and I look forward to meeting the incoming Foreign Minister at the earliest opportunity.

Departmental Staff Data

170. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the proportion of employees in his Department or in organisations under its remit registered as disabled. [1858/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): As of 31 December 2016, 3.64% of staff in the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade had a declared disability in accordance with the definition in the Disability Act 2005. The 2016 figure is the most recently available and was submitted to the National Disability Authority (NDA) for inclusion in their Annual Report 2017. Figures for 2017 are expected to be available in the second quarter of this year.

Departmental Communications

171. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his Department uses anti-profanity software on its email systems and online contact forms; if so, the level of human oversight that is applied to the monitoring of these softwares and their effectiveness; his views on whether persons' legitimate right to petition government may be blocked unintentionally by errors in the use of such softwares in determining that which qualifies as profanity being communicated in email and or online contact forms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2087/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade does not use anti profanity software on its email systems and online contact forms.

Government Information Service

172. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the Government's initiatives in his Department in 2017 that promoted State services or welfare payments, public awareness on regulatory changes and public consultations that involved advertising and promotion on television, radio, newspapers and online, in tabular form; and the level of expenditure for each such initiative. [2263/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department engages in advertising of Government information which it is considered necessary to bring to the attention of citizens. Online adult passport renewals are a key part of the Passport Reform Programme and my Department advertised during 2017 in order to ensure a good uptake by citizens of this innovative service. The advertising in question took the form of a multi-format outdoor transport campaign combined with digital units in Dublin and Belfast Airports to promote the online passport service. The outdoor transport campaign ran over two two-week cycles in May and June 2017. The digital units in Dublin and Belfast Airports ran from May to August. In addition to the outdoor campaign, a further online and social media campaign was also run with ads being placed around digital articles and social media activity

on travel-related themes. This part of the campaign ran from April until August of last year. The advertising was successful in helping to raise public awareness of this award-winning new service and has been seen over 110,000 people avail of it to date. The total cost of the advertising is outlined in the following table.

Table 2: Advertising Costs - 2017

Activity	Cost	Supplier
Public Information Campaign to raise awareness of the Online Passport Service	€210,324.15	MEC

Vehicle Registration

173. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the status of the registration process from a Revenue Commissioners' point of view regarding the registration of funeral hearses; the fees payable to register them; the fee that has been paid in the past; the recent changes in this area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54804/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The registration of all vehicles, including hearses, is provided for in the Finance Act 1992, Part II, Chapter IV. In this legislation, hearses are "listed vehicles" which means that the flat VRT charge of €200 applies when they are being registered (this amount was €50 up until the end of April 2011).

If the hearse is a new means of transport for VAT purposes (i.e. less than six months old or has travelled less than 6,000km), VAT at the standard rate, currently 23%, may be payable at the time of registration depending on whether the person registering it is entitled to a VAT deduction. There have been no recent changes to these VAT provisions.

I am also informed by Revenue that, in 2017, it became aware that certain older vehicles modified as hearses in the UK were able to obtain a UK registration document showing the date of first registration as the current year. Revenue has put procedures in place to ensure that these older vehicles are given a registration plate corresponding to the date/year the vehicle was first entered to service.

Property Tax

174. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance his plans for a cross-party review group on the local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1550/18]

177. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to review local property tax; the timeframe for a review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1889/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 174 and 177 together.

The Department of Finance engaged Doctor Don Thornhill in 2015 to conduct a review to consider and make recommendations on the operation of the Local Property Tax, in particular any impacts on LPT liabilities due to property price developments.

Doctor Thornhill made a number of recommendations in his report on his review of the Lo-

cal Property Tax. His central recommendation was for a revised system whereby a minimum level of LPT revenues in each local authority area would be determined by Government, ideally having regard to the apportionment between local authority areas of the historic yield. This in turn would allow for the estimation of LPT rates for each local authority area and the application of these by taxpayers and Revenue. Local authorities could adjust this rate upwards by a factor of up to 15%. This new system was recommended by Doctor Thornhill with a possible interim deferral of the next valuation date until November 2018 or November 2019.

The previous Minister for Finance subsequently proposed to Government that the revaluation date for the LPT be postponed from 2016 to 2019. This postponement meant that home owners were not faced with significant increases in their LPT in 2017 as a result of increased property values. The postponement also gives sufficient time for the other recommendations in Doctor Thornhill's report to be considered fully by the Government.

The Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Act 2015 gave effect to the postponement of the revaluation date of residential property for LPT purposes, and also to two of the recommendations in Doctor Thornhill's report, involving LPT relief for properties affected by pyrite and relief for properties occupied by persons with disabilities.

I have stated consistently that my Department will consider issues relating to the implementation of other recommendations in the Thornhill Report in due course in line with the 2019 timeline. The Government will make its position clear so that households will know well advance what its plans are for LPT. In that regard, I consider it very important that the principle that formed a central part of the terms of reference for the 2015 review of LPT i.e., achieving relative stability in LPT payments of liable persons both over the short and longer terms, will inform our consideration of this matter.

My Department will advance work on this matter in 2018 in conjunction with the Departments of Public Expenditure & Reform, Housing, Planning & Local Government and the Revenue Commissioners. This review will involve a public consultation so that the views of all interested individuals and parties can be elicited.

Electric Vehicles

175. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Finance the amount his Department plans to spend on the recently announced 0% benefit in kind rate on electric vehicles, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1620/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I understand that the Deputy wishes to ascertain the estimated tax foregone as a result of the implementation of a 0% benefit in kind rate on electric vehicles.

Given the relatively small numbers of electric vehicles currently registered in Ireland, and the fact that many of these are privately owned, the cost of the measure proposed is likely to be low at present. The estimated cost of the measure for 2018 for the purposes of inclusion in budgetary arithmetic is €500,000 in tax foregone.

Pension Provisions

176. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to rectify an anomaly in the State pension system whereby married persons who switch from a single payment with

an adult dependant to individual pension claims do not receive a net increase in their income (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1754/18]

178. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance if an anomaly in the State pension system whereby a married couple that switches from a single payment with an adult dependant to individual pension claims do not receive a net increase in income will be rectified (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2076/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 176 and 178 together.

I am advised by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection that individual pensioners can apply for two State Pensions. The State Pension (Contributory) is based on social insurance contributions paid or credited over the course of a person's working life. The State Pension (Non-Contributory) is a means tested payment. The State Pension (Contributory) has six payment bands ranging from €95.20 for those with an average of 10-14 contributions, up to €238.30 for this with an average of 48 or more contributions. The State Pension (Non-Contributory) payments start at €2.50 and rise incrementally up to a maximum of €227 per week (for those with weekly assessed means of less than €30). Individuals are paid whichever of the two potential pension payments is most beneficial to them (gross).

Pensioners can also apply for an increased payment in respect of a qualified adult (IQA) (i.e. an adult that is dependent on their income such as, for example, a dependant spouse). The IQA payment is means tested and can be paid directly to the Qualified Adult. The maximum amount payable to a Qualified Adult under the age of 66 is €158.80 (when related to State Pension (contributory) or €150 (when related to State Pension (non-contributory)). When the Qualified Adult reaches pension age, he/she can apply for both available pensions in his/her own right, or continue to be classed as a qualified adult for the purposes of an IQA payment from the spouse's pension. That over-66 IQA payment has a maximum rate of €213.50. Once more, the person is paid whatever payment is most beneficial to them (gross).

With regard to the taxation of these payments, the State Pension, including an increase to that pension in respect of a qualifying adult dependent, is chargeable to income tax.

Where an individual in a married couple is entitled to the State Pension and such pension is increased in respect of a qualifying adult dependant, Section 126(2B) of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 provides that it remains one pension for tax purposes and the individual claiming the pension is chargeable to tax on it. The individual is entitled to a PAYE tax credit of €1,650 to be set against his or her tax liabilities, in addition to the married personal tax credit of €3,300.

Alternatively, where a married couple are in receipt of two separate and distinct social welfare pensions, each spouse is chargeable to income tax in respect of their respective pension and each spouse is entitled to a PAYE tax credit of €1,650 in addition to the couple being entitled to the married personal tax credit of €3,300. The total value of tax credits available to a couple where both individuals has pension income in his/her own right therefore exceeds the total value of the credits available to a couple with only one source of pension income (such as a State Pension with IQA).

It is assumed that the individuals in question switched from a single payment with an adult dependant to individual pension claims in order to receive an increased gross pension payment. Having regard to the tax credits set out above, the circumstances set out in the question whereby a net decrease in income has occurred should not, in general, arise in practice. If the Deputy is aware of a couple that have identified what appears to be an anomaly in their tax affairs they should be advised to contact Revenue to have their tax affairs reviewed.

Many factors determine the tax position of any individual or couple including, for example, the receipt of additional incomes or an entitlement to additional tax credits due to particular circumstances. While any increase in income may lead to an increased tax liability, the structure of the income tax systems and the rates of charge are such that an increase in gross income should not, generally, lead to a decrease in net income.

Question No. 177 answered with Question No. 174.

Question No. 178 answered with Question No. 176.

Vehicle Registration

179. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Finance if he will address a matter regarding vehicle registration tax charged to a person (details supplied) in County Sligo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54328/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am informed by Revenue that the vehicle in question was presented for registration at the Sligo NCT centre on 19 October. As part of the registration process, the documentation presented was examined to establish the vehicle particulars. In addition to providing information on the vehicle, this documentation must also provide proof of the date of entry into the State. An error was made in relation to the date on which the vehicle entered the State, which resulted in an additional VRT charge of €427 being incorrectly applied.

When the error was brought to Revenue's attention, the matter was corrected and arrangements made to refund the additional charge.

NAMA Portfolio

180. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Finance the number, extent and value of housing developments, commercial properties and land under the control of NAMA in County Galway and in Galway city in each of the years 2009 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54337/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I wish to point out to the Deputy that the property assets securing NAMA's loan portfolio remain under the ownership and control of debtors and receivers.

Set out in the following is information, in the format held by NAMA, relating to property collateral in Co. Galway that secured NAMA's loan portfolio for each of the years from 2012 to 2017 (as at mid-June). Changes from year to year reflect the impact of asset disposals activity, changes in the value of retained assets and changes in asset classification e.g. from 'Land' to 'Development' for sites on which development was funded by NAMA.

I am advised that the NAMA website, www.nama.ie, includes a list of all properties under the control of NAMA receivers, including properties in Co. Galway.

Breakdown of NAMA secured assets in Galway by sector

2012 - aggregate value €488m	
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Questions - Written Answers

Retail	39%
Hotel & Leisure	18%
Residential	14%
Office	12%
Industrial	7%
Land	5%
Residential / Commercial Development	4%
Other	0.4%

2013 - aggregate value €439m	
Retail	40%
Hotel & Leisure	16%
Residential	14%
Office	12%
Industrial	8%
Land	5%
Residential / Commercial Development	5%
Other	1%

2014 - aggregate value €503m	
Retail	27%
Residential	22%
Hotel & Leisure	16%
Office	14%
Land	9%
Industrial	7%
Residential / Commercial Development	3%
Other	1%

2015 - aggregate value €290m	
Retail	36%
Residential	19%
Office	19%
Land	11%
Industrial	6%
Residential / Commercial Development	5%
Hotel & Leisure	4%
Other	0.1%

2016 - aggregate value €48m	
Land	37%
Retail	21%
Residential / Commercial Development	19%
Industrial	10%
Residential	7%
Office	6%

HY 2017 - aggregate value €43m	
Land	42%
Retail	23%
Residential / Commercial Development	13%
Residential	9%
Industrial	7%
Office	6%

NAMA Portfolio

181. **Deputy Noel Greally** asked the Minister for Finance the details of NAMA's remaining portfolio, by county and by type in each of the years since 2009, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54338/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I refer the Deputy to the following tables, which show a breakdown of the property collateral securing NAMA's portfolio, by county and sector, for each of the years from 2012 to 2017. The Deputy will be aware that the acquisition of loans by NAMA was undertaken in 2010 and 2011 and, because it took some time to collate data on the underlying property collateral, the breakdown requested by the Deputy is not available for those years, other than a geographical split by country which is the Annual Reports for 2010 and 2011. The carrying value of NAMA's loan portfolio at each year-end can be found in its Annual Reports, which are publicly available on the NAMA website – www.nama.ie.

I am advised by NAMA that the year-on-year reduction in the value of its remaining portfolio is a result of NAMA's approach to the disposal of assets under its control. In each of its main markets, NAMA has released assets for sale in a phased and orderly manner that is consistent with the level of demand, the availability of credit and the absorption capacity of each market. This approach enabled NAMA to redeem all of its senior debt by October 2017 and thereby eliminate the contingent liability of the Irish State.

Breakdown of NAMA secured assets by county and by sector

2012			
	Location		Sector
Dublin	67%	Retail	26%
Cork	11%	Office	20%
Kildare	5%	Residential	18%
Galway	4%	Land	14%
Meath	2%	Development	11%
Wicklow	2%	Hotel & Leisure	8%
Limerick	2%	Industrial	2%
Louth	1%	Other	1%
Sligo	0.7%		
Waterford	0.7%		
Westmeath	0.6%		
Carlow	0.5%		
Wexford	0.5%		
Clare	0.5%		
Dublin	0.4%		

Questions - Written Answers

Laois	0.4%		
Tipperary	0.4%		
Donegal	0.3%		
Mayo	0.3%		
Kerry	0.3%		
Kilkenny	0.2%		
Offaly	0.2%		
Roscommon	0.2%		
Cavan	0.2%		
Leitrim	0.1%		
Longford	0.1%		
2013			
	Location		Sector
Dublin	69%	Retail	24%
Cork	10%	Office	22%
Galway	4%	Residential	18%
Kildare	4%	Land	14%
Meath	2%	Development	11%
Limerick	2%	Hotel & Leisure	7%
Wicklow	2%	Other	3%
Louth	1%	Industrial	2%
Westmeath	0.7%		
Clare	0.5%		
Carlow	0.4%		
Sligo	0.4%		
Wexford	0.4%		
Laois	0.4%		
Tipperary	0.4%		
Waterford	0.4%		
Roscommon	0.3%		
Kerry	0.3%		
Donegal	0.3%		
Kilkenny	0.2%		
Mayo	0.2%		
Offaly	0.2%		
Cavan	0.2%		
Leitrim	0.1%		
Longford	0.04%		
Monaghan	0.01%		
2014			
	Location		Sector
Dublin	68%	Retail	27%
Cork	9%	Residential	22%
Galway	5%	Office	18%

2014			
	Location		Sector
Kildare	4%	Land	15%
Meath	2%	Development	9%
Limerick	2%	Hotel & Leisure	6%
Wicklow	2%	Industrial	3%
Kerry	1%	Other	1%
Louth	1%		
Waterford	1%		
Clare	1%		
Sligo	1%		
Wexford	1%		
Laois	1%		
Westmeath	0.5%		
Tipperary	0.4%		
Donegal	0.4%		
Carlow	0.4%		
Kilkenny	0.4%		
Mayo	0.3%		
Roscommon	0.2%		
Cavan	0.2%		
Offaly	0.1%		
Leitrim	0.1%		
Monaghan	0.1%		
Longford	0.05%		
2015			
	Location		Sector
Dublin	70%	Land	22%
Cork	9%	Residential	20%
Kildare	5%	Office	19%
Galway	4%	Retail	17%
Meath	3%	Development	12%
Wicklow	2%	Hotel & Leisure	6%
Limerick	2%	Industrial	3%
Sligo	1%	Other	1%
Laois	0.5%		
Louth	0.4%		
Donegal	0.4%		
Wexford	0.4%		
Westmeath	0.4%		
Cavan	0.3%		
Kerry	0.3%		
Roscommon	0.3%		
Waterford	0.2%		
Clare	0.2%		

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Tipperary	0.2%		
Mayo	0.2%		
Carlow	0.1%		
Kilkenny	0.1%		
Leitrim	0.1%		
Offaly	0.1%		
Monaghan	0.05%		
Longford	0.04%		

2016			
	Location		Sector
Dublin	78%	Land	31%
Cork	8%	Development	22%
Kildare	5%	Residential	19%
Wicklow	4%	Retail	13%
Louth	1%	Office	9%
Westmeath	1%	Hotel & Leisure	4%
Sligo	1%	Industrial	1%
Meath	1%	Other	1%
Galway	1%		
Limerick	0.3%		
Wexford	0.2%		
Waterford	0.2%		
Leitrim	0.1%		
Kilkenny	0.1%		
Laois	0.1%		
Offaly	0.05%		
Longford	0.05%		
Donegal	0.04%		
Mayo	0.03%		
Roscommon	0.03%		
Clare	0.02%		
Kerry	0.02%		
Tipperary	0.01%		

HY - 2017			
	Location		Sector
Dublin	78%	Land	31%
Cork	8%	Development	24%
Kildare	5%	Residential	19%
Wicklow	4%	Retail	13%
Meath	1%	Office	8%
Galway	1%	Hotel & Leisure	4%
Sligo	1%	Industrial	1%
Louth	0.4%		
Waterford	0.3%		

HY - 2017			
	Location		Sector
Limerick	0.3%		
Wexford	0.2%		
Westmeath	0.2%		
Mayo	0.1%		
Kilkenny	0.1%		
Laois	0.1%		
Clare	0.1%		
Leitrim	0.1%		
Roscommon	0.04%		
Longford	0.03%		
Cavan	0.02%		
Donegal	0.01%		
Kerry	0.01%		
Offaly	0.01%		
Tipperary	0.01%		

NAMA Portfolio

182. **Deputy Noel Greally** asked the Minister for Finance the reason properties and land in the NAMA portfolio are listed by NAMA as not for sale; the number of properties or land which are for sale and not for sale respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54339/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Deputy will be aware that NAMA does not own property. Instead NAMA acquired loans and its role is as a secured lender. The property itself continues to be owned and managed by the property owner, or receiver where one has been appointed. Sections 99 and 202 of the NAMA Act 2009 preclude NAMA from disclosing information relating to NAMA debtors, their finances and their property. As such, NAMA cannot publish information relating to debtor-managed properties and the NAMA website therefore does not include information relating to such properties. The Deputy will be aware that sales of NAMA-secured properties are conducted according to NAMA's open marketing guidelines, with the property owner or receiver, not NAMA, managing the sales process.

With regard to receiver-managed properties, because certain information relating to the receivership is publicly available, this allows NAMA to publish details of these properties on the NAMA website. The information available includes the location of the particular property and contact information for the receiver's office. Where a property is for sale, contact information for the sales agent is also included.

Currently there are 428 entries on the NAMA website of receiver-managed assets in Ireland which are not yet for sale but which are likely to be offered for sale in the future. In addition, there are 112 entries which relate to receiver-managed assets which are currently for sale. I am advised that each entry may consist of multiple properties. If a NAMA-secured property is not for sale, this is due to the strategy adopted by the receiver or property owner in order to maximise the return for the asset and also to ensure that NAMA obtains the best achievable financial return for the State, as required under Section 10 of the NAMA Act.

The most recent details for NAMA's remaining portfolio are available in the Agency's quar-

terly section 55 accounts for Q2 of 2017. This report is publicly available under the Publications section of the NAMA website and outlines that the carrying value of NAMA's loan portfolio at 30 June 2017, net of cumulative impairment, was €3.7 billion. I am advised that the intention of the Agency is to continue the deleveraging of the remaining portfolio, but am advised that this loan portfolio will require intensive management in order to ensure that the underlying value is realised and that NAMA's advised projected terminal surplus of €3bn can be secured subject to current market conditions prevailing.

NAMA Social Housing Provision

183. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Finance the number of residential properties that have been identified by NAMA as suitable for social housing and offered to local authorities; the number of such units delivered, by local authority area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54340/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Deputy will be aware that as part of its engagement with the Department, Planning and Local Government, and the Housing Agency, NAMA has played a significant role in facilitating the supply of social housing from its portfolio.

As part of this engagement, NAMA continuously reviews the assets of all NAMA debtors to establish if vacant residential properties securing their loans could be utilised for social housing. Up until end-2017, NAMA had identified a total of 6,951 residential properties as being potentially suitable for social housing. The location of these properties was made known to the Housing Agency, which liaised with local authorities across Ireland to determine the demand for these units. Of the units identified, demand was confirmed by local authorities for 2,684 properties, of which 2,472 have been contracted or delivered for social housing use to date.

I would remind the Deputy that confirmation of demand and decisions regarding the suitability of properties is a matter for the local authorities, and NAMA plays no role in this. I understand that local authorities take account of the requirement to provide an appropriate mix of housing tenures and to avoid undue housing segregation within individual developments and wider residential area. The table below outlines the number of residential units identified by NAMA on a county-by-county basis, the number where demand was confirmed by local authorities and the number delivered to date. This and other information on NAMA's social housing initiatives is available on the NAMA website.

Once suitability and demand is confirmed for a property, NAMA facilitates contact and negotiation between the NAMA debtor or receiver and a local authority or approved housing body (AHB) to acquire the property. This can take the form of direct purchase by the local authority or AHB, or long-term leasing to the housing body by National Asset Residential Property Services Limited (NARPS). The creation of NARPS, a special purpose vehicle established by NAMA, was designed to streamline NAMA's social housing delivery. The role of NARPS is to purchase suitable properties from NAMA debtors for onward leasing to local authorities or AHBs on the basis of long-term, commercial arrangements.

Prior to the transfer of the property to a housing body, NAMA provides funding to its debtors and receivers to ensure that the properties are completed in full compliance with current building standards and in compliance with all planning conditions. The Deputy will be aware that many of the properties acquired by NARPS had been incomplete vacant units in unfinished housing estates. The purchase of these properties by NARPS has often had the effect of triggering a wider programme of completion and remediation for these estates, including the common

areas of the unfinished estates.

Table: Total number of dwellings offered and secured for use by local authorities or approved housing bodies, by local authority, to end-2017

Local Authority	Identified by NAMA	Delivered (Completed & Contracted)
Carlow Co. Co.	194	104
Cavan Co. Co.	49	0
Clare Co. Co.	235	55
Cork City	470	138
Cork Co. Co.	817	321
Donegal Co. Co	124	5
Dublin City	854	412
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Co. Co.	480	282
Fingal Co. Co.	312	143
Galway City	203	196
Galway Co. Co.	145	32
Kerry Co. Co.	221	42
Kildare Co. Co.	352	172
Kilkenny Co. Co.	189	56
Laois Co. Co.	132	34
Leitrim Co. Co.	35	0
Limerick City and County Council	163	16
Longford Co. Co	38	0
Louth County Council	32	27
Mayo Co. Co.	75	0
Meath Co. Co.	236	39
Monaghan Co. Co.	45	38
Offaly Co. Co.	83	30
Roscommon Co. Co.	104	0
Sligo Co. Co	122	4
South Dublin Co. Co.	593	146
Tipperary Co. Co	161	0
Waterford Co. Co	109	51
Westmeath Co. Co.	108	20
Wexford Co. Co.	225	102
Wicklow Co. Co.	45	7
Grand Total	6,951	2,472

Property Tax Assessments

184. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Finance if he will address a matter regarding the rate of local property tax in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54346/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the person in question owes arrears of Local Property Tax (LPT) in respect of 2016, 2017 and 2018 amounting to €675.

Revenue has also confirmed that the outstanding amount is based on a Band 2 valuation (€100,001-€150,000). The person originally valued their property in Band 3 (€150,001-€200,000) in 2013 but this was subsequently reduced in April 2015.

From the information provided by the Deputy, the person may be entitled to a deferral of their LPT liabilities as provided for by Part 12 of the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 as amended. However, it is important to note that a deferral is not an exemption and the tax does become payable at a later date and remains as a charge on the property until paid. A deferral also attracts an interest charge of 4% per annum.

If the person does not qualify for a deferral or does not wish to avail of such an option, Revenue has assured me that it will work with the person to agree an appropriate phased payment arrangement. To advance matters the person should make direct contact with the LPT team at telephone number 065 6849127.

Tax Clearance Certificates

185. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance when a tax clearance certificate will be provided by the Revenue Commissioners to a person (details supplied) in order for them to draw down a farm payment from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54348/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Revenue has advised me that the administrative process for tax clearance was changed from a paper based system to a real-time online facility (electronic Tax Clearance or ‘eTC’) with effect from 1 January 2016. The legislative basis to change the process to an online environment is provided for by Section 95 of the 2014 Finance Act.

The introduction of ‘eTC’ means that taxpayers no longer need to provide a paper certificate to confirm tax clearance to a third party. Instead tax clearance can be verified by simply supplying the unique ‘Tax Clearance Access Number’ and PPSN to the relevant third party. The only circumstances where a paper Tax Clearance Certificate may still issue is where the taxpayer is not e-enabled, for example no access to technology, or due to infirmity.

Revenue has advised me that the person in question was previously advised that they needed to apply online through the ‘eTC’ system for tax clearance certification but have to date failed to do so. It is not possible for Revenue to ensure their tax clearance is in place until the application process is completed.

Revenue has also confirmed that the person was provided with the direct contact details of an official to assist them if they were experiencing any difficulties in completing the application process. Revenue has assured that this arrangement is still in place should the person wish to avail of it.

Departmental Investigations

186. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the studies, research or preparation that has been carried out by his Department or the Central Bank into the effects of a

significant increase in interest rates over the coming years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54461/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In order to assess the vulnerability of the Irish economy to changes in exogenous variables, my Department regularly simulates the impact of a number of scenarios using the ESRI COSMO macroeconomic model. These results are published in the Risk and Sensitivity Analysis chapter of the Budget and Stability Programme Update documentation.

In Budget 2018, my Department simulated the impact of a 1 percentage point increase in the main ECB policy interest rate on the economy over 5 years (see Economic and Fiscal Outlook). The analysis suggests that such a shock would reduce the level of GDP by approximately 1 per cent after 5 years relative to the baseline projection, with the level of employment after 5 years 0.7 per cent lower as a result (also relative to baseline).

It should be noted that, on the basis of current information, market participants do not anticipate an increase in policy rates at any stage throughout 2018. Indeed, at its recent policy meeting, the ECB Governing Council indicated no change to its forward guidance position.

Publican Licences

187. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Finance the number of publican licences of all descriptions issued, by county in each of the years 2010 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [54512/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the number of publican licences of all descriptions issued, by county in each of the years 2010 to 2017 and to date in 2018 is as set out in the following tables.

Statistical information is available on the Revenue Website www.revenue.ie at the following link <http://www.revenue.ie/en/about/publications/statistical-reports.html>

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
CO. CARLOW									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	99	114	103	95	104	90	105	89	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	7	9	8	6	7	6	5	5	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. CARLOW Total	108	124	112	102	112	97	111	95	0
CO. CAVAN									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	219	204	204	206	201	194	192	195	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	10	11	11	10	11	8	9	11	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. CAVAN Total	229	215	215	216	212	202	201	206	0

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
CO. CLARE									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	0	2	0	2	1	0	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	336	310	315	314	303	287	314	287	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	3	3	2	3	4	3	3	2	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	11	23	14	12	16	9	12	12	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	5	4	3	4	3	6	3	6	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. CLARE Total	357	344	336	337	329	307	335	312	0
CO. CORK									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	995	1,033	971	990	974	981	952	950	1
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	6	8	7	7	8	6	8	6	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	1	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0

Questions - Written Answers

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	11	8	11	9	11	8	12	7	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	0	2	0	1	1	2	0	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	50	54	41	47	49	44	50	38	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	4	6	5	5	4	5	5	3	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. CORK Total	1,069	1,116	1,039	1,063	1,051	1,050	1,031	1,008	1
CO. DONEGAL									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	367	370	398	400	359	378	386	381	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	5	9	7	6	6	6	8	2	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	0	2	1	1	0	2	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	0	0	0	2	3	2	2	2	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	1	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	43	40	47	35	30	30	36	25	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	12	7	9	10	2	6	4	6	0

	2010	2011	'2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
CO. DONEGAL Total	430	431	464	456	404	427	440	420	0

Table ctg.

	2010	2011	'2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
CO. DUBLIN									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	732	769	733	810	777	802	799	789	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	64	61	56	59	55	58	51	49	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	1	1	1	0	2	1	1	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	0	2	1	1	2	5	4	5	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	0	0	2	1	2	3	2	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	108	132	118	118	121	122	131	111	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	11	21	13	16	10	9	12	12	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	5	5	4	6	5	5	5	5	0
CO. DUBLIN Total	923	993	930	1,013	976	1,007	1,007	974	0
CO. GALWAY									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	1	1	1	1	0	2	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	549	489	488	505	504	480	515	468	0

Questions - Written Answers

	2010	2011	'2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	3	9	6	6	6	8	9	6	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	2	1	1	3	2	6	2	5	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	55	63	54	53	51	56	48	47	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	10	13	12	10	10	9	11	8	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. GALWAY Total	622	578	564	580	576	564	589	538	0
CO. KERRY									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	471	441	448	473	448	435	467	433	1
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	2	1	3	2	1	3	2	2	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	7	7	5	7	6	6	6	6	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

	2010	2011	'2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	38	45	41	36	37	37	33	37	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	7	6	7	7	6	5	8	6	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. KERRY Total	526	501	505	526	500	489	518	486	1

Table ctg.

	2010	2011	'2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
CO. KILDARE									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	177	193	184	163	188	197	170	192	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	1	1	0	1	2	1	0	2	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	1	2	0	0	0	2	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	4	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	8	5	8	7	8	6	7	10	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	14	18	23	13	17	16	17	14	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. KILDARE Total	204	222	218	187	218	225	197	223	0
CO. KILKENNY									

Questions - Written Answers

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	203	218	186	201	201	205	193	197	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	0	0	2	1	1	1	1	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	2	0	1	1	2	0	2	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	0	2	0	1	2	1	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	12	10	11	13	9	9	12	11	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	0	0	2	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. KILKENNY Total	218	231	203	219	217	218	210	211	0
CO. LAOIS									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	116	129	121	134	128	127	133	122	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	9	9	7	7	8	6	8	8	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	1	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. LAOIS Total	128	142	131	144	139	136	144	133	0

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
CO. LEITRIM									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	109	104	123	120	112	107	103	112	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	5	4	6	3	4	1	6	4	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	1	1	1	0	2	1	1	1	0

Questions - Written Answers

Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. LEITRIM Total	118	112	132	126	122	113	113	120	0
CO. LIMERICK									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	401	386	365	373	366	357	371	356	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	3	7	4	6	7	5	8	7	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	2	1	1	0	2	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	16	19	18	19	17	18	21	20	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	4	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. LIMERICK Total	426	420	392	404	397	386	406	389	0
CO. LONGFORD									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	89	97	89	80	111	90	88	95	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0

Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	2	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	1	0	3	0	1	0	2	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. LONGFORD Total	94	99	93	83	114	91	93	100	0

Table ctg.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
CO. LOUTH									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	176	199	193	191	194	180	203	201	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	5	5	6	5	5	4	7	2	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Questions - Written Answers

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	10	10	10	10	9	8	9	9	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. LOUTH Total	194	217	212	209	211	194	222	214	0
CO. MAYO									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	378	386	390	385	384	371	382	394	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	1	1	1	0	1	2	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	1	1	1	2	6	5	6	5	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	51	36	44	36	26	43	35	32	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	4	6	3	4	3	3	2	4	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. MAYO Total	436	431	440	428	421	428	429	438	0
CO. MEATH									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

	2010	2011	'2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	217	206	221	182	212	196	226	213	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	0	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	6	3	4	6	2	4	5	5	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	1	1	0	2	2	3	2	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	10	8	9	9	8	7	11	8	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	5	2	3	3	2	2	3	4	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. MEATH Total	239	222	238	203	227	213	248	232	0

Table ctg.

	2010	2011	'2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
CO. MONAGHAN									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	105	104	108	119	109	99	106	88	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	1	2	0	3	2	2	2	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Questions - Written Answers

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	6	7	7	6	8	7	5	7	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. MONAGHAN Total	114	115	117	130	120	110	114	96	0
CO. OFFALY									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	135	134	125	133	133	132	140	121	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	5	4	4	4	2	3	3	3	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	2	2	2	2	1	3	2	2	0

	2010	2011	'2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. OFFALY Total	142	140	131	139	136	138	146	127	0
CO. ROSCOM-MON									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	218	217	214	227	205	214	203	194	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	1	1	0	2	0	1	2	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	1	1	2	0	2	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	6	5	5	4	4	4	4	3	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. ROSCOM-MON Total	228	225	222	234	212	221	211	198	0

	2010	2011	'2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
CO. SLIGO									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	155	160	139	162	149	147	137	156	0

Questions - Written Answers

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	1	1	2	4	2	1	1	3	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	2	1	1	1	1	1	0	2	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	9	11	9	11	10	10	11	10	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	3	4	3	2	1	2	1	2	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. SLIGO Total	170	177	154	180	163	161	150	173	0
CO. TIPPERARY									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	440	452	418	441	452	396	426	418	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	4	4	4	5	3	4	5	2	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	1	1	1	0	2	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	0	4	2	2	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	15	18	13	14	19	14	13	16	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. TIPPERARY Total	464	483	442	465	480	419	449	441	0
CO. WATERFORD									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	217	222	217	236	243	220	230	220	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	2	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	0	2	1	0	2	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	12	11	11	10	13	13	11	12	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	0	4	2	2	2	2	1	1	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. WATERFORD Total	234	244	235	254	265	240	247	238	0

Questions - Written Answers

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
CO. WESTMEATH									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	188	167	172	171	156	189	177	173	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	3	4	4	4	5	4	4	3	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	10	7	10	7	7	8	6	8	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	3	2	3	1	5	2	2	2	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. WESTMEATH Total	206	182	191	185	175	205	192	187	0
CO. WEXFORD									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	249	272	272	273	265	268	257	260	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	3	3	3	1	5	3	3	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	1	1	0	2	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	4	4	3	5	5	5	6	5	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	1	3	0	3	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	18	16	17	22	17	16	15	14	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. WEXFORD Total	279	301	298	309	296	296	285	284	0
CO. WICKLOW									
Publican's Licence (6-Day & Early Closing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (6-Day)	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Publican's Licence (7-Day Ordinary)	162	153	154	152	160	148	154	169	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Holiday Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) - Theatre	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Greyhound Racetrack	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Horse Racecourse	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	6	6	8	7	5	6	8	6	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - 1902 Act. (Resident's Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Public Bar)	11	12	10	11	12	11	7	10	0

Questions - Written Answers

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Publican's Licence (Ordinary) Hotel - BF - 1902 Act (Resident's Bar)	3	5	4	3	2	3	1	3	0
Publican's Ordinary Railway Refreshment Rooms Licence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO. WICKLOW Total	183	177	178	175	181	170	173	190	0

European Investment Bank

188. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Finance the extent of State borrowing from the European Investment Bank; the average rate and duration of such borrowing; the advantage to the State of such borrowing over direct Exchequer financing; the projects that have received funding to date and on which there are outstanding amounts, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54538/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In relation to the current extent of State borrowing from the European Investment Bank (EIB), I am advised by the EIB and the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) that the EIB has lent or contracted to lend directly to Ireland, acting through the NTMA, the amounts shown below:

Loan Facility	Loan amount	Drawn amount (as of 31/12/2017)
Loan Facility	Loan amount	Drawn amount (as of 31/12/2017)
Irish Schools Programme	100,000,000	100,000,000
Irish Water Investment Programme	100,000,000	100,000,000
Irish Schools Programme II	100,000,000	100,000,000
Dublin LUAS Cross City	150,000,000	150,000,000
Irish Water Investment Programme - B	100,000,000	100,000,000
Irish Flood Prevention Programme	200,000,000	200,000,000
Irish Schools Programme III	200,000,000	200,000,000
National Children's Hospital	490,000,000	0
Total	1,440,000,000	950,000,000

The weighted average interest rate for this funding is 1.535%, based on the drawn amounts.

These loans are for durations of up to 25 years, although loans to Ireland are typically repaid over shorter periods.

The EIB has two outstanding loans to the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland as indicated in the table below.

Loan Facility	Loan amount	Drawn amount (as of 31/12/2017)

Loan Facility	Loan amount	Drawn amount (as of 31/12/2017)
Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland	200,000,000	200,000,000
Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland	200,000,000	200,000,000
Total	400,000,000	400,000,000

In addition, the EIB has provided information that the Housing Finance Authority (HFA) and certain local authorities have outstanding loans with the EIB. Issues relating to the HFA and local authorities would come within the purview of my colleague, the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government.

As regards the HFA, I understand that there are two outstanding loans, as shown in the table below.

Loan Facility	Loan amount	Drawn amount (as of 31/12/2017)
Loan Facility	Loan amount	Drawn amount (as of 31/12/2017)
HFA – Irish Social Housing	200,000,000	0*
HFA – Irish Social Housing Development	150,000,000	100,000,000
Total	350,000,000	100,000,000

* The HFA expect to begin drawing on this facility later in the year and continue into 2019.

The two local authority loan facilities are set out in the table below.

Loan Facility	Loan amount	Drawn amount (as of 31/12/2017)
Loan Facility	Loan amount	Drawn amount (as of 31/12/2017)
Local Authority Framework loan	100,000,000	100,000,000
Local Authority Framework Loan II	90,000,000	90,000,000
Total	190,000,000	190,000,000**

** I am also advised by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government that Limerick City and County Council and Fingal County Council have entered into financing agreements with the EIB. However, as of 31 December 2017, no funds have been drawn down in respect of these agreements.

The main advantages of such State borrowing over direct exchequer financing include diversification of sources of funding and, at times, greater cost-effectiveness than alternative sources of funds, including borrowing on the sovereign bond markets.

To assist the Deputy I have attached a link (below) to the EIB website which lists EIB loans to Ireland over a number of years.

<http://www.eib.org/projects/loan/list/?from=2011®ion=1§or=&to=&country=IE>

Young Farmers Scheme

189. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Finance the age limit for young farmers to qualify for 1% stamp duty relief. [54554/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that there is currently one stamp duty relief available that applies a 1% rate of stamp duty on the transfer of agricultural land between certain blood relatives in certain circumstances. This measure is known as Consanguinity Relief.

Transfers of farmland between certain blood relatives qualify for a reduced rate of stamp duty of 1% provided certain conditions are met. In addition to being a relative of the transferor, the individual to whom the land is transferred or conveyed must either farm the land or lease it to someone who farms the land for a period of not less than 6 years. The person farming the land must do so on a commercial basis and with a view to the realisation of profits. In addition the person farming the land must devote at least 50% of his or her normal working time to farming or be the holder of one of the agricultural qualifications set out in Schedule 2, 2A or 2B to the Stamp Duties Consolidation Act (SDCA) 1999. Since the enactment of Finance Act 2017 on 25 December 2017, there is no age limit for Consanguinity Relief. For transfers executed prior to that date, it was a requirement that the person disposing of the lands be under 67 years of age.

I have also introduced a measure in Finance Act 2017 to allow a farmer to claim relief from stamp duty where he or she sells land and purchases land, in order to consolidate his or her holding. The relief applies to land in the State which is agricultural land with no residential buildings on it and includes commercial woodlands. Where there is a purchase and sale of land within 24 months of each other that satisfy the conditions of consolidation, then stamp duty will only be paid to the extent that the value of the land that is purchased exceeds the value of the land that is sold. In such a situation stamp duty will only apply at the rate of 1% on the excess. This measure is subject to European Union State Aid rules and will not be commenced until approval is received from the EU. There is no age limit for Farm Consolidation Relief.

Young Trained Farmer Relief may also be relevant to your query. This is available to farmers who, subject to certain conditions, qualify for full relief from stamp duty on the transfer of agricultural land. To qualify for the relief the transferee must, on the date of execution of the instrument of transfer, be less than 35 years of age and be the holder of one of the agricultural qualifications set out in Schedule 2, 2A or 2B to the SDCA 1999.

In addition to the age and educational qualifications required the transfer must be by way of sale or gift and must be irrevocable. The young trained farmer, or each of them if there is more than one must retain ownership of the land for a period of 5 years from the date of execution of the instrument and during that time must devote not less than 50 per cent of his or her normal working time to farming the land.

Ireland Strategic Investment Fund Capital

190. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Finance the financial measures that have been put in place and which are available to assist indigenous craft beer brewers and distilleries. [54615/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Article 4 of EU Directive 92/83/EEC provides for the application of reduced rates, or relief, of excise duty of up to 50% less than

the national rate of excise duty in respect of breweries producing 200,000 hectolitres or less of beer per annum. In Budget 2005, relief of 50% on excise duty in respect of beer produced by breweries producing up to 20,000 hectolitres (hl) per annum was provided to reduce barriers of entry and to promote competition in the brewery sector. Accordingly, the duty of excise on a 4.3% ABV pint of beer produced by a microbrewery is €0.27 compared to €0.54 on a 4.3% ABV non-qualifying pint of beer.

In Budget 2015, the relief limit was extended to microbreweries producing not more than 30,000 hectolitres.

As of Budget 2016, the Alcohol Products Tax relief for small independent breweries was made available by way of a reduction on the duty paid rather than through a repayment of excise. This improved the cash-flow of small independent breweries and removed a barrier to entry into this market.

Budget 2017 increased the qualifying production threshold for the relief from 30,000 hl to 40,000 hl with a corresponding increase for cooperating independent breweries from 60,000 hl to 80,000 hl. This allowed production to exceed the previous threshold, though the volume of beer on which the relief could be claimed remained unchanged at 30,000 hl.

It should be noted that in order to adhere to EU rules, these measures apply to any microbrewery within the European Union. It does not solely benefit indigenous microbreweries; importers in other EU member states that meet the criteria for this scheme and release supplies of beer for consumption in the State can also avail of the relief.

Figures from the Revenue Commissioners show that in 2016 there were 71 claimants of this relief, with the vast majority relating to beer produced in the State. The total value of the relief in 2016 was €4.089m, of which €4.03m related to beer produced in the State and €58,000 related to beer imported into the State from the EU.

There is no such relief available to small distilleries where the applicable EU regime is much less accommodating and where specific public health concerns arise.

Ireland Strategic Investment Fund Investments

191. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Finance the status of the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund; and the regional breakdown of projects funded to date. [54616/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware, the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (“ISIF”) has a statutory mandate to invest on a commercial basis in a manner designed to support economic activity and employment in Ireland.

ISIF have informed me that, as at 30 September 2017 ISIF’s Discretionary Portfolio (as distinct from ISIF’s Directed Portfolio which relates to certain directed investments in the Irish banking sector) was valued at €8.6 billion and ISIF had committed €3.0 billion to investment in Ireland.

The regional information sought by the Deputy is available on ISIF’s website: <http://isif.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Economic-Impact-Report-FY-2016.pdf> . As at end December 2016, ISIF investment had supported 22,000 direct and indirect jobs in the Irish economy. The table below shows the percentage split on a regional basis of the jobs supported, capital deployed and Gross Value Added (GVA) achieved by ISIF:

	Jobs	Capital Deployed	GVA
Dublin	51%	57%	49%
Leinster ex Dublin	15%	13%	20%
Munster	27%	18%	23%
Connacht	5%	8%	5%
Ulster	2%	4%	3%

Gross Value Added (GVA) is a standard measure of economic activity, with GDP comprising the aggregate of GVA at enterprise level across the economy.

As set out in Slide 8 of the ISIF Economic Impact Report, available on ISIF's website, as at end December 2016 the regional impact of its investments is in line with the CSO's national spread of economic activity as measured by Gross Value Added (GVA).

ISIF will shortly publish its 2017 year-end update which will include detailed economic impact data to 30 June 2017.

Home Renovation Incentive Scheme Data

192. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Finance the number of properties that have registered for the home renovation incentive scheme in Waterford city and county to date; and the monetary value of these works. [54640/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that statistics on the Home Renovation Incentive (HRI) scheme are available on the Revenue Statistics webpage at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/tax-expenditures/index.aspx>.

These statistics are updated on a monthly basis and end of year reports are also available at the same website. These provide a range of information in respect of the scheme, including a breakdown of the number of properties registered, works carried out and their estimated values by Local Authority, including Waterford.

As set out in the tables, the number of properties with works registered for the incentive in Waterford city and county to date is 1,515.

The corresponding monetary value of these works is €28.89 million.

Tax Code

193. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Finance if consideration has been given to an incentive or clawback scheme for farmers that wish to install closed-circuit television to deter criminals targeting rural communities. [54641/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that a farmer would be entitled to write off the cost of installing a CCTV system against her or his farming income as a CCTV system would qualify for capital allowances. The cost may be written off over eight years.

Where a farmer does not have an entitlement to capital allowances (he or she may be retired

and no longer trading for example), relief may be available under the Home Renovation Incentive (HRI). HRI provides income tax relief of 13.5% of the cost of certain repairs, renovations and improvements carried out on a person's main residence. The installation of security equipment (such as CCTV cameras) comes within the terms of the incentive. It should be noted that, as relief under HRI is restricted to works carried out on a residence, the installation of a CCTV camera to protect an out-building, or other non-residential part of a farm, would not qualify. The relief is granted by way of a credit against income tax over the two years following the year in which the works are paid for. Half of the relief is given in each year.

The key features of the scheme are that:

- the works must be carried out by a tax compliant contractor;
- the works must be carried prior to 31 December 2018;
- Local Property Tax payments must be up to date in respect of the property; and
- the cost of the works must be greater than €4,405 and not more than €30,000 (both figures exclusive of Value Added Tax). The cost of multiple works by different contractors may be aggregated in a claim.

Full details of the scheme are available on the Revenue website at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/property/home-renovation-incentive/index.aspx>

House Prices

194. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his Department's forecast for house price inflation in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54705/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department produces macroeconomic forecasts twice a year. As part of the forecast process my Department produces a forecast for overall investment (gross domestic fixed capital formation), and in line with the national accounts approach, this involves forecasting the overall volume and price changes for newly built residential units. The sale of existing houses is not included in the national accounts as it is simply the change of ownership of an existing asset, though the value created as part of the sale process is included - for example, the conveyancing activity. As the Deputy will appreciate, estimates of price inflation for newly built units in the context of the national accounts framework are not the same as forecasts for overall house price inflation. With this in mind, the current forecast for price inflation of newly built units in 2018, on a national accounts basis, is 5 per cent.

In its annual review of residential mortgage lending requirements, the Central Bank concluded that both actual and expected price dynamics are heavily influenced by the current low levels of housing supply. Increasing supply is key to addressing the current difficulties in the housing market, and the Government has taken a significant number of measures in this area through Rebuilding Ireland – Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness. As you will be aware, Budget 2018 provided significant increases in funding for a number of initiatives aimed at increasing the supply of new homes. These measures include funding of €750 million for a new vehicle – Home Building Finance Ireland – to boost the supply of debt funding to residential development. An additional €500 million was allocated to build a further 3,000 social housing units by 2021. An extra €75 million is also being provided under the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund. I also announced an increase to the rate applicable under the vacant site levy in the second and subsequent years of continued vacancy. This will provide a

strong incentive to owners of these lands to either develop them or sell them for the purpose of development.

Although admittedly coming from a low base, the latest figures from the Department of Housing show significant increases in residential construction activity, with Commencement Notices and ESB connections up 36% and 28% respectively to November 2017. My Department will continue to work with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and all other stakeholders to ensure housing supply maintains this growth. Increasing the supply of homes is the most effective method of easing inflationary pressure in the housing market.

Ireland Strategic Investment Fund Investments

195. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the investments including lending made by the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund in the area of residential and non residential property since its inception; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54706/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am informed by the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (“ISIF”) that as at 31 December 2017 ISIF has a number of commitments in the area of residential and non-residential property. These commitments are outlined in tabular form below.

I am also informed by ISIF that the Fund has committed a further €25 million to a real estate debt structure, the detail of which will be announced in due course.

	ISIF investment	Purpose
Activate Capital	€325m	Lending on commercial basis to residential development projects in Ireland.
Ardstone Residential Partners Fund	€30m	Residential equity investment fund.
Cherrywood	€52m	Site infrastructure funding to unlock 360 acres of development land at Cherrywood, South County Dublin, for residential and commercial development.
DCU Student accommodation	€54m	ISIF has leveraged DCU’s existing student accommodation programme to help unlock funding for the overall Campus Development Programme.
DAD Property Fund (Bancroft)	€8m	Investment partnership acquiring apartments in Tallaght, to provide mix of open market and social/affordable housing.

WLR Cardinal	€75m	Provides development and refinance capital. Focus on multiple real estate sectors, providing both pure finance & development capital. Some residential housing elements.
Quadrant	€50m	Focus on office development projects. Provides development and refinance capital. Some residential housing elements.
Kilkenny Regeneration	€2m	Providing seed investment for a major urban regeneration project in the heart of Kilkenny City.
Finegrain	€25m	Invests in offices, business parks, logistics facilities and industrial properties. Primarily in regional locations.

Departmental Funding

196. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance the name and number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from his department 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 amount of money that they have spent on this particular campaign during that time; the number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from his Department that have expended resources seeking the retention of the eighth amendment; the amount of funding these organisations have received from the State in the past five years; and the amount of money that they have spent on this particular campaign during that time. [54766/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Under the Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices Act, 1938, as amended most recently by the Oireachtas (Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices) (Amendment) Act, 2014, and the Electoral Act 1997 certain payments are made from the Central Fund to political parties. The payments are contingent on the request/approval of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in accordance with the Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) Act, 2011.

Apart from payments made under the above legislation, no funding was provided from the Department of Finance to political organisations.

My Department has no role in monitoring the use made by parties of funds received under the above legislation.

Tracker Mortgage Examination

197. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to commission

a report on the net aggregate position of each bank involved in the recent tracker mortgage scandal, including the benefits to the banks of moving persons to higher interest rates; the cost of the redress schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54905/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy is aware, the Central Bank's Tracker Mortgage Examination requires all mortgage lenders that provided tracker interest rate mortgages in the Irish market to conduct a complete review of their mortgage loan books to assess compliance with both contractual and regulatory requirements relating to tracker mortgages. Lenders' reviews are required to be conducted in accordance with the Central Bank's framework for completion of the Examination (the "Framework") issued in December 2015. The Framework requires lenders to identify all impacted customers and to address customer detriment in line with the Central Bank's Principles for Redress. Steps being taken by lenders to address customer detriment identified during the course of the Examination include putting customers on the correct interest rates (rate rectification) in order to stop the immediate harm caused to them, and providing redress and compensation.

While the Central Bank is not in a position, due to confidentiality requirements under Central Bank legislation, to comment on the position of individual regulated entities, it has provided aggregated information to the public in relation to the Tracker Examination. The Bank published its most recent aggregate update on progress of the Tracker Mortgage Examination on 20 December 2017. As per the update, as at mid-December, following Central Bank challenge, lenders have included around 33,700 customers as affected by tracker mortgage failings with €297 million paid to that point in redress and compensation. (This includes impacted mortgages identified before the commencement of the industry wide examination.)

While the Central Bank's view is that the vast majority of customers have now been identified, the Bank will continue to review, challenge and verify the work undertaken by the lenders, and complete its intrusive on-site inspection programme. The Central Bank will submit a further progress report to me on the basis of end-March 2018 data. In addition, I have requested the Central Bank to undertake an assessment of the current culture, behaviour and associated risks in Irish retail banks and to consider the further actions that may be taken to ensure that banks prioritise customer interests in the future. Work is underway on this and I expect it will be finalised by the end of June. The findings of the report will determine whether any additional legislative or regulatory changes are required to enhance accountability in the banks and to ensure that consumer interests are prioritized.

Departmental Schemes

198. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether the home building finance Ireland scheme will be successful in lending to developers to build homes in view of the fact that it has to operate within market conditions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54993/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As announced in my Budget speech on 10 October 2017, it is my intention to establish Home Building Finance Ireland (HBFI) to increase the availability of debt funding on market terms to commercially viable residential development projects in the State.

The purpose of HBFI is to address the concerns raised by many developers and other participants in the residential development market that the relative scarcity and cost of development debt funding is proving to be a major contributory factor to the shortfall in residential supply. While appetite is increasing both by the main banks and alternative funding providers to fund

residential development there is evidence of emerging supply constraints which could be exacerbated as house building levels increase to meet the economy's required levels in the coming years.

Given this policy objective it was never the intention of the Government to provide cheap or subsidised funding to developers, nor would it be appropriate to do so. It has always been envisaged that HBFi would lend on commercial, market-equivalent terms and conditions, which would depend on the risk profile of each individual project, the quality of collateral and the creditworthiness of the borrower. This approach would be akin to a bank or private equity investor, in that HBFi would not be directly involved in development – its role would be solely as a commercial lender. In taking this approach HBFi will also be designed to comply with State aid rules and its ongoing lending activity is not expected to impact the General Government Balance.

With a proposed allocation of up to €750m, it is estimated that HBFi could have capacity to fund up to 6,000 homes in the coming years. The current estimated shortfall in residential supply is 15,000 – 20,000 units per annum and, accordingly, HBFi, with an annual average delivery of 2,000 homes, would reduce this shortfall by about 10% (assuming a three year horizon). This would be a significant contribution but it would not make HBFi a dominant player in the residential funding market and it would clearly leave room for banks and other finance providers to increase their contribution to funding much-needed residential development.

Clearly housing finance alone will not deliver houses. However, the Government, through its agencies, will do what it can to provide finance on a commercial basis for housing development. As set out in Rebuilding Ireland, policy actions are required in other areas and the construction sector must play its part in adopting innovative delivery approaches that can boost the productivity of the sector.

Credit Availability

199. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the reason the banking sector is not providing sufficient credit to developers to build homes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54994/17]

200. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether a lack of sufficient affordable credit to developers is stunting the supply of housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54995/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 199 and 200 together.

As the Deputy is aware, Government policy is focused on ensuring that all viable small and medium sized businesses have access to an appropriate supply of credit from a diverse range of bank and non-bank sources. The Deputy will also be aware that, in my role as Minister for Finance, I have no direct function in the relationship between the banks and their customers. Also, I have no statutory function in relation to the banking decisions made by individual lending institutions at any particular time and these are taken by the board and management of the relevant institution. This includes decisions in relation to products as determined by the banks.

However, officials from my Department collate and examine data from AIB and Bank of Ireland on a monthly basis, including data pertaining to the various sectors. Furthermore, my officials meet the banks on a quarterly basis to ensure an informed understanding of the wider SME bank lending environment which assists the development and implementation of policies

aimed at ensuring SME access to finance and increased competition in the SME lending sector.

It should also be noted that the data published by the Central Bank of Ireland in its Quarterly Trends in Business Credit and Deposits series shows that new lending to Construction enterprises for year-end Q3 2017 totaled €141 million in drawdowns, a growth of almost 20% when compared to the same period in 2016.

Separately, ISIF is making a very substantial contribution to new private housing supply which is critical in terms of meeting the pent up demand for housing across all sectors of the market. In line with its double bottom line mandate, ISIF has already invested in a number of significant financing platforms and projects in the construction sector, and is actively examining other investment opportunities.

The Government remains committed to the SME sector, including those involved in Construction, and sees it as the key engine of ongoing economic growth.

Legislative Programme

201. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to bring forward technical amendments to the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman Act 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55004/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware, matching definitions for long-term financial service were used in both the Government legislation and the Sinn Féin legislation passed by the Oireachtas last year in relation to this Ombudsman.

The Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman Act 2017 provides that

“‘long-term financial service’ means—

(a) subject to paragraph (b), a financial service the duration of which is a fixed term of 5 years and one month, or more, but, notwithstanding that the aggregate term of them may be 5 years and one month (or more), there does not fall within this paragraph a series of consecutive terms in respect of a financial service’s duration (provided no individual one of them is 5 years and one month, or more, in length); or

(b) a financial service that is life assurance to which, by virtue of Regulation 4 of those Regulations, the European Communities (Life Assurance) Framework Regulations 1994 (S.I. No. 360 of 1994) apply (not being life assurance falling within Class VII defined in the first Annex thereto) and regardless of whether the term of which life assurance is fixed at a specified calendar period or not;”

The policy intent of paragraph (b) was to capture life assurance contracts of all durations, including open ended products.

However, it has emerged that the wording used will not achieve the policy objective because the European Union (Insurance and Reinsurance) Regulations 2015 implementing the Solvency II Directive superseded the 1994 Regulations for many insurance undertakings.

I accept that primary legislation will be required to resolve this issue and I hope to be able to address this as part of the MIFID implementation legislation shortly. I am also considering a possible further technical amendment to address an issue already raised by the Deputy.

Insurance Industry Regulation

202. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the rules governing the practice of certain insurance firms automatically renewing a home insurance policy and taking payment from a person's bank account in the absence of receiving communication from the customer; if he plans to renew the policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55010/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. I have no role in day to day supervision of the insurance industry, as this is the responsibility of the Central Bank of Ireland.

Consequently, I submitted this question to the Central Bank of Ireland for its observations. It has informed me that all regulated entities, including insurance undertakings and insurance intermediaries, must comply with the Central Bank's Consumer Protection Code ("the Code"). The Code provides that a regulated entity must act honestly, fairly and professionally in the best interests of its customers and the integrity of the market, and must make full disclosure of all relevant material information, including all charges, in a way that seeks to inform the customer. A regulated entity must ensure that all information it provides to a consumer is clear, accurate, up to date, and written in plain English. Key information must be brought to the attention of the consumer, and the method of presentation must not disguise, diminish or obscure important information.

Provision 4.30 and 4.31 of the Code provide that: "A regulated entity providing an insurance quotation to a consumer must include the following information in the quotation, assuming that all details provided by the consumer are correct and do not change: a) the monetary amount of the quotation; b) the length of time for which the quotation is valid; and c) the full legal name of the relevant underwriter." and "A regulated entity must set out clearly in the quotation provided to the consumer any warranties or endorsements that apply to the policy. Where the quotation is provided on paper or on another durable medium, this information must not be in a smaller font size than other information provided in the document."

In addition, the Non-Life Insurance (Provision of Information) (Renewal of Policy of Insurance) Regulations 2007 provides that the insurer shall, not less than 15 working days prior to the date of expiry of a policy of insurance, where the insurer wishes to invite a renewal, issue to the client in writing a notification of renewal of the policy of insurance, or issue to the client in writing a notification that it does not wish to invite a renewal unless the insurer has reason to believe that the client would not wish to renew the policy. Finally, Schedule 3 of the Unfair Terms in Consumer Contracts Regulations 1995 sets out the indicative list of terms which may be regarded as unfair. Part (h) cites terms "automatically extending a contract of fixed duration where the consumer does not indicate otherwise, when the deadline fixed for the consumer to express this desire not to extend the contract is unreasonably early" as being unfair.

In light of the above, I am satisfied that the legal framework provides sufficient protection to consumers that such practices, as described in the question, are covered under the existing framework.

Banking Sector Regulation

203. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to a tactic used by at least one vulture fund in which it pressures a borrower to appoint an agent to collect all rent to be passed on to the fund but avoid formally appointing a receiver, thereby

keeping the tax liabilities upon the borrower; his plans to address such behaviour; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55015/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that Section 1049 of the Taxes Consolidation Act (TCA) 1997 sets out that a receiver appointed by a court in the State which has the direction and control of property is assessed and charged to income tax or corporation tax, as appropriate, on the property as if the property were not under the direction and control of the court. Such a receiver is answerable for doing all matters required under the Tax Acts for the assessment and payment of income tax or corporation tax, as appropriate.

In other cases, where a receiver has not been appointed by the court, but property is in receivership or a mortgagee has taken possession, section 96(3) of the TCA 1997 provides that tax on net rental income from the property, is chargeable on the mortgagee. This means that in these circumstances the mortgagee, and not the receiver, has to make a return in respect of, and pay the tax liability on, such income.

In each case it is the legal nature of the possession of the property that determines the person liable to tax on any income arising in respect of that property.

Motor Insurance Costs

204. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Finance the steps he is taking to ease the rising costs of motor insurance; when he last met officials on this matter; the persons he has met; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55022/17]

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 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, particularly during 2015/2016, 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 (<http://www.finance.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/170110-Report-on-the-Cost-of-Motor-Insurance-2017.pdf>). The Report makes 33 recommendations with 71 associated actions to be carried out in agreed timeframes, which are set out in an Action Plan.

Work has been 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 is scheduled to be published within the next few weeks and will focus on the 14 actions which were due

for completion in the final quarter of 2017.

It should be noted that the most recent CSO data (for November 2017) indicates that private motor insurance premiums have decreased by 16.3% since peaking 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 levels of mid-2016.

The Cost of Insurance Working Group is now chaired by Mr. Michael D’Arcy T.D., the Minister of State for Financial Services and Insurance. The Working Group met in full session on a total of 15 occasions during 2017, most recently on 6 December, and will continue to meet regularly throughout 2018. In parallel with the ongoing implementation of the recommendations from the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance, the Working Group has also been undertaking an examination of the employer liability and public liability insurance sectors.

As part of its preparation of the Motor Report, the Working Group consulted with a wide range of relevant stakeholders (see Appendix 4 of Report for list). In addition, in his role as Minister of State for Financial Services and Insurance, Minister D’Arcy has met on a regular basis with insurance companies and a wide range of bodies associated with the insurance sector generally, while my officials – particularly those within the Insurance Policy section – maintain good day-to-day working relationships with relevant stakeholders including, for example, Insurance Ireland.

In response to the “details supplied” section of the Deputy’s question, the Deputy should be aware that policy in respect of the NCT lies with the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport. The NCT was introduced to comply with an EU Roadworthiness Testing Directive aimed at improving road safety and environmental protection. While the NCT is one component of having safer vehicles on our roads, every vehicle owner has a personal and legal responsibility to ensure that their vehicles are roadworthy and well maintained. The NCT is an inspection or general “health check” of what is visible and accessible on the day of the test and includes a check of the roadworthiness of such safety features as, amongst others, lighting, brakes and tyres.

The NCT is a minimum requirement of roadworthiness and is therefore not the only rating factor taken into account in the provision of motor insurance. Insurers will generally require that a vehicle has a valid NCT in order to be covered. However, in making their individual decisions on whether to offer cover and what terms to apply, they will also use a combination of other rating factors, including the age of the vehicle, as well as the vehicle type, the age of the driver, the claims record and driving experience, the number of drivers, how the vehicle is used, etc. My understanding is that insurers do not all use the same combination of rating factors, and as a result prices and availability of cover varies across the market. In addition, insurance companies will price in accordance with their own past claims experience, meaning that in relation to the age of a vehicle and the availability/price of cover, different insurance companies will use different age thresholds.

Banking Sector Regulation

205. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Finance the actions his Department is taking to monitor the use and investment of crypto currencies such as Bitcoin here; the way in which these currencies affect the financial industry; the studies his Department is conducting to analyse the potential problems and risks involved in using and investing in these currencies; the regulatory frameworks required in the near future or that are currently in place in relation to

crypto currency; if he is liaising with the Central Bank on these matters; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55025/17]

206. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Finance the safeguards in place to protect Irish investors that invest in crypto currency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55026/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 205 and 206 together.

Cryptocurrencies and their exchanges or platforms are currently not regulated and do not currently require an authorisation or licence from the Central Bank of Ireland. On 12 December 2013 the EBA published a warning to consumers on virtual currencies, and on 4 July 2014 issued an opinion recommending that national supervisory authorities discourage credit institutions, payment institutions and e-money institutions from buying, holding or selling virtual currencies.

The Central Bank subsequently published a notice on its website, warning consumers that no regulatory protections exist for consumers when holding, buying or selling virtual currencies. In addition, the Central Bank last month published an information notice to alert consumers to the high risks associated with Initial Coin Offerings, which are frequently associated with virtual currencies.

The Fifth EU Anti-Money Laundering Directive (5AMLD) will introduce measures to mitigate some of the money laundering and terrorist financing risks presented by cryptocurrencies. Agreement has been reached at EU level on the 5AMLD proposals but the legal text has not yet been published in the Official Journal of the European Union.

As part of the measures proposed under 5AMLD, Virtual Currency Exchanges and Custodian Wallet Providers will be required to register with a competent authority and will be subject to regulatory supervision and oversight in respect of their anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing obligations.

The Central Bank contributes to the work of the European Supervisory Authorities on cryptocurrencies. It has also been liaising with my Department on cryptocurrencies in the context of the National Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Risk Assessment.

The Anti-Money Laundering Committee, chaired by the Department of Finance, is undertaking a risk assessment of new technologies, to include e-money and virtual currencies, from the point of view of anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism. This is expected to be concluded by Q3 2018.

Insurance Costs

207. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Finance the measures he will take to reduce the cost of insurance for taxis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55075/17]

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

require insurance companies to obtain prior approval of the pricing or terms and conditions of insurance products. Consequently, I am not in a position to review individual cases as to the pricing level or terms or conditions that should apply in such cases.

However, it is acknowledged that pricing in the motor insurance sector 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. 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 for taxi drivers and other motorists, whilst taking account of the need to ensure a financially stable insurance sector. 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 most recent of these was published in October 2017 and is available on my Department's website at <http://www.finance.gov.ie/updates/cost-of-insurance-working-group-3rd-progress-report-2017/> . The fourth quarterly update will be published shortly.

With regard to the taxi sector in particular, I am advised that insurers use a combination of rating factors in making their individual decisions on whether to offer cover and what terms to apply. These terms can include the age of the driver, as well as the type and age of car, the claims record, driving experience and penalty points of the driver, the number of drivers, how the car is used, etc. My understanding is that insurers do not all use the same combination of rating factors, and as a result prices and availability of cover varies across the market. In addition, insurance companies will price in accordance with their own past claims experience. In the case of taxi drivers, I understand that insurers take into account the nature of the taxi business, which involves driving for hire or reward extensively, and in their view has a much higher risk of injury claims from passengers and other road-users as a result.

I understand that taxi sector representatives made representations to my Department and the Cost of Insurance Working Group and these were taken into consideration during the review. The position of the taxi sector was acknowledged by the inclusion in the Report of a recommendation for the Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles (commonly referred to as the Taxi Advisory Committee (TAC)) to enter discussions with Insurance Ireland in order to explore solutions for drivers in the sector. I understand that the TAC met with Insurance Ireland on May 22nd last year to explore solutions for drivers in the sector and reported to the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport that it agreed that it will continue to engage with Insurance Ireland on this issue in addition to providing a platform for relevant representative groups to provide their views on the cost of insurance.

It should be noted that the issues raised by the taxi sector were in the main similar to those affecting consumers generally, notwithstanding that there are risks that are specific to the sector. While there is no silver bullet to reduce the cost of insurance, I believe that with the cooperation and commitment of all parties, fairer premiums for consumers, including taxi drivers can be delivered over the implementation period of the Cost of Motor Insurance Report. I would note that the most recent CSO data (for November) indicates that private motor insurance premiums have reduced by 16.3% 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 the last years.

IBRC Liquidation

208. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the refunds made or compensation issued by the special liquidator of IBRC in respect of payment protection insurance wrongly charged by a building society (details supplied); the recourse customers and former customers have in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55079/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by the Special Liquidators of IBRC that no refunds have been made or compensation issued by them in respect of payment protection insurance charged by the former building society referred to in your question.

The Special Liquidators further advise that former customers may contact the Office of the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman to request that office to review and investigate any such matters.

Departmental Expenditure

209. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the cost to date in appealing the EU state aid ruling on a case (details supplied); the cost to date in the establishment of an escrow account and other costs related to the collection of the €13 billion plus interest from the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55082/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Government disagrees profoundly with the Commission's analysis in the Apple State aid case and is challenging the Commission's decision before the European Courts.

The Irish authorities engaged fully with the Commission throughout the State aid investigation. This involved a significant degree of legal and technical complexity, and additional expertise has been engaged where required. During the investigation, detailed and comprehensive responses were provided to the Commission to demonstrate that the appropriate amount of Irish tax was charged in accordance with the relevant legislation, that no selective advantage was given and that there was no State Aid. This has continued with the annulment application that has been lodged in the General Court of the European Union.

Notwithstanding the appeal in the Apple State aid case and the difference in view between Ireland and the Commission on the issue, the Government is committed to complying with the binding legal obligations the Commission's Final Decision places on Ireland.

Significant progress has been made on this complex issue and the establishment of an escrow fund, in compliance with all relevant Irish constitutional and European Union law requirements, is close to completion. Officials and experts from across the State have been engaged in intensive work to ensure that Ireland complies with all its recovery obligations as soon as possible.

Over the past four years approximately €5 million (including VAT) has been paid in total, of which approximately €2.5 million relates to the recovery process. This includes all legal costs, consultancy fees and other associated costs. These fees have been paid by the Department of Finance, Revenue Commissioners, NTMA, Central Bank of Ireland, Attorney General's Office and Chief State Solicitor's Office.

This case has involved a significant degree of legal and technical complexity, and additional expertise has been engaged where required. As it is and will continue to be an important issue for the State, it will continue to be appropriately resourced.

State Aid Investigations

210. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the amount that will be deposited in the escrow account established to hold the moneys recouped from a company (details supplied) following the EU's state aid ruling; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55083/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Notwithstanding the appeal in the Apple State Aid case and the difference in view between Ireland and the Commission on the issue, the Government is committed to complying with the binding legal obligations the Commission's Final Decision places on Ireland.

Apple therefore must be deprived of the benefit of the alleged aid and this involves two actions:

- The calculation of the amount of aid
- The process by which Apple are denied this amount of money

The Commission have estimated that this will amount to €13 billion but the precise sum is to be calculated using the methodology set out in the Decision, which is then subject to interest as set out in EU Regulations on the recovery of State Aid.

These sums will be placed into an escrow fund with the proceeds being released only when there has been a final determination in the European Courts over the validity of the Commission's Decision.

VAT Rebates

211. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Finance when VAT will be repaid under the tax relief for drivers and passengers with disabilities in case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55118/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the VAT refund to the person concerned was paid into his bank account on 9 January 2018.

Tax Code

212. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to amend legislation regarding the taxation requirements and inheritance implications for siblings living together in the same home or at the same address. [55128/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am informed by Revenue that for inheritance tax purposes, the relationship between the person who provides the inheritance (i.e. the disponent) and the person who receives the inheritance (i.e. the beneficiary) determines the maximum amount known as the "Group threshold" below which inheritance tax does not arise.

There are three separate Group thresholds based on the relationship of the beneficiary to the disponent. The Group A threshold (currently €310,000) applies, inter alia, where the beneficiary is a child (including adopted child, step-child and certain foster children) or minor child of a deceased child of the disponent. The Group B threshold (currently €32,500) applies where the beneficiary is a brother, sister, a nephew, a niece or lineal ancestor or lineal descendant of the

disponer. The Group C threshold (currently €16,250) applies in all other cases.

Any prior gift or inheritance received by a beneficiary since 5 December 1991 from within the same Group threshold is aggregated for the purposes of determining whether any tax is payable on a benefit. Where a person receives gifts or inheritances which are in excess of their relevant tax free threshold, CAT at a rate of 33% applies on the excess over the tax free threshold.

Section 86 of the Capital Acquisitions Tax Consolidation Act (CATCA) 2003 provides for a dwelling house exemption which allows for property to be inherited tax free where the inheritor is already living in the home subject to certain conditions. Firstly the inherited dwelling house must have been the deceased person's principal private residence at the date of his or her death. This requirement is relaxed in situations where the deceased person had to leave the house before the date of death because of ill health; for example, to live in in a nursing home. In addition the beneficiary must not have a beneficial interest in another residential property. Finally the beneficiary must have lived in the house for 3 years prior to the date of the inheritance and must continue to live in the dwelling house for 6 years after the date of the inheritance.

If a beneficiary qualifies as a 'dependent relative' then there is no requirement that the dwelling house be the principal private residence of the disponer or that the beneficiary remain in the dwelling house for 6 years after the date of the inheritance. For this purpose, a dependent relative is a direct relative of the disponer, or of the disponer's spouse or civil partner, who is permanently and totally incapacitated because of physical or mental infirmity from maintaining himself or herself or who is over the age of 65.

As the dwelling house exemption applies equally to siblings as to any other persons residing together, I therefore have no plans to amend this legislation.

House Sales

213. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Finance if a person can volunteer their house for sale if they are in negative equity and have a bank write off the debt; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55176/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I assume from the question asked that the person in question is in arrears. The Central Bank has informed me that its approach to mortgage arrears resolution is focused on ensuring the fair treatment of borrowers through a strong consumer protection framework and ensuring that lenders have appropriate arrears resolution strategies and operations in place.

The Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears (CCMA) is a key part of the Central Bank's Consumer Protection Framework in this regard. It is a statutory Code first introduced by the Central Bank in February 2009, with the current CCMA becoming effective from 1 July 2013. The CCMA provides a strong consumer protection framework, aimed specifically at the process to be followed by relevant firms with each borrower by reference to that borrower's individual circumstances, to ensure borrowers in arrears or pre-arrears in respect of a mortgage loan secured on a primary residence are treated in a timely, transparent and fair manner by reference to that borrower's individual circumstances.

Each regulated entity must consider the borrower's situation in the context of the solutions they provide, which may differ from firm to firm. The CCMA does not prescribe the solution which must be offered. Rather, the CCMA includes requirements to ensure that any alternative repayment arrangement agreed between a lender and borrower is appropriate and sustainable and based on a full assessment of the individual circumstances of that borrower.

If a lender does not offer a borrower an alternative repayment arrangement, the lender must provide the reasons to the borrower and inform the borrower of the other options available and the implications of each option for the borrower, which may include voluntary surrender. Similarly, if a borrower is not willing to enter into an alternative repayment arrangement offered by the lender, the lender must also inform the borrower of other options available to the borrower, such as voluntary surrender, and the implications of these for the borrower and the borrower's mortgage loan account.

However, as outlined above, the CCMA does not prescribe the solution which must be offered. The decision on a voluntary sale and whether to write off any residual debt is a commercial decision for the lender.

Financial Services Regulation

214. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he has made a decision to prohibit the payment of fees, commissions or non-monetary benefits to third parties, including brokers and independent financial advisors, in the provision of independent financial advice associated with the sale of certain financial products; the details of such a decision including the products it relates to and when it takes effect; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55200/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): For the purpose of this reply, I assume that the Deputy is referring to financial activities governed by the Insurance Distribution Directive (the IDD), the Markets in Financial Instruments Directive (MiFID) and the Central Bank of Ireland's Consumer Protection Code 2012 (the CPC).

In recent years, the European Commission has focused on Consumer Protection with regard to the provision of financial services. This began with the updating of the rules for the sale of financial instruments under MiFID and is also a focus of the IDD legislation. The aim of European Legislation in these areas is to provide transparency and clarity to the consumer around the advice they are being given. A way of achieving this is to bring in more stringent requirements around how sellers of such products can receive fees or inducements from third parties. There is also a need to ensure a level playing field for all the providers of products, such as insurance or financial instruments, which can be interchangeable in a number of cases.

Ireland is implementing the improvements in consumer protection via the transposition of IDD, MiFID II and amendments to the Central Bank Consumer Protection Code 2012.

As the deadline for transposition of the Insurance Distribution Directive is 23 February 2018. The Directive is currently in the process of being transposed and it will replace the Insurance Mediation Directive (IMD) which currently regulates point of sale insurance products.

IDD contains a number of national discretions which are open to Member States to adopt if they so wish. My Department carried out a public consultation on these discretions in April 2017 and submissions were received from Insurance Ireland, Irish Life Group and Brokers Ireland.

The discretions set out in Articles 22 and 29 of the Directive, allow Member States to limit or prohibit the acceptance or retaining of fees, commissions or other non-monetary benefits. Following the consideration of the submissions received during the public consultation and consultations with the Central Bank of Ireland, I have decided to exercise part of a discretion contained in Article 29 to prohibit the acceptance and retaining of fees, commissions or other non-monetary benefits in relation to the provision of independent advice for insurance-based

investment products.

I will further consider these discretions following the completion of the Central Bank's work in this area. The Bank issued a Consultation Paper in November, which contains proposals to enhance the protections for consumers when seeking advice from financial intermediaries. This includes proposals for stricter rules on how financial intermediaries can be paid commission (or other inducements) by the firms whose products they sell.

The proposed measures require firms to avoid conflicts of interest created by poorly designed inducement arrangements and provide greater transparency for consumers about how a financial intermediary, whose advice they are relying on, is getting paid.

This consultation will close on 22 March 2018 and I look forward to seeing the Central Banks' analysis once they have completed their work.

It should also be noted that the Commission has recently published a proposal to postpone the implementation date of the IDD requirements to 1 October 2018. This proposal is subject to agreement by the Council, Commission and European Parliament in the normal way.

The framework on advice in IDD is also replicated in the Markets in Financial Instruments Directive or MiFID II, which gives protection for investors in financial instruments, such as shares, bonds or derivatives, and came into effect on 03 January 2018. Under the legislation, authorised investment firms are banned from accepting fees, commissions or other non-monetary benefits when giving "independent" investment advice. The exception is where the non-monetary benefit is minor and is of benefit to the quality of service that the firm provides.

Under MiFID II, I exercised the discretion to allow certain firms such as those authorised under the Investment Intermediaries Act 1995, many of whom are small brokers servicing local markets, to be exempt from the full MiFID II requirements. However, these firms must be subject to strict rules around consumer protection that are deemed "analogous" to the MiFID II rules including those around the acceptance of fees and commissions. To ensure that these firms are covered by analogous rules, the Central Bank updated its Consumer Protection Code (2012) in this area in November 2017. Under the Code, product producers must be able to demonstrate that any commission arrangements based on levels of business introduced do not impair the intermediary's duty to act in the best interests of the consumers and do not give rise to a conflict of interest between the intermediary and the consumer.

State Properties Data

215. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance the vacant properties and land not in use, owned, rented or leased by his Department or by bodies and agencies under the aegis of his Department by square footage for buildings and acres for land, in tabular form; the address and location of these properties; and the last date of occupancy or use of these properties. [55212/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In response to the Deputy's question, my Department manages and controls the shared accommodation needs of both the Department of Finance and Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in respect of Departmental staff occupying accommodation within the State's buildings portfolio. My Department is not involved in any direct rental of buildings occupied by staff. Departmental accommodation needs are provided for by the Office of Public Works via the OPW's Property Management Services Section. In that regard, OPW are separately providing details of in respect of properties falling within the remit of the OPW Commissioners.

I am advised that one of the bodies under the aegis of my Department, the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA), has vacant land not in use.

This land consists of five sites totalling 4.5 acres located in the Dublin Docklands Strategic Development Zone. These sites are actively being progressed for development as part of NAMA's Dublin Docklands Development programme.

NAMA has indicated that the addresses of the five sites cannot be released due to commercial sensitivities. NAMA estimates that the sites have been vacant since the mid-2000s. As the sites in question were unoccupied before coming into NAMA's possession, it is unable to provide any further detail in relation to the last date of occupancy or use of these properties.

Stamp Duty

216. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Finance if he will address a matter regarding stamp duty in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55237/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): On 10 October 2017, in Budget 2018, the Deputy will be aware that I increased the rate of Stamp Duty on transfers of non-residential property from 2% to 6%. The Finance Act 2017 provides that, in general, the increased rate of duty applies in respect of all instruments relating to the transfer of non-residential property executed on or after 11 October 2017.

The old rate of 2% continues to apply in respect of instruments executed before 1 January 2018, but only where a binding contract for the transfer of the property concerned was entered into before 11 October 2017. I am advised by Revenue that from the information supplied by the Deputy that this condition is not met in the case of the person concerned. This means that the transfer in question is subject to the 6% rate of duty. The Deputy may wish to note that a company is a separate legal entity to the individual who holds shares in the company.

Housing Loans

217. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance the examinations his Department is undertaking into recent reports that developers are no longer accepting the "subject to loan approval" clause which protects the deposits of home buyers; the extent of this practice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55245/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Developers are not regulated financial service providers and their actions are not a matter for the Department of Finance so my Department is not undertaking any examinations into reports that developers are no longer accepting "subject to loan approval" clauses in contracts for house sales. I am aware that the Deputy has put a similar question to the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government.

That said, I am aware that the Law Society of Ireland's conveyancing committee recently reviewed its recommendation that "solicitors acting for purchasers where a loan is required in order to complete the purchase transaction insert a special condition (or amend their usual form of special condition regarding loan approval) to provide that the contract and the completion thereof is subject to the purchaser's loan approval being in place at the date of completion in a sum sufficient to allow the purchaser complete the contract."

In June 2017, the committee concluded that "it would be unsafe for purchasers if it changed

its recommendation. The dangers of proceeding without a loan clause in a contract are too serious for the majority of purchasers relying on loan finance to complete the purchase.”

While the purchase of homes by buyers from developers is not within my remit as Minister for Finance, I would strongly advise home buyers to be cognisant of this conclusion in negotiating the contract for purchase.

Mortgage Interest Relief Eligibility

218. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if a person (details supplied) in County Cork qualifies for mortgage interest relief on the mortgage of their family home in view of the circumstances that apply. [55249/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that Section 244 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 provides for mortgage interest relief in respect of qualifying interest paid in a tax year.

In order to qualify for the relief, a loan must be exclusively used to purchase, repair, develop or improve the principal private residence of the claimant.

In the case to which the Deputy refers, while the loan was secured on the family home, it was not used for qualifying purposes in accordance with the Act and therefore does not qualify for mortgage interest relief.

Disabled Drivers and Passengers Scheme

219. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Finance if there are planned changes to the criteria for the primary medical certificates to allow children and adults with significant intellectual disabilities to obtain the certificate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55259/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Scheme provides relief from VAT and VRT on the purchase of an adapted car for transport of a person with specific severe and permanent physical disabilities, payment of a fuel grant, and an exemption from Motor Tax.

To qualify for the Scheme an applicant must be in possession of a Primary Medical Certificate. To qualify for a Primary Medical Certificate, an applicant must be permanently and severely disabled within the terms of the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Regulations 1994 and satisfy one of the following conditions:

- be wholly or almost wholly without the use of both legs;
- be wholly without the use of one leg and almost wholly without the use of the other leg such that the applicant is severely restricted as to movement of the lower limbs;
- be without both hands or without both arms;
- be without one or both legs;
- be wholly or almost wholly without the use of both hands or arms and wholly or almost wholly without the use of one leg;

- have the medical condition of dwarfism and have serious difficulties of movement of the lower limbs.

I recognise the important role that the Scheme plays in expanding the mobility of citizens with disabilities. From time to time representations are received from individuals who feel they would benefit from the Scheme but do not qualify under the six criteria. While I have sympathy for these cases, given the scale and scope of the Scheme, I have no plans to expand the medical criteria beyond the six currently provided for in the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Regulations 1994.

VAT Yield

220. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the anticipated increase in VAT revenue in 2018 arising from the increase in the public service obligation levy for electricity; the amount collected in VAT from this source in each of the past five years; and the amount estimated for 2018. [1031/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the information furnished on a VAT return does not require the yield from particular trades or activities to be separately identified; with the result that the amount of VAT collected from the Public Service Obligation (PSO) levy cannot be identified from Revenue data.

An estimate of the VAT collected on the PSO levy based on figures published by the Commission for Energy Regulation is provided in the following table. Much of the VAT collected would be repaid or claimed as input credit by VAT-registered electricity customers. The net VAT revenue arising from the increase in the public service obligation levy for electricity cannot be accurately determined.

The level of PSO levy for the period October 2018 to September 2019 is not yet available. For the purpose of estimation an assumption of no change has been made.

Public Service Obligation Year (1 October to 30 September)	Public Service Obligation Levy (€ millions)	Estimate of VAT Collected (€ millions)	Tax Year (1 January - 31 December)	Estimate of VAT Collected adjusted for the Tax Year
2012/2013	131	17.68	2013	20.38
2013/2014	211	28.48	2014	32.66
2014/2015	335	45.22	2015	44.88
2015/2016	325	43.87	2016	46.13
2016/2017	392	52.92	2017	55.62
2017/2018	472	63.72	2018*	63.72*

*2018 estimate assumes no change in the value of the levy for the period 2018/2019.

Disabled Drivers and Passengers Scheme

221. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the position in regard to persons acquiring a vehicle by means of a personal contract plan being entitled to avail of the disabled drivers and disabled passengers scheme provided the person and the vehicle meet the relevant criteria; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1038/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The qualifying provisions for the Disabled Drivers and Passengers Scheme are contained in Statutory Instrument No. 353 of 1994 (Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Regulations 1994. Regulations 8 (disabled drivers), 10 (disabled passengers) and 12 (organisations) provide that a vehicle must be “purchased” by the person or organization. The Regulations further clarify that “purchased” does not include any form of lease arrangement.

I understand that Revenue is currently reviewing cases where applications under the Scheme were refused on the grounds of PCP financing to establish if they qualify.

Commemorative Coins

222. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if it is only the Central Bank that produces coins officially recognised by the State to mark historic events; if his or the Central Bank’s attention has been drawn to private companies implying that they are selling officially sanctioned commemorative coins; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1087/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Central Bank of Ireland acts as agent for the Minister for Finance in issuing all legal Irish coin, both circulating coins and commemorative coins. The Central Bank is the sole body with the statutory authority to issue coin as legal tender in Ireland. The Central Bank is aware that there are private companies within the market that offer coin-like objects and medals for sale and has expressed its concern to some of these companies about how they represent some of their products. I am informed by the Central Bank that it intends to contact both the Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland and the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission in relation to the concerns it holds.

State Investments

223. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance the value of American treasury bonds held by the State in 2017. [1201/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am informed by the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) that the Exchequer held no American treasury bonds during 2017.

However, I am informed by the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) that as of 31 December 2017, the ISIF held, in its Global Portfolio (which comprises a globally diversified portfolio of investments) American treasury bonds and bills with a value of €11.1m.

Mortgage to Rent Scheme Administration

224. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance his Department’s role in giving overall financial sanction in respect of the proposed new mortgage to rent scheme (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1248/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department has no role in sanctioning expenditure in respect of the proposed new Mortgage to Rent Scheme.

The Mortgage to Rent Scheme is managed by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

EU Budget Contribution

225. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the recent proposal by EU Commissioner Phil Hogan to increase the EU budgetary contributions to 1.1% or 1.2%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1254/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The current Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) (2014-2020) provides a medium-term framework for financial programming and budgetary discipline by ensuring that EU spending is predictable and stays within agreed limits. The annual EU budget negotiations take place within the framework of the medium-term ceilings as established under the MFF.

As the current MFF is coming to the end of its lifespan, the European Commission is due to publish its formal proposal on the next MFF in May 2018.

While my Department has undertaken some initial preparations on the future MFF, it would not be prudent to comment on any individual elements without seeing the broader package within which they fit. My Department will continue to work closely with other Departments and will examine the proposal in detail upon its release.

State Debt

226. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance the steps already taken by the National Treasury Management Agency to refinance State debt in 2018; the agency's future plans in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1255/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy may be aware, several steps have already been taken to lower this year's refinancing requirement.

Through a combination of the original early repayments to the IMF in late 2014 and early 2015, as well as the execution of bilateral bond switches by the NTMA, the 2018 refinancing requirement has been reduced by over €4 billion.

There are €3.9 billion of loans from the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism (EFSM) with contractual maturity dates in 2018, the first of which is in April. However, owing to the maturity extensions granted in 2013, the EFSM will refinance these loans. The NTMA is currently in discussions with the European Commission regarding the modalities of the refinancing of the 2018 maturing loans.

The NTMA continues to pre-fund and to build up cash and liquid asset balances. These stood at €10.5 billion at end-2017. On 3 January, the NTMA issued a new 10-year bond which raised €4 billion in new funding for the Exchequer.

The Exchequer is well positioned to meet the €8.8 billion bond redemption in October 2018.

EU Budget Contribution

227. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Finance the payments by the Exchequer to the European Union in 2016 and 2017; the estimated payments for 2018; the receipts from the European Union for 2016; the estimated receipts for 2017 and 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1268/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Member State contributions to the EU Budget are based upon a complex formula which includes Traditional Own Resources (customs duties), a VAT-based payment and a residual balancing component paid in accordance with each Member State's share of EU Gross National Income (GNI).

Ireland's contribution to the EU budget was €2,023 million in 2016 and c. €2,016 million in 2017. Our current forecast for 2018 is €2,650 million. EU budget forecasts are contingent on a number of variables, including the size of the overall EU budget for any individual year and other operational developments which will only emerge as the year progresses. As such, these estimates are monitored and updated on an ongoing basis as new information becomes available.

In relation to receipts, these are published on the Department's website in the Budget Statistics publication. The most recent report highlighted that public sector receipts amounted to c. €1,622 million in 2016.

Data on 2017 will be published in this report later this year, with the data for 2018 following a year later.

Property Tax Collection

228. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance the reason for the change in the number of weeks over which the local property tax is deducted from the State pension from 52 weeks to 50; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1305/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the Local Property Tax (LPT) deduction at source payment option, which includes a number of Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) schemes, is a very efficient and cost effective method for property owners to meet their obligations.

There are no fees or charges associated with the option and once selected it automatically carries forward to following years unless an alternative payment method is selected.

The change from a 52 week to a 50 week cycle was implemented with effect from 2018 at the request of DEASP to ensure its customers received the full benefit of the Christmas Bonus and double week payment arrangement. The change to a fifty week cycle will have minimal impact on the amounts to be deducted, for example a property owner paying an LPT liability of €268 per year (Band 3) will pay €5.36 per week rather than €5.15 per week over a fifty two week cycle.

Revenue has assured me that if the reduced payment cycle creates a difficulty for any individuals it will be happy to engage with them to agree a suitable alternative.

Tax Yield

229. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of money collected by the Exchequer in each of the years 2010 to 2017, inclusive, from excise and carbon tax on motor fuel, VRT, motor taxation and VAT on motor fuel and on vehicle purchases, in tabular form; the estimated impact the State's policy of encouraging the purchase of electric vehicles will have on taxation receipts in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1477/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that information on Excise receipts, Carbon Tax on motor fuel and Vehicle Registration Tax for the years 2010 to 2016 are 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>.

Provisional data for 2017 are shown in the following table.

2017	€m
(Provisional)	
Petrol - Excise	625
Diesel -Excise	1,391
Petrol - Carbon	54
Diesel - Carbon	179
VRT	841

As VAT returns do not require the yield from a particular activity or product to be separately identified, the actual VAT collected from the sale of motor fuel and on motor vehicle purchases cannot be identified from Revenue data. However, based on the volume and average price charged, an estimate of the gross VAT receipts collected from the sale of motor oil and vehicles is provided in the following table. Please note these estimates are provided in relation to gross VAT receipts and not the actual total VAT collected.

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Estimated VAT €m	766	868	886	876	948	1,016	1,108	1,115

The large scale adoption of electric vehicles in the future would be a welcome development from a climate change policy perspective, making a significant contribution to our commitment to de-carbonise the economy by 2050. In the medium to long term, my Department is aware that any such development would also pose a threat to Exchequer receipts in the absence of any countervailing measures to address the reduction in this revenue stream.

It is envisioned that number of options will be adopted to replace excise duty as EVs become the car of choice. The potential development of a system of road users charges and congestion charges will be among the options considered. Similarly, Vehicle Registration Tax and annual Motor Tax could be increased to offset some of the loss.

Insurance Coverage

230. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number and percentage of households here that have home insurance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1478/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Neither my Department nor the Central Bank of Ireland collect information on the number and percentage of households that have home insurance. I am therefore unable to provide a precise answer to the question. However, the Central Statistics Office collects information in its Household Budget Survey on household home insurance (household building or contents insurance or combined building and contents insurance) expenditure. While this is not a precise indicator of whether a household has home

insurance, it does provide a basis for establishing the pattern of household expenditure in relation to home insurance.

The survey is conducted every five years and most recently was undertaken between February 2015 and February 2016, inclusive. I am informed by the CSO that this survey indicated that 91.1% of households, that either own a property outright or own a property with a mortgage, stated that they pay household building or content insurance or combined building and content insurance. The comparable percentage for rented households was 10.4%. I understand that this is based on 1,702,000 households in the State (an estimate of the number of occupied households during the survey's reference period), of which almost 70% either own a property outright or own a property with a mortgage.

The Deputy will appreciate that with regard to rented households, the type of home insurance that a tenant in such a household might purchase would be for their own contents only, as typically, the buildings and contents insurance would be paid for by the landlord. I understand that the Survey did not collect information from such households as to whether or not the landlord paid insurance for the rented accommodation, so it would be difficult to make any assumptions on whether such households have home insurance or not.

Data Protection

231. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if his Department has sought EU approval to proceed with the commencement of section 68 of the Finance Act 2017; when he will commence this measure; if the new measure will be retrospectively applied to qualifying transactions that take place from 1 January 2018 once the approval comes through; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1493/18]

232. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Finance if his Department has sought EU approval to proceed with the commencement of section 68 of the Finance Act 2017; when he will commence this measure; if the new measure will be retrospectively applied to qualifying transactions that take place from 1 January 2018 once the approval comes through; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1499/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 231 and 232 together.

Officials in my Department are currently examining this issue and plan on bringing it to the EU Commission to seek State Aid approval in due course. If State Aid approval is granted, the legislation will, when commenced, apply to purchases and sales of property between 1 January 2018 and 31 December 2020.

Legislative Programme

233. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Finance the projects undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation, including the cost, the duration, the number of staff required and if this process was carried out by his Department or outsourced in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [1565/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The VAT Consolidation Act 2010 was undertaken as part of Revenue's business plan, therefore the staff internally worked on the consolidation (primarily one Assistant Principal). The duration of the project was six months and

it was enacted and published on 23 November 2010.

The Customs Act 2015 was undertaken as a stand-alone project within the Revenue Commissioners, which was more than just a statutory consolidation of the national customs legislation, being also a modernisation and restructuring of the legislation, some of it dating back over 130 years to 1876.

The Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman Act 2017 merged the offices of the Pensions Ombudsman and the Financial Services Ombudsman into a single office which provides a one stop shop for people with unresolved complaints against financial service and pension providers. However, this legislation was motivated by the amalgamation of the offices rather than a desire to amalgamate or consolidate the legislation.

Work is ongoing on the preparation of a draft Central Bank Consolidation Bill. A tender was awarded to Matheson to assist the Department in the process. The tender was awarded for a fixed fee of €100,000, however, no monies have been paid to date.

This response relates only to legislation which was prepared by the Department for the specific purpose of either the consolidation or amalgamation of legislation. It does not address legislation that may have amended existing legislation, which inherently tends to include some element of amalgamation.

Corporation Tax

234. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance the gross and net corporate tax receipts in each of the years 2008 to 2017. [1613/18]

235. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of interest payments paid to corporate taxpayers in respect of overpaid corporate tax in each of the years 2008 to 2017. [1614/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 234 and 235 together.

I am informed by Revenue that the gross and net Corporation Tax receipts for the years 2008 to 2017 are shown in the following table. Figures for 2017 are provisional and likely to be updated on publication of Revenue's Annual Report for the year 2017. These figures can also be accessed on the Revenue website at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/press-office/annual-report/index.aspx> for recent years and also at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/index.aspx> for earlier years.

Year	Gross Corporation Tax	Net Corporation Tax
	€m	€m
2008	6,046	5,072
2009	5,335	3,890
2010	4,920	3,944
2011	4,449	3,500
2012	5,027	4,215
2013	4,978	4,270
2014	5,300	4,617
2015	7,657	6,873

Year	Gross Corporation Tax	Net Corporation Tax
2016	8,206	7,352
2017(p)	9,349	8,202

Regarding Question No. 235, Revenue has advised me that the following table sets out the number and value of interest payments made to corporate taxpayers on foot of overpayments for the years 2008 to 2017 inclusive.

Year	Number of Repayments	Interest Paid €m
2008	93	0.22
2009	105	0.62
2010	56	0.05
2011	17	0.73
2012	9	0.38
2013	6	1.00
2014	5	0.02
2015	11	0.53
2016	5	0.01
2017	4	0.02
Total	311	3.58

The Deputy may wish to note that Revenue will publish a paper with detailed analysis of Corporation Tax receipts in 2017 in April 2018 once data for last year have been processed.

Mortgage Interest Rates

236. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether mortgage pricing here is excessive in view of the cost of funds being enjoyed by banks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1685/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): A healthy commercial banking system that is in a position to provide finance to customers and is resilient to economic and financial market shocks needs to be able to generate sustainable profits over the long term. In Ireland, the mis-pricing of risks in historical lending continues to be a significant contributor to weak profitability, as evidenced by the continued high level of non-performing loans, prevalence of very low yielding tracker mortgages, and low net interest margins.

Furthermore, the residential mortgage market comprises, inter alia, fixed interest rate, loan to value managed variable rate mortgages, trackers, restructured mortgages of various types, etc. Therefore, the residential mortgage market cannot be assessed by only looking at standard variable rate mortgages, and any assessment, would need to consider the large number of different factors that influence interest rate pricing.

There are legacy issues, together with input costs which include higher costs from credit losses, higher funding costs, higher levels of capital resulting from regulatory changes, higher required capital per euro risk given the severe loss experience in the crisis, higher operating costs per euro of loans given falling balance sheets and the fixed costs base that comes with the infrastructure requirements of large retail banks.

The Central Bank has informed me that it does not have a statutory role to prescribe the rates that mortgage lenders charge on their loans. However, the Central Bank does require that

all mortgages are advertised and sold in accordance with the requirements of financial services legislation (including Central Bank Codes), and that consumers who choose a given mortgage product (or to switch to a new product) are treated in accordance with these requirements in the context of the product they have chosen.

Additionally, the Central Bank has carried out research, which showed the scope for borrowers to save money by switching mortgages and the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission has launched a mortgage switching tool for consumers (which itself notes the findings of the Central Bank research of cases where borrowers could make savings).

The Central Bank releases monthly retail interest rate data (Tables B1.1 - B2.1). These statistics satisfy reporting requirements as laid down in Regulation (EC) No 1072/2013 of 24 September 2013 (ECB/2013/34)¹ as amended by Regulation of the ECB of 8 July 2014 (ECB/2014/30), concerning statistics on interest rates applied by monetary financial institutions (MFIs) to deposits and loans *vis-à-vis* households and non-financial corporations. Quarterly mortgage interest rates broken down by property type and interest rate type are also published relating to the Irish market. The most recent statistics are available on *centralbank.ie*.

In addition, the Central Bank announced the introduction of a number of increased protections for variable rate mortgage holders. The enhanced measures, which are provided for in an Addendum to the Consumer Protection Code 2012, and became effective on 1 February 2017, require lenders to explain to borrowers how their variable interest rates have been set, including in the event of an increase. The measures also improve the level of information required to be provided to borrowers on variable rates about other mortgage products their lender provides which could provide savings for the borrower and signpost the borrower to the CCPC's mortgage switching tool.

In August 2017, the Central Bank published a Consultation Paper, see link <https://www.centralbank.ie/publication/consultation-papers/consultation-paper-detail/cp112-enhanced-mortgage-measures-transparency-and-switching> proposing new measures which would enhance the framework of protections for mortgage holders. In that consultation the Central Bank proposed new measures to require lenders to:

- inform consumers about other available mortgage options that could save them money and about the impact of mortgage-related incentives;
- help consumers to compare their existing mortgage to other mortgage options;
- provide consumers with standardised switching information; and
- follow a time-bound switching process.

The consultation period has now ended, and the Central Bank is analysing the responses it received and is considering next steps.

Property Tax Deferrals

237. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of local property tax, LPT, liability that has been deferred by liable persons in line with the legislation to date; the number of persons who have availed of this deferral method; the amount of interest that has accrued to date in respect of LPT deferred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1686/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended) provides for a deferral or partial deferral (50%) of LPT where certain specified circumstances exist. These circumstances include ‘Income Level’, ‘Hardship’, ‘Personal Insolvency’ and ‘Personal Representative of a Deceased Person’.

Once granted, a deferral normally remains in place for the duration of the ‘valuation period’, which is currently 1 May 2013 to 31 October 2019. However property owners can opt to pay the outstanding liability at any time and discontinue with the deferral. Where a deferral is in place, the outstanding liability remains as a charge on the property and must be paid before a sale or transfer can be completed. Interest is also charged on the deferred amount at a rate of 4% per annum.

Revenue has confirmed that there are currently almost 62,000 properties with LPT deferrals in place amounting to €61.7m (for all years from 2013 to 2017 inclusive). The accumulated interest to date is in the order of €6m.

Approved Housing Bodies

238. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated impact on the public finances, including fiscal space, of the approved housing bodies sector being included on balance sheet; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1689/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The decision to reclassify a number of tier 3 approved housing bodies (AHBs) was made by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) at the end of December 2017. This decision has been sent to Eurostat.

At this stage the impact on the government debt and expenditure are unknown. The CSO are currently engaged in collecting the required data to compile the end-March 2018 Excessive Deficit Procedure (EDP) notification tables (also known as the Maastricht returns) covering general government deficit and debt. At the same time the Department of Finance is also preparing the Stability Programme Update 2018. This will take full account of the figures published by the CSO as part of the government finance statistics release.

The impact on public finances and fiscal space will depend on the outcome of deliberations between Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government regarding delivery of social housing units by AHBs following the reclassification decision by the CSO.

State Aid Investigations

239. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the progress that has been made in setting up the escrow account and the collection of relevant moneys from a company (details supplied) in respect of the State aid ruling from the European Commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1690/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): While the Government has never accepted the Commission’s analysis in the Apple State aid decision, we have always been clear that we are fully committed to ensuring that recovery of the alleged State aid takes place without delay and has committed significant resources to ensuring that this is achieved as quickly as possible.

Significant progress has been made on this complex issue and the establishment of an es-

crow fund, in compliance with all relevant Irish constitutional and European Union law requirements, is close to completion. This will allow for the collection of the alleged State aid from Apple. Officials and experts from across the State have been engaged in intensive work to ensure that Ireland complies with all its recovery obligations as soon as possible.

Excise Duties Yield

240. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Finance the excise returns by category to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1727/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the first provisional Excise returns for 2018 will be the receipts for the month of January 2018 and this will be available in early February 2018. I am further advised that Revenue will publish Excise category breakdowns for 2017 over the coming months as data for last year are finalised.

Departmental Staff

241. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Finance the proportion of employees in his Department or in organisations under its remit who are registered disabled. [1857/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Department is fully aware of its obligations as set out in the Disability Act of 2005 and is fully compliant in submitting its returns to the National Disability Authority (NDA) on an annual basis. The Department has an appointed Disability Liaison and Access Officers, who work in tandem to support staff and members of the public with disabilities who require assistance.

The Department does not possess information regarding employees who are registered disabled. Staff can volunteer to self-declare a disability and, on that basis, I can confirm that for 2016, as reported to the NDA in March 2017, 3% of our staff had a self-declared disability as set out under the Disability Act 2005.

Similarly, the seventeen bodies under the aegis of my Department do not possess information of employees who are registered disabled. The employees can volunteer to self-declare a disability. The following is the proportion of employees who have volunteered to self-declare a disability in four of the bodies under the aegis of my Department:

Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General - 4.82%

Office of the Revenue Commissioners - 4.16%

Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman - 1.7%

National Treasury Management Agency - 3.16%*

*This figure includes staff of the National Asset Management Agency and the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland. Staff are seconded to these two bodies under an administrative agreement with the National Treasury Management Agency.

Three bodies do not directly employ staff, namely the Credit Review Office, the Disabled Drivers Medical Board of Appeal and the Irish Financial Services Appeals Tribunal.

A further six bodies have indicated that none of their employees have declared a disability,

as follows:

- Credit Union Advisory Committee
- Irish Fiscal Advisory Council
- Credit Union Restructuring Board
- Irish Bank Resolution Corporation.
- Social Finance Foundation
- Tax Appeals Commission

The Central Bank has indicated that it does not maintain a record of staff with disabilities. Staff of the Investor Compensation Company Limited are seconded from the Central Bank.

Credit Union Regulation

242. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the steps being taken to ensure the voluntary ethos of the credit union movement at all levels is protected and fostered; his views on whether sufficient guidance is provided to directors that sit on boards in a voluntary capacity to allow them carry out their regulatory duties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1902/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Credit unions have a key role to play in providing access to credit and other important services in local communities throughout the country. The Government recognises this and has put in place a number of measures to ensure that credit unions can continue to provide these vital services to their members and to safeguard the stability of the sector into the future. These measures include:

- establishment of the Commission on Credit Unions;
- publication of the Credit Union and Co-operation with Overseas Regulators Act 2012;
- establishment of the Credit Union Restructuring Board – ReBo;
- establishment of a stabilisation levy to support credit unions that are undercapitalised but are otherwise viable;
- availability of €250 million for voluntary restructuring of credit unions facilitated by ReBo;

The Commission on Credit Unions was given a mandate to review the future of the credit union sector and make recommendations in relation to the most effective regulatory structure for credit unions, taking account of their not-for-profit mandate, their volunteer ethos and community focus, while paying due regard to the need to fully protect members' savings and financial stability.

The Final Commission Report, March 2012 informed the publication of the Credit Union and Co-operation with Overseas Regulators Act 2012, which contains over 60 of those recommendations, and also made a number of recommendations regarding strengthening of the regulatory framework of credit unions, including more effective governance and regulatory requirements.

The 2012 Act provides the statutory basis for the restructuring of credit unions and placed

the Credit Union Restructuring Board (ReBo) on a statutory footing. The Government provided €250m to the Credit Union Fund for restructuring on a voluntary, incentivised and time-bound basis. The Government also provided a further €250 million for resolution purposes to ensure the safety of members' savings. In line with the Commission Report, Part 4 of the 2012 Act also provides for a stabilisation process that addresses short-term problems at credit unions that are viable but undercapitalised.

The Central Bank is committed to providing supports to the credit union sector to assist volunteers in fulfilling their regulatory duties. The Credit Union Handbook sets out the main legislative and regulatory requirements for specific areas and contains additional guidance which credit unions and their volunteers may find useful in furthering their understanding of the various requirements for that area. The Handbook is updated regularly, specifically when new regulations are introduced or new guidance on a specific area is necessitated. On introduction of the Credit Union Act 1997 (Regulatory Requirements) Regulations 2016 (the 2016 Regulations) an FAQ document was published to assist credit unions.

The Central Bank holds an annual series of information seminars throughout the country to which credit union staff and volunteers are invited. These seminars provide updates on regulatory developments impacting the sector and provide attendees with an opportunity to meet with staff from the Registry of Credit Unions to discuss issues and pose questions they may have. The Registrar, Deputy Registrar(s) and staff from the Registry of Credit Unions frequently present on regulatory developments and various other topics at events held by the credit union bodies and other advocacy bodies who provide training and supports to the sector. The Central Bank website contains a dedicated section for credit unions which contains a repository of information in relation to credit union regulation and contains recent publications and reports which are useful aids to credit unions, their staff and volunteers.

The Central Bank remains committed to meaningful engagement with credit union directors and other volunteers who provide a significant contribution to the credit union sector.

Finally, credit unions in Ireland have their own credit union specific legislation which acknowledges the credit union ethos. This undoubtedly also demonstrates awareness of the distinction between credit unions and other financial service providers. I consider, from the number of credit union specific changes that have been implemented that it is evident that the Government clearly recognises and has done much to preserve the ethos of the credit union sector.

Departmental Communications

243. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if his Department uses anti-profanity software on its email systems and online contact forms; if so, the level of human oversight that is applied to the monitoring of these softwares and their effectiveness; his views on whether persons' legitimate right to petition Government may be blocked unintentionally by errors in the use of such softwares in determining that which qualifies as profanity being communicated in email and or online contact forms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2086/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): 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, infrastruc-

tures and services.

The OGCI has put in place an industry-leading email security solution for my Department, which filters emails based on industry standard security terminology which includes profanities. All incoming emails are automatically scanned by the email security solution for terminology, including profanities, and if positive the email is quarantined and the recipient is notified that their email has been quarantined. If the recipient believes the email to be business related or quarantined in error they will contact the Service Desk stating this and the email will be released to the recipient.

The email filtering is reviewed and updated based on updated dictionaries and email statistics to keep the solution current. The Department's online contact forms are routed through its email security solution and are supported by the same functionality in relation to profanity. As emails are not blocked, but rather quarantined, a person's legitimate right to petition government will not be blocked unintentionally by the email security solution.

Government Information Service

244. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance the Government's initiatives in his Department in 2017 that promoted State services or welfare payments, public awareness on regulatory changes and public consultations that involved advertising and promotion on television, radio, newspapers and online, in tabular form; and the level of expenditure for each such initiative. [2262/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I can inform the Deputy that there were a number of Government initiatives in my Department in 2017 for the promotion of State services, welfare payments, public awareness on regulatory changes and public consultations that involved advertising or promotion on television, radio, newspapers or online. Details of expenditure to publicise these initiatives are outlined below:

Gordon MRM: Announcement relating to AIB IPO Retail Offering Information. My Department procured the services of this company, but the costs are fully recoupable from AIB. The costs concerned totalled €91,202.04, but there is no net cost to my Department.

Language Communications : Public awareness campaign to promote customer switching. My Department procured the services of this company, but the costs are fully recoupable from AIB and PTSB in the context of their restructuring plans. The costs concerned in 2017 totalled €717,746, but there is no net cost to my Department.

My Department has also advertised directly on a number of occasions, and I have also included a breakdown of those costs below:

Independent Newspapers Marketing Ltd; Irish Examiner; The Irish Times Ltd : Information notice re: Beneficial Ownership. Cost: €2,407.73.

Tuairisc Bheo Teoranta: Information notice re: consultation on Irish language scheme on www.tuairisc.ie. Cost: €982.77.

Independent Newspapers Marketing Ltd: Information notice re: consultation on Irish language scheme in Seachtain Irish language supplement. Costs: €1,239.84.

Flood Risk Management

245. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of meetings held by the Shannon River Basin Management Co-ordination Group in 2017; and the details of those and the agencies that have attended. [54488/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I understand that the Deputy's question relates to the Shannon Flood Risk State Agency Co-ordination Working Group.

The Group was established in early 2016 by the Government across all of the State Agencies involved with the River Shannon. The Group is building on the existing work and commitment of all the State Agencies involved in flood risk and continues to enhance the ongoing co-ordination and co-operation between members.

The Group met on 21 March 2017 and 23 October 2017. In 2017, a number of sub-committees were established in accordance with the Group's Terms of Reference to progress the delivery of initiatives agreed by the Group.

The Group comes under the chair of the Office of Public Works and members of the Group are at CEO level or equivalent with the following State Agencies:

- Office of Public Works;
- Local Authorities, represented by the City and County Management Association;
- Waterways Ireland;
- Electricity Supply Board;
- Inland Fisheries Ireland;
- Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (National Parks and Wildlife Service);
- Department of the Housing, Planning and Local Government;
- Bord na Móna;
- Environmental Protection Agency;
- Irish Water.

State Pensions

246. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the reason a person (details supplied) will not receive their pension until they reach 68 years of age. [54536/17]

264. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the person or body that was consulted with during the drafting of the interim arrangements put in place until such time as legislation is passed to increase the mandatory retirement age for public service employees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55097/17]

265. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the interim arrangements in place until such time as legislation is passed to increase the mandatory

retirement age for public service employees will apply to those aged 66 years of age who were facilitated by their employer at 65 years of age to remain at work and now wish to remain at work beyond pension age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55098/17]

266. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the reason part of the interim arrangements put in place until such time as legislation is passed to increase the mandatory retirement age for public service employees involve a pay reduction for the employee when that employee will remain in the same role; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55099/17]

267. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the reason part of the interim arrangements put in place until such time as legislation is passed to increase the mandatory retirement age for public service employees involve the employee being able to accrue pension contributions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55100/17]

268. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if particular conditions will be attached to the legislation which will increase the mandatory retirement age from 65 to 70 years of age for public service employees; if these conditions will be similar to the interim arrangements put in place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55101/17]

269. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to introduce legislation to increase the mandatory retirement age from 65 to 70 years of age for public service employees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55102/17]

270. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to introduce the new measures to allow civil servants who wish to work past 65 years of age; if it will be applied retrospectively to persons forced to retire in 2017 when introduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55157/17]

283. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if under the new mandatory retirement measures for civil servants a person would drop a scale in their pension if they worked an additional year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1535/18]

285. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if persons (details supplied) will remain on their existing salary during the extended period of employment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1574/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 246, 264 to 270, inclusive, 283 and 285 together.

The Government agreed on 5 December 2017 that the compulsory retirement age of public servants recruited before 1 April 2004 should be increased to age 70. This group of public servants currently have a compulsory retirement age of 65. Primary legislation will be required for the changes to be implemented. In approving the proposals, the Government also approved the General Scheme of a Bill to give effect to the changes. The Attorney General's Office has been asked to give priority to the drafting of this legislation so that the new compulsory retirement age for pre 2004 public servants will become effective as soon as possible. The new compulsory retirement age will only apply to pre-2004 public servants who reach the age of 65 following the commencement of the new legislation.

In the meantime, the Government has approved some limited interim arrangements to apply in the period between the Government decision and the commencement of the necessary legislation. The interim arrangements (which have to respect the current statutory position of

the compulsory retirement age of 65) through retirement and re-hire, will allow pre 2004 public servants who reach the age of 65 in that period to remain in employment only until they reach the age of eligibility for the State Pension (Contributory), which is currently 66. The interim arrangements will not apply in the case of public servants who, at age 65, were facilitated by their employer to remain at work until age 66, as they will have already reached the age of eligibility for the State Pension (Contributory), which is currently 66 and will remain at that age until 2021.

The policy across the public service is that, where a retired employee is re-hired, they are paid at the minimum point of the relevant scale, rather than at the pay point they had reached when they retired. This practice is continuing in the context of the interim arrangements. Pension abatement rules will, however, apply in the case of a public servant availing of the interim arrangements. Pension abatement means that the pension that has been awarded will be reduced so that the person concerned will not receive more in combined pension and salary payments than they would have received if they had remained working. Given that the person's "new" salary will be at the minimum point, there will be room through the payment of pension and the "new" salary rate so that the sum of the "new" salary rate and the pension in payment can address the difference between the minimum point of the scale and the pay point they had reached when they retired.

Under the interim arrangements, the additional service will not accrue public service pension benefits, as the primary legislation is necessary to enable this. The employee's pension or lump sum payment will not be affected by this move to a lower pay point, as the persons will already have retired and be in receipt of their pension entitlements.

It is not intended that the practice of payment at the minimum point would apply to public servants who choose to remain beyond the age of 65 once the legislation is commenced. Those public servants will not be in the position of having retired and been re-hired. It is intended that when the legislation is enacted, it will allow for the retention of public servants who reach the age of 65 following the commencement of the legislation, on current terms and conditions. Additional service will count towards pension accrual subject to the statutory maximum of 40 years and pension entitlements will then become payable at the date of retirement.

The increase in the compulsory retirement age followed a review of the current statutory and operational considerations giving rise to barriers to extended participation in the public service workforce carried out by my Department, in consultation with public service employers. The engagement with public service employers included discussion in relation to the interim arrangements to apply in the period between the Government Decision and the commencement of the necessary legislation. Under the terms of the Public Service Stability Agreement (Para. 6.4.2) staff representatives were also consulted.

Oireachtas Members' Remuneration

247. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the basic pay for TDs, Ministers of State, Ministers and the Taoiseach in each of the years 2007 to 2017; the basic pay that will apply to TDs, Ministers of State, Ministers and the Taoiseach in each of the years 2018 to 2021; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54643/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the tables below. I would point out that Members of the Government and Ministers of State are forgoing any pay restoration during the period of this Government by way of personal waivers; and the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017

specifically precludes them from benefitting from the further unwinding of pay cuts provided under the Act for other Public Servants in 2021-2022.

Teachta Dála (TD) Salary

	1 Dec.2006€	1 Jun.2007€	1 Mar.2008€	1 Sept.2008€	1 Jan.2010€	1 Jul.2013€
Basic	93,493	95,363	97,747	100,191	92,672	87,258
* LSI 1	96,477	98,407	100,867	103,389	95,550	-
* LSI 2	99,457	101,446	103,982	106,582	98,424	-

1 Apr.2017€	1 Jan.2018€	1 Oct.2018€	1 Sept.2019€	1 Oct.2020€
89,965	93,599	94,535	96,189	98,113

* LSI = Long Service Increment – abolished with effect from the 31st Dáil, March 2011.

Officeholder Remuneration (TD salary + Officeholder salary)

	1 December 2006 €	1 June 2007 €	1 March 2008 €	1 Sept. 2008 €	1 Jan. 2010 €
Taoiseach	172,999	176,459	180,870	185,392	135,794
TD	93,493	95,363	97,747	100,191	92,672
Total	266,492	271,822	278,617	285,583	228,466
Tánaiste	135,431	138,140	141,594	145,134	115,854
TD	93,493	95,363	97,747	100,191	92,672
Total	228,924	233,503	239,341	245,325	208,526
Minister	116,648	118,981	121,956	125,005	98,745
TD	93,493	95,363	97,747	100,191	92,672
Total	210,141	214,344	219,703	225,196	191,417
Minister of State	50,903	51,921	53,219	54,549	46,594
TD	93,493	95,363	97,747	100,191	92,672
Total	144,396	147,284	150,966	154,740	139,266

	1 Jan. 2011 €	9 Mar. 2011 €	1 Jul. 2013 €	1 Apr. 2017 €	1 Jan. 2018 €
Taoisach	121,515	107,328	98,092	100,268	98,634
TD	92,672	92,672	87,258	89,965	93,599
Total	214,187	200,000	185,350	190,233	192,233
Tánaiste	104,814	91,733	84,051	85,709	83,919
TD	92,672	92,672	87,258	89,965	93,599
Total	197,486	184,405	171,309	175,674	177,518
Minister	88,611	76,603	70,282	71,486	69,545
TD	92,672	92,672	87,258	89,965	93,599
Total	181,283	169,275	157,540	161,451	163,144
Minister of State	46,594	37,370	34,381	34,474	32,140
TD	92,672	92,672	87,258	89,965	93,599
Total	139,266	130,042	121,639	124,439	125,739

	1 Apr. 2018 €	1 Oct. 2018 €	1 Apr. 2019 €	1 Sept. 2019 €	1 Oct. 2020 €
Taoisach	103,517	104,601	109,485	111,401	113,629
TD	93,599	94,535	94,535	96,189	98,113
Total	197,116	199,136	204,020	207,590	211,742

	1 Apr. 2018 €	1 Oct. 2018 €	1 Apr. 2019 €	1 Sept. 2019 €	1 Oct. 2020 €
Tánaiste	88,284	89,211	93,576	95,214	97,118
TD	93,599	94,535	94,535	96,189	98,113
Total	181,883	183,746	188,111	191,403	195,231
Minister	73,456	74,230	78,142	79,510	81,100
TD	93,599	94,535	94,535	96,189	98,113
Total	167,055	168,765	172,677	175,699	179,213
Minister of State	34,941	35,319	38,120	38,787	39,563
TD	93,599	94,535	94,535	96,189	98,113
Total	128,540	129,854	132,655	134,976	137,676

Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme Applications

248. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of proposed coastal protection works at Spanish Point, County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54954/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I am advised that the Office of Public Works (OPW) has completed a review of the Coastal Erosion and Flood Risk Management Study of Mal Bay which includes the area of Spanish Point as submitted by Clare County Council. The OPW has recently written to the Council with its detailed comments on the study and requesting some further information.

Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme Applications

249. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the proposed flood defence works at Quilty, County Clare (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1209/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I am advised that the Office of Public Works (OPW) has completed a review of the Coastal Erosion and Flood Risk Management Study of Mal Bay which includes the area of Quilty as submitted by Clare County Council. The OPW has recently written to the Council with its comments on the study and requesting some further information.

Garda Stations

250. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when a project (details supplied) will proceed to tender stage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1756/18]

286. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the new site for a Garda station (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1593/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I propose to take Questions Nos. 250 and 286 together.

The Office of Public Works and the Chief State Solicitor's Office continue to progress the acquisition of the preferred site for this project as a high priority and expect the process to reach

a conclusion shortly. 'Contracts for Sale' have been executed by both parties and final completion of the legal formalities will take a short while longer. I have requested the Office of Public Works to inform both Deputies once the acquisition process is completed and to provide details of the property at that time. Until the property is entirely in the ownership of the State we cannot give exact details as to when the Project will proceed to tender stage.

Departmental Administrative Arrangements

251. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the dates on which his Department has issued P60s to its employees in recent years; if P60s were issued later than 15 February or six weeks from the end of the tax year, which is the required deadline for issuing of P60s; the reason therefor; his plans to change departmental practice to comply with this requirement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1798/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am informed that the Department of Education and Skills payroll migrated to Government Payroll Shared Services during the tax year 2015. Payroll Shared Services records indicate that P60s for the Department of Education and Skills payees were made available on 11 February 2016, in respect of tax year 2015, and were made available between 6 February and 10 February 2017, in respect of tax year 2016. Payroll Shared Services intends to make the P60s in respect of tax year 2017 available by 15 February 2018.

Garda Station Closures

252. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of Garda stations closed in the past 20 years in counties Cavan and Monaghan which are still in State ownership; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1943/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I have been advised by the Commissioners of Public Works that the following Garda Stations closed in the past twenty years in counties Cavan and Monaghan and are still in State ownership:

County Cavan

- Bawnboy - Former Garda Station – Closed 2013 – 1 of the 6 Garda stations announced to be reopened

- Redmills – Former Garda Station – Closed 2013 - Awaiting outcome of Policing Authority review

- Stradone – Former Garda Station – Closed 2002 – Currently being prepared for disposal

County Monaghan

- Clontibret - Former Garda Station – Closed 2012 – Awaiting outcome of Policing Authority review

- Corrinshigagh – Former Garda Station – Closed 2013 - Awaiting outcome of Policing Authority review

- Newbliss – Former Garda Station – Closed 2013 – Awaiting outcome of Policing Author-

ity review

- Smithborough Former Garda Station – Closed 2012 - Awaiting outcome of Policing Authority review

Flood Prevention Measures

253. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if additional flood defences will be put in place at residential housing developments along Red Barns Road, Dundalk, County Louth which are at risk of both fluvial and coastal flooding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54312/17]

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 (FRMP).

Dundalk and Blackrock South is an Area of Further Assessment under the CFRAM Programme and includes the area of Red Barns Road. The proposed Plan, which addresses the fluvial and coastal risk along Red Barns Road, consists of a series of hard defences, including; flood embankments and walls, rock armour coastal protection, demountable barriers, road raising and sluice gates. The proposed plan includes improvement of channel conveyance on the Blackrock River, together with flood attenuation on the Castletown River.

The FRMPs are currently subject to 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 in the coming weeks to seek the approval from the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform for the Flood Risk Management Plans.

Public Sector Staff Remuneration

254. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the estimated cost of introducing the living wage for all employees in the public sector. [54567/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The detailed costings sought in this request would require detailed data on the position of staff on each salary scale across the public service and details of the standard working hours per week for each individual grade. This data is not available to the Department.

Pay band data available to the Department indicates that some 94% of all public service staff are on salary points in excess of €25,000 per annum. The suggested wage at €11.70 per hour based on the Civil Service 37 hour standard net working week equates to an annual salary of €22,589.

Any of those currently on an annual salary of less than €22,589 could be receiving remuneration in excess of the suggested living wage through additional premium payments in respect of shift or atypical working hours or are on salary scales that progress to the suggested living wage through incremental progression.

Data based on Civil Service staff only indicates that only some 1% of staff (FTE) in the Civil Service are on salary points less than €22,589. The estimated cost within the civil service, which is some 12% of the overall public service, would be some €3.8m (Headcount). Detailed costings in other sectors of the public service would require collation and estimation on an individual sector level.

Under the new Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020, from January 2018 pay in the public service have been further adjusted. The pay increases provided for under the Agreement are again progressively weighted towards the lower paid with benefits ranging from 7.4% to 6.2% over the term to end 2020.

Regulation of Lobbying

255. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the way in which persons (details supplied) were exempted from the stipulations in section 22 of the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 for senior public officials when they left office to join private public relations firms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54650/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 provides that the Standards in Public Office Commission (Standards Commission) will be the Registrar of Lobbying and is responsible for establishing an online Register of Lobbying. The Standards Commission oversees the implementation of the register, monitors compliance with the Act, provides guidance and assistance and where necessary investigates and pursues breaches of legal requirements.

My Department would not have any knowledge of or details relating to cases involving applications made by individuals to the Standards Commission under section 22 of the Act as this would be an operational matter for the Standards Commission.

Section 22 of the Act provides that certain Designated Public Officials are restricted from being engaged in lobbying in certain circumstances for a year after they leave their employment or office. In effect, they are subject to a “cooling-off” period in respect of involvement in particular lobbying activities.

The Designated Public Officials concerned are Ministers and Ministers of State, special advisers to Ministers and Ministers of State and prescribed public servants (Section 22(2)). Others who are Designated Public Officials for the purposes of the lobbying registration requirements are not covered by this provision, that is, TDs, Senators, MEPs and local authority members.

The public officials who are covered by this provision may not

- carry on lobbying activities or
- be employed by, or provide services to, a person carrying on lobbying activities in certain circumstances.

These circumstances are where the lobbying activity

- Involves any public service body with which the public official was connected, that is, employed or held an office or other position in the year prior to his/her leaving, or
- Is to a person who was also a Designated Public Official connected with that public service body in the year prior to the first public official's leaving.

Designated public officials subject to this provision may apply to the Standards Commission for consent to engage in such lobbying. The Standards Commission may decide to give consent unconditionally or give consent with conditions attached or refuse the application for all or part of the period (Section 22(5)). A public official who is unhappy with the decision may appeal the decision of the Standards Commission to an independent Appeal Officer.

Section 25 of the Act provides that the Standards Commission shall prepare an annual report relating to the operation of the Act which shall be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas. Section 25(2)(c) of the Act provides that the annual report shall include, in a form which does not enable identification of the persons involved, information relating to any applications for consent under section 22 of the Act, and all decisions on such applications, made in the year to which the report refers.

The Standards Commission's annual report for 2016 is available on www.lobbying.ie and contains general details of applications for consent made under section 22 of the Act during 2016.

Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme

256. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the way in which his Department plans to prevent erosion along the County Wexford coastline; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54651/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): Coastal erosion is a natural and ongoing process which takes place around the national coastline. Coastal erosion may threaten human life, infrastructure such as roads, and may undermine and cause damage to properties. However, it should also be recognised that coastal erosion also has beneficial effects to the local environment, such as providing natural nourishment and supply of sediment to adjacent beaches.

The primary objective of Government policy on coastal protection is to ensure that in areas identified as being at greatest risk of damage or loss of economic assets through coastal erosion or flooding, appropriate and sustainable measures are identified by Local Authorities to protect those assets and, where such measures are economically justified on cost benefit grounds and compatible with all required environmental and other statutory requirements, they are implemented subject to the availability of resources.

The Office of Public Works (OPW) has undertaken a national assessment of coastal erosion (including erosion rates) under the Irish Coastal Protection Strategy Study (ICPSS) and the results of this study have been published on the OPW website. The relevant reports and associated predictive erosion hazard mapping (to 2050) may be viewed at

www.opw.ie/en/flood-risk-management/floodanderosionmapping/icpss/.

This Study has surveyed and assessed the coastal erosion risk along the entire national coastline and this information is available to all Local Authorities to enable them to develop appropriate plans and strategies for the sustainable management of the coastline in their counties including the identification, prioritisation and, subject to the availability of resources, the implementation of coastal protection works both of a structural and non-structural nature.

The Local Authorities may carry out coastal protection works using their own resources. If necessary, they may also put forward proposals to the relevant central Government Departments for funding of appropriate measures depending on the infrastructure or assets under threat.

Because intervention within a coastal area may cause problems further along the coast, any proposed intervention measures are best developed in conjunction with a formal coastal erosion risk management study which has carefully investigated the problem and explored the full range of management options.

The OPW operates the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme, under which applications for funding from local authorities are considered for measures costing up to €750,000 in each instance. Funding for coastal erosion risk management studies may also be applied for under this scheme. Funding of up to 90% of the cost is available for projects which meet the eligibility criteria including a requirement that the proposed measures are cost beneficial.

The OPW has published guidelines for coastal erosion risk management measures and funding applications under the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme, available on the OPW website at www.opw.ie/en/media/Final%20Guidelines%20&%20Schedules%20A%20&%20B%2030-03-12.pdf.

Seirbhísí trí Ghaeilge

257. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den Aire Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe cén fáth nach bhfuil an Ghaeilge luaite leis an bplean Ár Seirbhís Phoiblí 2020; an ndéanfaidh sé cur síos ar na hiarrachtaí atá déanta ag an Roinn an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn sa tSeirbhís Phoiblí le cúig bliana anuas; cé mhéad airgid atá caite acu gach bliain le cúig bliana anuas ar sholáthar seirbhísí trí Ghaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [54703/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Mar is eol don teachta, tá dualgas uileghabhálach orm i leith an chláir athchóirithe sa Státseirbhís agus sa tSeirbhís Phoiblí trí chéile.

Tá tagairt shonrach don Ghaeilge sa chlár 'Ár Seirbhís Phoiblí 2020' sa rannóg 3 'Dea-Thorthaí a Sholáthar dár bPobal – Gníomh 3 Féach chuige go bhfuil seirbhísí ar fáil go héasca ag gach duine' agus díríonn sé ar chinntiú go mbeadh gach duine den phobal in ann na seirbhísí poiblí go léir a rochtain go héasca, lena n-áirítear iad siúd a bhfuil riachtanais éagsúla acu agus imircigh agus daoine i gcásanna leochaileacha. Tá fo-ghníomhanna san áireamh sa ghníomh seo ar úsáid a bhaint as teanga simplí as Gaeilge agus seirbhísí poiblí a chur ar fáil trí mheán na Gaeilge. Is iad seo na fo-ghníomhanna:

- úsáid a bhaint as teanga shimplí mar atá leagtha amach sa Treoir Stíle um Béarla Simplí don tSeirbhís Phoiblí (Plain English Style Guide for the Public Service) a d'ullmhaigh an Oifig Athchóirithe agus Seachadta sa Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe chun eispéireas na gcustaiméirí a fheabhsú agus an gá a bhíonn ag daoine teagmháil a dhéanamh arís agus arís eile a laghdú. Tá leideanna le fáil i bhfoilseachán Bhreacadh, Cuir Tú Féin in Iúl/Get Your Message Across, maidir le teanga shoiléir a úsáid nuair a bhíonn Gaeilge á scríobh;

- a chinntiú go bhfuil seirbhísí poiblí ar fáil as Gaeilge, ar aon dul lena moltar sa Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge, 2010-2030;

Sonraítear sa chlár 'Ár Seirbhís Phoiblí 2020' gur ghá táscairí oiriúnacha a fhorbairt leis an leibhéal feidhmíochta a thomhas. Féadfar aiseolas ón bpobal ó shuirbhéanna faoi shástacht na gcustaiméirí a úsáid chun aiseolas díreach a fháil ó chustaiméirí ar an úsáid atá bainte as teanga shimplí sa Ghaeilge agus sa Bhéarla.

Ag teacht le hAlt 10 Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003, foilsíodh leagan Gaeilge den

chreat, Ár Seirbhís Phoiblí 2020, ar an lá céanna leis an leagan Béarla. Tá an leagan seo ar fáil ar líne ag www.ops2020.gov.ie leis an leabhrán ar an gcreat ‘Achoimre’.

Ar an dul céanna, foilsíodh Plean um Athchóiriú na Seirbhíse Poiblí 2014-2016 as Gaeilge agus tá an plean ar fáil ag www.reformplan.per.gov.ie.

Bhain costas €2310.56 (CBL san áireamh) ar an aistriúchán ar ‘Ár Seirbhís Phoiblí 2020’ agus ar an leabhrán.

Bhain costais leis an obair dheartha ar na foilseacháin Gaeilge agus na foilseacháin bainteach leis an tionscnamh, agus bhí siad san áireamh sa chonradh leis an obair dheartha ar fad a dhéanamh.

Bhain costais €2236.88 (CBL san áireamh) ar an aistriúchán ar an bPlean um Athchóiriú na Seirbhíse Poiblí 2014-2016.

Cé go bhfuil dualgas orm don Ghaeilge sa Státseirbhís, tá dualgais ar Airí eile i leith na teanga sa tSeirbhís Phoiblí níos leithne. Ar deireadh, tá dualgas ar gach Roinn a riachtanas Gaeilge a aithint agus gníomhnú orthu, seirbhísí poiblí a chur ar fáil trí mheán na Gaeilge i gceantair Ghaeltachta ach go háirithe.

Tá deacracht ag Comhlachtaí Poiblí seirbhísí trí Ghaeilge a chur ar fáil toisc easpa foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge. Mar thoradh ar an deacracht seo, bíonn deacrachtaí ag Comhlachtaí Poiblí na ceanglais reachtúla ina scéimeanna teanga a chomhlíonadh san amscála atá sonraithe sa scéim teanga. Ina theannta sin, cruthaíonn sé deacrachtaí an chéad scéim eile a aontú, faoi mar a shamhlaítear faoin reachtaíocht, toisc nach féidir le Comhlachtaí Poiblí feabhas a chur ar na seirbhísí atá leagtha amach sa scéim.

Ba é comhaontú seirbhíse idir An Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe agus An Roinn agus An Roinn Ealaíon, Oidhreachta, Gaeltachta agus Oileán (Teideal na Roinne – Feabhra 2013) an chéad chéim leis an gcuspóir le hinniúlacht sa Ghaeilge a neartú sa Státseirbhís a bhaint amach agus socraíodh é i Mí Feabhra 2013. Mar thoradh ar an gcomhaontú seo, tá dualgas ar sholáthar traenála don Ghaeilge sa Státseirbhís le cinntiú go gcomhlíontar riachtanas eagraíochtúil ar An Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta anois.

Mar thoradh ar an gcomhaontú seo, tá comhaontú conarthach ag Foras na Gaeilge, eagraíocht trasteorainn faoin Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta, le Gaelchultúr/ Coláiste na hÉireann le hoiliúint sa Ghaeilge don tSeirbhís Phoiblí a sholáthar. Íocadh suimeanna de €66,666, €57,777, €41,111, €40,000 agus €40,000 don soláthraí seirbhíse sna blianta 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 agus 2017, faoi seach, i gcomhréir leis an gcomhaontú.

Ní mór a lua, gan taighde cuimsitheach déanta ar an ábhar, nach féidir an méid atá caite ar sholáthar sheirbhíse trí Ghaeilge a mheas laistigh de thréimhse ghearr ama. Mar gheall ar na réimsí oibre agus na hoifigí atá bainteach leis an soláthar seo, tá an contúirt ann nach bhféadfaí brath ar an taighde sin.

Cheadaigh an Rialtas, mí Dheireadh Fómhair 2013, cur chuige nua le tacú le hinniúlacht sa Ghaeilge sa Státseirbhís. Rinneadh an cinneadh seo le teacht in áit mharcanna bónais a bhronnadh bunaithe ar inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge le linn chomórtais earcaíochta agus comórtais ardaithe céime sa Státseirbhís. Cuireadh deireadh le marcanna bónais a bhronnadh as inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge in earcaíocht agus comórtais ardaithe céime na Státseirbhís.

Faoin gcur chuige sin, iarradh ar Ranna na poist/ réimsí oibre ina mbíonn daoine le hinniúlacht Gaeilge de dhíth orthu a sainaithint agus iad seo a chur san áireamh ina bpleananna don phleanáil fórsa saothair. Mar chuid den chreat um phleanáil fórsa saothair 2015-2017, iarradh

ar Ranna/Oifigí na poist seo a sainaithe. Ag féachaint d'Acht na Gaeltachta 2012, iarradh ar Ranna aird ar leith a dhíriú ar na poist atá lonnaithe nó atá ag freastal ar na ceantair Ghaeltachta. Mar chuid den chinneadh seo, is gá na poist seo le riachtanas Gaeilge a sainaithe sa scéimeanna teanga faoi Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003.

Rinne, oifigigh ón Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta agus comhghleacaithe ó Ranna Rialtais eile, athbhreithniú sa chéad leath de 2017 ar an reachtaíocht nua atá beartaithe, agus thángthas ar an tuairim nach raibh ag éirí leis an gur chuige nua na cuspóirí seo a bhaint amach. Dá réir sin, d'fhoilsigh an Rialtas na Dréacht Chinn de Bhille na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú) 2017 leis an bhfadhb seo a shárú. Tá sé mar aidhm ag an mbille, ina bhfuil forail ann go mbeidh 20% d'earcaigh nua sa tseirbhís phoiblí ina gcainteoirí Gaeilge, athruithe a dhéanamh ar an mbealach a dhéantar chainteoirí Gaeilge a earcú sa tSeirbhís Phoiblí agus caighdeán teanga le haghaidh earnálacha éagsúla den tseirbhís phoiblí a thabhairt isteach in ionad chóras reatha na scéimeanna Teanga. Táthar ag súil go méadófaí acmhainneacht chomhlachtaí poiblí seirbhísí poiblí a sholáthar trí Ghaeilge mar thoradh ar an mbille seo.

Departmental Funding

258. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the name and number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from his Department 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 amount of money that they have spent on this particular campaign during that time; the number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from his Department that have expended resources seeking the retention of the eighth amendment; the amount of funding these organisations have received from the State in the past five years; and the amount of money that they have spent on this particular campaign during that time. [54771/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department has not provided funding from its Vote to any organisations covered by this question.

Cycling Facilities Provision

259. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the proposed redesign and or reconfiguration of the pedestrian and cycle paths on Chesterfield Avenue in the Phoenix Park, Dublin; if the proposed works will be completed by the end of the first quarter of 2018 in advance of the summer months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54789/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The Office of Public Works is commissioning an independent report to examine the feasibility and implications of the suggested changeover of the cycle trails and footpaths along Chesterfield Avenue in the Phoenix Park. The report will be available in the first quarter of this year.

State Properties

260. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 91 of 23 November 2017, the position regarding the application

in view of correspondence (details supplied); and when he expects the process to be completed. [54792/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): Under Section 28(2) of the State Property Act, 1954, land vested in or held in trust for a body corporate immediately prior to its dissolution, (other than land held by such body in trust for another person) becomes property of the State in the person of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. The interest acquired by the Minister is described as a defeasible interest as it may be defeated by restoration of the company up to 20 years after dissolution.

The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform has the discretion, under Section 31 of the State Property Act 1954, to waive property that has devolved to the State under Section 28, if he believes it is proper to do so having regard to all the circumstances of the case.

I can confirm that an application for waiver of this property has been made by Fingal County Council since my reply to your previous Parliamentary Question on 23rd November 2017. A response to Fingal County Council will issue shortly outlining any additional requirements before a full consideration of the waiver application can be made.

Capital Expenditure Programme Review

261. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the review of the capital plan will be published before 2018. [54803/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Review of the Capital Plan was published on the 14 of September 2017, and a copy of the report was made available to each Deputy on that day.

The review of the Capital Plan draws on an evidence base that included submissions by Departments and Offices, an extensive public consultation, and also an Infrastructure Capacity and Demand Analysis completed by the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

I also published the Major Capital Projects Tracker, which lists a range of projects and programmes committed to by Departments over the period of the Capital Plan. Copies of the documentation and the Major Capital Projects Tracker can be found at www.per.gov.ie.

The findings of the review assisted Government in selecting priorities for the allocation of the additional €4.3 billion capital expenditure allocated in Budget 2018 over the period to 2021.

Building on this, a new 10-year capital plan is currently in the process of being finalised. The plan, which will be published early in the new year alongside the new National Planning Framework detailed in the Ireland 2040 Plan, will set out the Government's intentions in relation to public capital investment beyond 2021 and will demonstrate how public investment will underpin the delivery of the Strategic Outcomes detailed in the Ireland 2040 Plan.

Community Employment Schemes Supervisors

262. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on community employment supervisors that have retired with no pension; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54985/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): An issue which has been under discussion by the Community Sector High Level Forum relates to community employment supervisors and assistant supervisors who have been seeking, through their union representatives, the allocation of Exchequer funding to implement a Labour Court recommendation relating to the provision of a pension scheme.

At the April meeting of the Forum, my Department outlined its intention to conduct a detailed scoping exercise in order to comprehensively examine and assess the full potential implications of the issues under consideration. In considering the particular matter referred to, regard must be had to the costs and precedent of such an arrangement were one to be created.

It continues to be the position that state organisations are not the employer of the particular employees concerned and that it is not possible for the State to provide funding for such a scheme. The employees in question are, or were, employees of private companies notwithstanding the fact that the companies concerned are, or were, reliant on State funding.

A meeting of the Forum took place on Thursday, 23 November 2017 where the findings of the scoping exercise were shared with members of the Forum. A follow-up meeting to deal with technical questions arising from the exercise took place on Friday, 15 December 2017.

Road Network

263. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his Department is responsible for a road (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55094/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department has no responsibility for funding roads. The road Deputy Healy-Rae refers to appears to be a private or non-public road.

I would therefore refer to the response to PQ 52581/17 given by Minister Michael Ring on 7 December 2017 concerning funding for private and non-public roads.

Questions Nos. 264 to 270, inclusive, answered with Question No. 246.

Departmental Properties

271. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the vacant properties and land not in use, owned, rented or leased by his Department or by bodies and agencies under the aegis of his Department by square footage for buildings and acres for land, in tabular form; the address and location of these properties; and the last date of occupancy or use of these properties. [55217/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The Commissioners of Public Works, on behalf of the State, manage a large and diverse property portfolio which ranges from office accommodation to heritage properties, visitors centres, Garda stations, among others. As is typical of such large portfolios, there will always be a number of properties, at any given time, that are vacant. These are currently being retained because of their future strategic development value.

A list of the non-operational properties currently vacant and owned or leased by the Commissioners is attached at Appendix 1. The square footage or acreage has been included where

available.

The majority of the properties currently vacant are those Garda stations closed under the 2012/2013 policing plans of An Garda Síochána. The remainder consists of properties such as customs posts, former coastguard stations and sundry other properties located throughout the country.

The future use of the former Garda stations will be determined once the current review of closed Garda stations has been concluded.

Appendix 1

County	Property	Owned/Leased	Property Type	Area of sites	Year of Last Use
Cavan	Bawnboy	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Cavan	Ballyconnell	Owned	Customs Post Site	0.3 acres	No specific date.
Cavan	Farnham Road, Cavan Town	Owned	Dentralisation Site	10.84 acres	2006
Cavan	Redhills	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Cavan	Stradone	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	2002
Clare	Broadford	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Clare	Doonbeg	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Clare	Inagh	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Clare	Quin	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Cork	Adrigole	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Cork	Ballyfeard	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2012
Cork	Ballygurteen	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2012
Cork	13 Woodville, Blarney	Owned	Garda Residence	N/A	2010
Cork	Buttevant	Owned	Garda Residence	N/A	2011
Cork	Carrigtwohill	Owned	Site	0.5 acre	1983
Cork	Crosshaven	Owned	Site	1 acre	No specific date.
Cork	Crosshaven	Owned	CoastGuard Cottage	N/A	1995
Cork	Crosshaven	Owned	CoastGuard Cottage	N/A	2005
Cork	Crosshaven	Owned	CoastGuard Cottage	N/A	Pre 1983
Cork	Crosshaven	Owned	CoastGuard Cottage	N/A	Pre 1983
Cork	Crosshaven	Owned	CoastGuard Cottage	N/A	Pre 1983
Cork	Crosshaven	Owned	CoastGuard Cottage	N/A	Pre 1983
Cork	Crosshaven	Owned	CoastGuard Cottage	N/A	1996
Cork	Clonakilty	Owned	Agricultural College & Office	N/A	2014

Questions - Written Answers

	OPW Vacant Property				
County	Property	Owned/Leased	Property Type	Area of sites	Year of Last Use
Cork	Goleen	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2012
Cork	Kinsale Butchers Row	Owned	Site	0.2 acres	No specific date.
Cork	Knocknagree	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2012
Cork	Rathduff	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Cork	Toe Head	Owned	CoastGuard MES	N/A	N/A
Cork City	McCurtain Street	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	N/A
Cork City	Ballyhooley Rd, Cork	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	1992
Donegal	Ballyshannon	Owned	Former customs site	300 sq metres	No specific date.
Donegal	Bunbeg	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	N/A
Donegal	Buncrana	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	N/A
Donegal	Castlefin	Owned	Site	3 acres	No specific date.
Donegal	Castlefin	Owned	Residence	N/A	Early 1990s
Donegal	Malin	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Donegal	Na Brocacha / Cloghan	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Dublin	10/11 Castle Street	Owned	Building	N/A	1999
Dublin	Dun Laoghaire	Owned	Building	N/A	2010
Dublin	Halston Street.	Owned	Building	N/A	2006
Dublin	Dalkey	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2012
Dublin	Hammond Lane	Owned	Site	1.01 acres	2000
Dublin	Kill of the Grange	Owned	Site	1 acre	2007
Dublin	Military Road-Heuston Gate	Owned	Site	4.7 acres	No specific date.
Dublin	Spruce House / Leeson Lane	Owned	Site	0.5 acres	No specific date.
Dublin	Church Ave Glasnevin	Owned	Former Educatte Together School	N/A	2017
Galway	Ballymoe	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Galway	Corrandulla	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2012
Galway	Gort	Owned	Former RDF Site	0.2 acres	2014
Galway	Kilconly	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Galway	Kiltullagh	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Galway	Letterfrack	Owned	Site	2.6 acres	No specific date.
Galway	Leenane	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Galway	Maam	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	No specific date.
Galway	New Inn (Galway)	Owned	Site	0.82acres	No specific date.
Kerry	Ballylongford	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2012
Kerry	Brosna	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013

	OPW Vacant Property				
County	Property	Owned/Leased	Property Type	Area of sites	Year of Last Use
Kerry	Camp	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Kerry	Kilarney	Owned	Muckcross Road Site		
Kerry	Moyvane	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2012
Kerry	Valentia Island	Owned	Met site		
Kildare	Rathangan	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	2003
Kilkenny	Castlecomer	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	2001
Kilkenny	Freshford Road	Owned	Met Station	N/A	N/A
Kilkenny	Thomastown	Owned	Decentralisation Site	3.06 acres	2008
Laois	Curraghnadeige	Owned	CDS Site		No specific date.
Laois	Portlaoise	Owned	Decentralisation Site	9.1 acres	2007
Leitrim	Dromahair	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Leitrim	Drumkeeran	Owned	Garda Station & Garda Res	N/A	Closed 2012
Leitrim	Glenfarne	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Leitrim	Keshcarrigan	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Leitrim	Manorhamilton	Owned	Customs Stn	N/A	N/A
Limerick	Cecil Street	Owned	Building	N/A	2014
Limerick	Castletown Conyers	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Limerick	Edward Street	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	1987
Limerick	Galbally	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Limerick	Kilfinane	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	2013
Limerick	Mallow Street	Owned	Building	N/A	N/A
Limerick	Mary Street	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Limerick	Mayorstone Park	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	2006
Limerick	Shanagolden	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2012
Longford	Ballinalee	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Louth	Carrickarnon	Owned	Customs Post site	31 acres	No specific date.
Louth	Ferryhill	Owned	Customs Post Site		No specific date.
Louth	Dundalk former Employment Exchange	Owned	Building	N/A	N/A
Louth	Drogheda - 62/63 West Street	Owned	Building	N/A	2013
Louth	Drogheda	Owned	Decentralised sites	1.72 acres	2006
Mayo	Ballina	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	2005
Mayo	Ballyglass	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Mayo	Bellacorrick	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2012
Mayo	Blacksod	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Mayo	Claremorris	Owned	Decentralisation site	2.70 acres	2007
Mayo	Hollymount	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013

Questions - Written Answers

	OPW Vacant Property				
County	Property	Owned/Leased	Property Type	Area of sites	Year of Last Use
Mayo	Knock	Owned	Decentralisation site	5.95 acres	2007
Meath	Navan (Kells Road)	Owned	Government Buildings	N/A	2006
Meath	Enfield	Owned	Former ESB building	N/A	2007
Monaghan	Castleblayney	Owned	Customs Post Site		No specific date.
Monaghan	Clontibret	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2012
Monaghan	Corrinshigagh	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Monaghan	Innisshannon	Owned	Customs Hut	N/A	N/A
Monaghan	Newbliss	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Monaghan	Scottstown	Owned	Site		No specific date.
Monaghan	Smithborough	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2012
Offaly	Birr	Owned	Met Station	N/A	2009
Offaly	Edenderry	Owned	Decentralisation Site	2.1 acres	2007
Offaly	Kinnitty	Owned	Garda Residence	N/A	N/A
Roscommon	Ballintubber	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Roscommon	Ballyforan	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Roscommon	Knockcroghery	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Roscommon	Tarmonbarry	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2012
Sligo	Ballymote	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	N/A
Tipperary	Rearcross	Owned	Site		No specific date.
Tipperary	New Inn (Tipperary)	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Tipperary	The Mall, Templemore	Owned	Garda Residence	N/A	2010
Tipperary	The Mall, Templemore	Owned	Garda Residence	N/A	2011
Tipperary	The Mall, Templemore	Owned	Garda Residence	N/A	2016
Tipperary	Church Ave, Templemore	Owned	Garda Residence	N/A	2011
Tipperary	Church Ave, Templemore	Owned	Garda Residence	N/A	2010
Tipperary	Thurles	Owned	Decentralisation Site	6.45 acres	2006
Tipperary	Dromard House (Residence)	Owned	Templemore	N/A	N/A
Waterford	Tramore Road	Leased	Warehouse	N/A	2005
Waterford	Dungarvan	Owned	Decentralisation Site	3 acres	2006

	OPW Vacant Property				
County	Property	Owned/Leased	Property Type	Area of sites	Year of Last Use
Waterford	Waterford	Owned	Decentralisation Site	3 acres	2007
Waterford	Ballyduff	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	Closed 2013
Waterford	Ardmore	Owned	Building	N/A	N/A
Westmeath	Mullingar	Owned	Met Station site		No specific date.
Wicklow	Hollywood	Owned	Garda Station	N/A	N/A

There are a limited number of sundry dwellings that are intrinsic to the estates of National Parks and Gardens managed by the OPW. In general, these are allocated to staff where there is a requirement for officials to be present on the ground. There are a number of these currently vacant due to the poor condition of the properties, though these would not be categorised in the same way as non-operational vacant properties that may be considered for other State use or for disposal.

Office of Public Works Projects

272. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of discussion between Louth County Council and the OPW to redecorate the facade of a building (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55256/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I have been advised by the Commissioners of Public Works that they have been in discussion with Louth County Council in relation to the condition of Westgate House. The Council has agreed to redecorate the façade of the building.

The future use of the property is currently being considered in line with OPW stated policy and, upon completion of this review, the issue of the restoration of the building will be addressed.

Flood Prevention Measures

273. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the OPW has entered into an agreement with Limerick City and County Councils to carry out works at Portnard, Cappamore, County Limerick, to prevent flooding; and if so, when the works will be completed. [55265/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The Office of Public Works (OPW) is responsible for the maintenance of Arterial Drainage Schemes and catchment drainage schemes designated under the Arterial Drainage Acts of 1945 and 1995. Under section 37 of this Act, the OPW is required to maintain designated drainage works in proper repair and effective condition.

OPW is responsible for the maintenance of the Mulkear River (Cappamore) Drainage Scheme, and some watercourses in the Portnard, Cappamore area. Regular maintenance is undertaken by OPW in accordance with its statutory obligations under the Arterial Drainage Acts

for the scheme channels.

In December 2017, the OPW became aware of an obstruction to a watercourse in the Capamore area. The matter was investigated and the obstruction removed. Unfortunately, the blockage has reoccurred and arrangements are currently being made address the issue. The OPW will continue to monitor the situation.

Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme Funding

274. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of funding for flood defences (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1001/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin in Boxer Moran): I have been advised that the Office of Public Works approved funding of €148,370 in October 2017 under its Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection scheme to Kerry County Council in respect of proposed localised flood relief works at Clieveragh, Listowel Co Kerry which the Council estimated to cost approximately €509,000 in total.

The funding provided was to allow necessary preparatory site investigation, design and planning work to proceed. I understand that the Council is currently progressing with this preparatory work which will enable more accurate costing of the works based on which the Council may submit a further application for funding to carry out the works.

Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme Applications

275. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 94 of 23 November 2017 (details supplied) if funding will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1056/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The Office of Public Works (OPW) has responsibility for the management of fluvial flood risk where a river comes out of its banks and floods adjacent properties or roads etc.

I met with Limerick County Council on this matter in November 2017 and the position of the OPW was set out in detail. Limerick County Council had previously submitted a minor works application to this office to address the issue of bank erosion in Abbeyfeale. While I would have considerable sympathy for the family in question, the criteria for the minor works programme does not allow the provision of funding to cover this particular instance. In addition, it is not a flood risk issue and therefore would not come within the remit of the Commissioners of Public Works.

Flood Prevention Measures

276. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if funding has been allocated for the flood defence works at Burnfoot, County Donegal; and when these works will commence. [1058/18]

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.

The flood maps and measures proposed for Burnfoot, which is an Area of Further Assessment (AFA) in the CFRAM Study, were developed prior to the flooding of August 2017 making use of the information available at the time.

As a result of the severe flooding in August 2017, the OPW took the decision to commission consultants to undertake a review of the Burnfoot AFA. The review will examine details of the August 2017 flood event and recent events in December 2017, in order to better understand the specifics of those flood events and to review the hydraulic modelling and flood mapping for this area.

Subject to the outcomes of this review, the OPW will re-assess the possible options to manage the risk and the economic viability of these options.

Flood Prevention Measures

277. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position regarding a flood relief scheme (details supplied) in County Clare; when it will move to construction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1213/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): This scheme is being progressed by Clare County Council (CCC) as the Contracting Authority with funding from the Office of Public Works (OPW). When completed the scheme will provide protection for 74 residential and 10 non-residential properties.

CCC submitted its Report on the Tender Evaluation process to the OPW for review. There were certain matters that required close consideration as part of the review, including project costs, and the OPW has been working closely with CCC and its consultants in order to fully clarify these matters. The OPW has completed its review and expects to be in contact with CCC on the matter very shortly. It is hoped that construction will commence shortly thereafter.

Office of Public Works Projects

278. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the timeframe for works (details supplied) that have been issued with a letter of intent and a funding stream to be completed. [1293/18]

281. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of a project (details supplied). [1394/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I propose to take Questions Nos. 278 and 281 together.

The Office of Public Works has invited tenders for proposed works to be carried out at Doneraile House. The proposed works include restoration of the ground floor to enable public access and for use of the main rooms as an exhibition and visitor reception facility. The tender

return date for the ‘main tender’ works is 31st January 2018, with the Mechanical and Electrical tenders due in February 2018, following ‘main tender’ evaluation.

As we are currently in a competitive tender procurement process and until tenders have been received, assessed and funding committed, we are unable to give further details or time-frame for undertaking the works. In addition to funding of capital investment, a decision to proceed is also dependent on local authority commitment in relation to future operation of the proposed facility.

I can confirm that no “letter of intent” has issued to any Contractor.

Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme Applications

279. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the North Quay, Drogheda, will be included in the proposed flood relief works in County Louth; if flood relief works in Dunleer, County Louth, will be carried out (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1303/18]

290. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of remedial works (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1730/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I propose to take Questions Nos. 279 and 290 together.

I have been advised that the Office of Public Works (OPW) approved funding of €58,500 in 2015 under its Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection scheme to Louth County Council for a detailed flood study for Dunleer, Co Louth which was completed in 2016.

I understand that Louth County Council is currently preparing a further application for funding to submit under the OPW’s Minor Works scheme to enable it to carry out further work to develop the options for the areas at risk identified in the flood study report.

The core strategy for addressing areas at potentially significant risk from flooding, is the OPW’s Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme. It is the principal vehicle for implementing the EU Floods Directive and national flood policy. The Programme, which is being undertaken by engineering consultants on behalf of the OPW working in partnership with the local authorities, involves the production of predictive flood mapping for each location, the development of preliminary flood risk management options and the production of flood risk management plans.

The Flood Risk Management Plans are now being finalised taking account of all observations and comments received as part of the statutory public consultation on the Draft Plans. The OPW is on track to finalise the Flood Risk Management Plans, in early 2018, for approval by the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform.

Drogheda is an Area of Further Assessment under the Eastern CFRAM Study area and includes the area of the North Quay. The proposed CFRAM Plan for Drogheda include such physical works as a series of hard defences (flood embankments and walls) along the River Boyne together with improvement of conveyance and a flow diversion channel on various tributaries. Some sealing of manholes and localised raising of roads is also proposed, as are automated defences to allow continued operation of port activities.

The CFRAM Flood Risk Management Plan for Drogheda proposes to progress the project-level development and assessment of the Flood Relief Scheme which will including environmental assessment as necessary, further public consultation for refinement and preparation for planning and, if and as appropriate, implementation.

Community Employment Schemes Supervisors

280. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on and his plans to implement the community employment supervisor and assistants pension claim (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1320/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): An issue which has been under discussion by the Community Sector High Level Forum relates to community employment supervisors and assistant supervisors who have been seeking, through their union representatives, the allocation of Exchequer funding to implement a Labour Court recommendation relating to the provision of a pension scheme.

At the April meeting of the Forum, my Department outlined its intention to conduct a detailed scoping exercise in order to comprehensively examine and assess the full potential implications of the issues under consideration. In considering the particular matter referred to, regard must be had to the costs and precedent of such an arrangement were one to be created.

It continues to be the position that State organisations are not the employer of the particular employees concerned and that it is not possible for the State to provide funding for such a scheme. The employees in question are, or were, employees of private companies notwithstanding the fact that the companies concerned are, or were, reliant on State funding.

A meeting of the Forum took place on Thursday, 23 November 2017 where the findings of the scoping exercise were shared with members of the Forum. A follow-up meeting to deal with technical questions arising from the exercise took place on Friday, 15 December 2017.

Question No. 281 answered with Question No. 278.

State Claims Agency Data

282. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the amount of money paid out by the State Claims Agency in respect of personal injury claims, including and excluding medical negligence claims, for each of the years 2010 to 2017, inclusive, by relevant State body the claims related to; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1476/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In response to the Deputy's question, I have forwarded to him a report supplied to me by the State Claims Agency. I am advised that the information contained in this report has been extracted from the National Incident Management System. The report can be seen at

[[https://debates%20authoring/webattachments.nsf/0/EF0740A29A826F13802582180046BD6F/\\$File/ATTKYIKM.pdf?openelement](https://debates%20authoring/webattachments.nsf/0/EF0740A29A826F13802582180046BD6F/$File/ATTKYIKM.pdf?openelement)]=NIMS]

Question No. 283 answered with Question No. 246.

Legislative Programme

284. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the projects undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation, including the cost, the duration, the number of staff required and if this process was carried out by his Department or outsourced in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [1570/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table.

Legislation Title	Year	Duration	No. staff required	Costs	Process Carried out by Dept or Outsourced
Freedom of Information Act	2014	2 years	3	See next column	Carried out primarily by the Department but also see below regarding Statute Law Revision Programme

In addition to the legislation listed above, the Statute Law Revision Programme, while not explicitly consolidating or amalgamating legislation, repealed over 60,000 pieces of obsolete legislation and has significantly simplified the Irish Statute Book. This project included the use of external legal expertise at a cost of €499,716. This expertise was also used in the work on the Government's legislative reform programme over 2013-2015.

Question No. 285 answered with Question No. 246.

Question No. 286 answered with Question No. 250.

Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme Applications

287. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if an application for funding from Kerry County Council to clear the Flesk river of all blockages has been reviewed (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1651/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I have been advised that the Office of Public Works (OPW) is not in receipt of an application under Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection scheme for the removal of blockages from the Flesk River.

Public Sector Pay

288. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the approvals given since May 2016 for exceptions to public pay policy; the details of the employer and the nature, quantum and reason for the exception, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1687/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In June 2011, the Government introduced a general pay ceiling of €200,000 for future appointments to higher positions across the public service and a general pay ceiling of €250,000 for future appointments to CEO posts within Commercial State Companies while recognising that in a small number of cases exceptions may be necessary. Other than the then proposed appointment of a CEO for the ESB (appointed in December 2011 at an annual remuneration rate of €318,083), which was facilitated by the policy provision that in a small number of cases exceptions may be necessary where the role is of substantial importance, no sanctions have been issued for new appointments in excess of those pay ceilings.

By way of further information, I should point out that arrangements have recently been approved by the relevant departments (DPER and DES) under the Framework provided for under Section 25 of the Universities Act 1997, for the recruitment of up to 10 world-leading researchers to Ireland under Science Foundation Ireland's (SFI) Research Professorship Programme. To remedy the situation whereby it is difficult to recruit Research Professors at the desired level in targeted areas, and in recognition of the potential commercial benefits to Ireland from their work, it would be possible for those recruited to earn up to the maximum salary that applies in the commercial semi-state sector (€250,000) subject to the achievement of key performance criteria including commercial benefits for Ireland.

Public Sector Pensions Data

289. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the approvals given since May 2016 for pension top-ups for individual public servants; the details of the employer and the nature and quantum of the pension top-up; the reason for same, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1688/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I take it that the Deputy's reference to pension 'top ups' relates to situations where extraordinary additions over and above the normal public service pension terms might have been conceded. I have not approved any such pension top ups for individual public servants.

For the Deputy's information, I would point out that there are a limited number of legislative provisions and approved schemes that govern the granting of pension terms in a range of situations, such as ill health early retirement; the grant of professional added years for certain professional, technical and specialist posts in the civil and public service; and the pension provisions applying to Secretaries General, City and County Managers, and the CEOs of Non-Commercial State Sponsored Bodies.

Question No. 290 answered with Question No. 279.

Departmental Staff Data

291. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the proportion of employees in his Department or in organisations under its remit that are registered disabled. [1862/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table.

Department / Body	Percentage of employees with a disability under the definition in the Disability Act 2005
Department of Public Expenditure and Reform	4.9%
Office of Government Procurement	5.1%
Office of the Ombudsman	3.17%
Institute of Public Administration	0%
State Laboratory	5.43% (2016)
Public Appointments Service	3.21% (2017)
Office of Public Works	2.41%
National Lottery Regulator	0%
Special EU Programme Body	0%
National Shared Service Office	4.2% (2016)

Emergency Planning

292. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when a response will issue to an interim reply (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1973/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The Minister for Defence is responsible for the coordination and oversight of emergency planning and chairs the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning.

The “Framework for Major Emergency Management” was adopted by Government in 2006 and sets out common arrangements and structures for front-line public sector emergency management in Ireland.

In line with this Framework, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government is the Lead Government Department for co-ordinating the response to national severe weather events, including flooding.

Local Authorities are designated the Principal Response Agency for all local flooding events and have plans and protocols in place to quickly respond to potential severe weather events. Local Authorities work with other agencies as part of their assessment and response to severe weather events. When required local authorities liaise with the other Principal Response Agencies (HSE, An Garda Síochána) and these Principal Response Agencies, can also be assisted by the Defence Forces, Civil Defence, Red Cross, Coastguard and Mountain Rescue.

I have asked the Minister of Defence, to further consider the correspondence and provide a more substantial response to the proposals raised.

Garda Stations

293. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the Garda stations in County Cork that have been sold since 2013. [1990/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I am advised by the Commissioners of Public Works that the following former

Garda Stations in County Cork have been sold since 2013:

- Inchigeela Garda Station,
- Mallow Road Garda Station,
- Meelin Garda Station.

Departmental Communications

294. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his Department uses anti-profanity software on its email systems and online contact forms; if so, the level of human oversight that is applied to the monitoring of this software and its effectiveness; his views on whether persons' legitimate right to petition Government may be blocked unintentionally by errors in the use of such software in determining that which qualifies as profanity being communicated in email and-or online contact forms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2091/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department has in place an industry leading email security appliance which filters emails based on industry standard security terminology which includes Profanities. All incoming emails are automatically scanned by the email security appliance for terminology, including profanities, and if positive the email is quarantined and the recipient is notified that their email has been quarantined. If the recipient believes the email to be business related or quarantined in error they will contact the Service Desk stating this and the email will be released to the recipient. The email filtering is reviewed and updated based on updated dictionaries and email statistics to keep the solution current. The Departments online contact forms are routed through its email appliance and is supported by the same functionality in relation to profanity. As emails are not blocked, but rather quarantined, a persons' legitimate right to petition government will not be blocked unintentionally by the email security appliance in determining that which qualifies as profanity.

Departmental Strategies

295. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the Government initiatives in his Department in 2017 that promoted State services or welfare payments, public awareness of regulatory changes and public consultations that involved advertising and promotion on television, radio, newspapers and online, in tabular form; and the level of expenditure for each such initiative. [2266/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table.

Initiative	Purpose of the Initiative	Method of Promotion	Expenditure in 2017
Open Data Initiative	Public Consultation (on draft Open Data Strategy 2017-2022) which aims to increase availability of public data and promote its usage	Online via D/PER website and the national Open Data portal and via twitter	Nil

Initiative	Purpose of the Initiative	Method of Promotion	Expenditure in 2017
Open Data Engagement Fund	Public Awareness and promotion of usage of public data for inter alia the creation of new products and services	Online via D/PER website and the national Open Data portal and via twitter	Nil
Review of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014	Public Consultation	Newspapers	€3,641.26
Appointment of Disclosures Recipient under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014	State Services	Newspapers	€2,437.95
Our Public Service 2020	Public consultation	Adverts in national press - Irish Times, Irish Independent, Irish Examiner, Seachtain	€3,762.04
EU Funding Website www.eufunds.gov.ie	Public awareness on regulatory changes	Online	€15,141.30
Public Services Card and MyGovID Publicity Campaign	Promote awareness of the Public Services Card, MyGovID, how they are to be used in the future, and how to find out more information.	Radio, Digital Media, Print and Outdoor	€205,440
Google Ads	Promoting awareness for the site wherey-ourmoneygoes.gov.ie	Digital Media	€307.93
Twitter Ads	Promoting awareness for the site wherey-ourmoneygoes.gov.ie	Digital Media	€144.81

The Office of Public Works will provide the relevant information directly to the Deputy.

First-Aid Training

296. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if consideration has been given to making occupational first aid training compulsory for all physically able teachers and SNAs (details supplied); if it will be fully funded by the Government; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54326/17]

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.

The Board of Management of each school is responsible for the care and safety of all of the students in their school and care and safety should be at the centre of all policy and practices.

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) advise that, by law, employers and those who control workplaces to any extent, must identify hazards in the workplaces under their control and assess the risk presented by the hazards.

Employers must write down the risks and what to do about them. This is known as Risk Assessment. The aim of Risk Assessment is to reduce the risk of injury and illness associated with work. The Risk Assessment(s) will form part of the employer's Safety Statement.

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 set out the First-Aid requirements for workplaces as follows: "Employers have a duty to provide first-aid equipment at all places at work where working conditions require it. Depending on the size or specific hazard (or both) of the place of work, trained occupational first-aiders must also be provided. Apart from some exceptions, first-aid rooms must be provided where appropriate. Information must also be provided to employees as regards the first-aid facilities and arrangements in place."

It is important that the school management authority requests parents to ensure that the school is made aware of any medical condition suffered by any student attending. Where the school is aware of potential difficulties that may arise as a consequence of a medical condition suffered by one or more students, it may be possible for the management authorities, working in conjunction with parents, teachers and children to put preventative measures in place to lessen the possibility of any difficulties arising or to ensure that, if a student suffers from an illness requiring, for example, the administration of medication, that appropriate treatment is available.

Where a child requires adult assistance to assist in the administration of medicine and where the extent of assistance required would overly disrupt normal teaching time, SNA support may be allocated for this purpose.

It is a matter for the Board of Management to ensure that SNAs are in a position to effectively meet the care needs of students for whom SNA support has been allocated in the school when appointing an SNA.

Where specific training is required, the Board of Management should liaise with the Health Service Executive (HSE) in order to ensure that the HSE provides guidance and training that enables the SNA to meet the care needs of the pupil in an appropriate manner. It is a matter for individual school authorities to make such arrangements locally.

It is my Department's experience that once the matter has been discussed in detail with the Board of Management and staff of a school, and once all parties are clear as to the procedures to be followed, arrangements can normally be made to assist the administration of first aid or medicine.

The NCSE are currently undertaking a Comprehensive Review of the SNA Scheme. In response to a progress report from the NCSE on the comprehensive assessment, the NCSE were requested to establish a working group, comprising relevant stakeholders, to assist in proposing a better model for providing care supports so as to provide better outcomes for students with special educational needs who have additional care needs.

This Working Group, which is chaired by Mr. Eamon Stack, Chairperson of the NCSE Council, has commenced its work and the work will run in tandem with the completion of the overall Comprehensive Review of the SNA Scheme. It is intended that the reports of the Working Group and of the Review will be completed in Spring 2018.

In tandem with this, a cross Departmental Working Group has been established to develop proposals in relation to the need for nursing supports in certain special schools for children with

complex medical needs.

In relation to insurance, the position is that the nature and terms of an individual school's insurance arrangements are a matter between the individual school and its insurers.

School Transport Eligibility

297. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare can avail of assisted transport. [54478/17]

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 115,000 children, including almost 12,000 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 of my Department's School Transport Scheme for Children with Special Educational Needs, children are eligible for school transport where they are attending the nearest recognised: mainstream school, special class/special school or a unit, that is or can be resourced, to meet their special educational needs.

The National Council for Special Education through its network of Special Education Needs Organisers (SENOs) acts in an advisory role to my Department on the suitability of placements for children with special educational needs.

The School Transport Section of my Department has no record of an application for special education needs school transport for the pupil, referred to by the Deputy.

The family referred to by the Deputy should liaise with the Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO) should they wish to apply for school transport under the terms of the scheme.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

298. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the provision of home tuition funding for early intervention can be provided in the case of a person (details supplied) to assist the person's parents in making the person's life easier; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54961/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department's policy is focused on ensuring that all children, including those with autism, can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in school settings through the primary and post-primary network.

In terms of the education provision for children who have autism, my Department has always recognised the importance of early intervention. Children with autism can be enrolled in an early intervention class from the age of 3.

Children in early intervention classes benefit from a reduced pupil-teacher ratio of 6:1. Class teachers are fully qualified and have access, through the Special Education Support Service, to training in a range of autism-specific interventions. Each class will have a minimum of

2 Special Needs Assistants.

As each child with autism is unique they should have access to a range of different approaches to meet their individual needs. This facilitates access to individualised education programmes which can be supported by Special Needs Assistants and fully qualified professional teachers who may draw from a range of autism-specific interventions, including Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), Treatment and Education of Autistic Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH) and Picture Exchange Communications System (PECS) as well as the appropriate school curriculum with the option, where possible, of full or partial integration and interaction with other pupils.

The enrolment of a child to a school is a matter, in the first instance, for the parents/guardians of the child and the Board of Management of a school.

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

The SENO can also advise parents in relation to supports which may be available to support children with special educational needs, including special transport arrangements which may be made available.

The purpose of the Special Education Home Tuition Grant Scheme is to provide a compensatory educational service for children who, for a number of reasons such as chronic illness, are unable to attend school. The scheme also provides a compensatory educational service for children with special educational needs seeking an educational placement and provision is made for early educational intervention for children with autism.

Where there is no Early Intervention class placement available, my Department will consider applications under the Home Tuition Grant Scheme, where a student can receive up to 20 hours home tuition per week as an interim measure until a placement becomes available.

Where a parent/guardian does not enrol a child in a school placement as identified by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), a grant for Home Tuition will not be provided. Accordingly, Home Tuition is provided as an interim measure only for children for whom a placement in a recognised school is not available and should not be regarded as an optional alternative to a school placement.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs also provides supports for childcare, including pre-school education.

The principal vehicle for the delivery of pre-school education is the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme which was introduced in January 2010 and provides for early learning in a formal setting to children in the year before they commence primary school.

Children with disabilities have access to pre-school services under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) programme of supports.

AIM is a child-centred model, involving seven levels of progressive support, moving from the universal to the targeted, depending on the needs of the child and the pre-school.

Details of the supports which are available under AIM can be found at www.preschoolaccess.ie which contains comprehensive information on the access and inclusion model and on how to apply for the new schemes and supports. For children attending a private pre-school

through the ECCE programme, questions relating to the AIM supports should be addressed to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

Children First Guidelines

299. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the national policy requirements for dealing with the reported sexual assault of a pupil by another pupil. [55179/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Department of Justice and Equality is responsible for the national criminal justice framework and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs is responsible for national policy in relation to the protection and welfare of children.

My Department's role is to give guidance and direction to schools in relation to meeting their statutory and other obligations in respect of the protection of children, including in relation to the reporting of child abuse.

The statutory requirements of the Children First Act 2015 became fully operational on 11 December 2017 when the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs commenced the remaining provisions of the Children First Act 2015.

The Children First Act 2015 put in place a statutory obligation on certain professionals who work with children (referred to as mandated persons and including all registered teachers) to report child protection concerns at or above a defined threshold to Tusla. Under this Act, all concerns about sexual abuse must be reported by mandated persons to Tusla.

The Children First Act 2015 operates side-by-side with the Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017) which was published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs on 2 October and also became operational on 11 December 2017.

The full commencement of the Children First Act, 2015 and the publication of the new Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 necessitated changes to the existing Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

My Department has recently published new Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary School 2017 which give direction and guidance to schools authorities and to school personnel in relation to meeting their new statutory obligations under the Children First Act, 2015 and in the continued implementation of the best practice (non-statutory) guidance set out in Children First National Guidance 2017 which requires all reasonable concerns about child abuse, including sexual abuse, to be reported to Tusla.

My Department's procedures for schools also outline that under the Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 it is a criminal offence to withhold information about a serious offence, including a sexual offence, against a person under 18 years or a vulnerable person. The offence arises where a person knows or believes that a specified offence has been committed against a child or vulnerable person and he or she has information which would help arrest, prosecute or convict another person for that offence, but fails, without reasonable excuse, to disclose that information as soon as it is practicable to do so to a member of An Garda Síochána.

The reporting obligations under the Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 are in addition to the reporting obligations under Children First National Guidance 2017 and the Children First Act, 2015.

Apprenticeship Data

300. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the average cost to the State of an apprenticeship; the amount of this cost that can be attributed to training; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1113/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): It is estimated that the cost of training an apprentice in one of the existing craft apprenticeships is approximately €6,700 per annum therefore, given that these apprenticeships are 4 years in duration, the average cost of a craft apprenticeship is approximately €26,800. The estimated cost of training an apprentice in one of the new consortia led apprenticeships is approximately €5,100 per annum. These new apprenticeships vary in duration from two to four years therefore, the average cost of each apprenticeship depends on its duration. The estimated cost of a new apprenticeship may be subject to further refinement as greater numbers of new apprenticeships come into operation.

All of these costs are attributed to training apprentices. In the craft apprenticeships, apprentices are paid a training allowance while attending their off-the-job phases and the employer pays their salary during their on-the-job phases. In the new consortia led apprenticeships the employer pays the apprentice's salary for the duration of the apprenticeship.

Apprenticeship Programmes

301. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason for the lack of apprenticeships in areas such as health and social care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1114/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): As the Deputy is aware, the Apprenticeship Council is currently overseeing the expansion of the apprenticeship system in Ireland into a range of new sectors of the economy. Last year, a second call for apprenticeship proposals invited consortia of enterprise, professional bodies and education and training providers to submit proposals for apprenticeship programmes to be developed to meet identified skill needs in their sector. Arising from this call, last month I announced 26 new apprenticeship proposals to be further developed into national apprenticeship programmes, including a proposal for a Professional Healthcare Assistant Apprenticeship. This programme, which is two years in duration, will lead to a level 6 qualification on the National Framework of Qualifications. It is estimated that the development process will take between 12 and 15 months.

Momentum Programme

302. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of places on the momentum programme; the full year cost of increasing the number of places on the programme by 20%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1242/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): The Momentum programme was created in 2012 during the economic downturn to address the needs of long term unemployed and young unemployed individuals. It funded the provision of free education and training projects to support over 12,500 jobseekers (who had been unemployed for twelve months or more) to gain skills and access employment opportunities in

growing sectors of the economy.

It was delivered through two programme iterations. The first (Momentum I) ran over the period 2012-2014, and the second (Momentum II) commenced in 2014 and concluded early last year. Momentum 1 cost in the order of €17m and Momentum II cost almost €19m. The cost of another round of Momentum with 20% greater numbers than Momentum II would be €22.8 million. It is likely that this total cost would be spread over more than a single year.

Given the overall improvement in the economic position, the welcome decline in the numbers who are unemployed and the consequent reduction in demand for training, there are no plans for a further round of the Momentum programme and participants are not currently being recruited.

Independent evaluations of both programmes have been carried out and published and are available on the SOLAS website at www.solas.ie.

Minor Works Scheme Payments

303. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when minor works grant funding will be received by a school (details supplied) in County Louth; the reason the funding for 2017 was delayed; and his plans for 2018 allocations to ensure schools are not put under undue financial strain. [54305/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Minor Works Grant in respect of the school year 2017/2018 was paid to the school referred to by the Deputy on 12 December 2017.

The payment of the Minor Works Grant is not confined to any particular date and can in fact, if paid, be issued during any month of the school year.

As part of our longer term infrastructural planning, my Department will explore whether it will be possible to give greater certainty to primary schools in relation to the payment of the Minor Works Grant, taking account of the Government's 10 Year Public Capital Investment Plan, which is currently under development.

Summer Works Scheme Eligibility

304. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a school (details supplied) in County Louth will be assisted in sourcing funding to replace tarmac in the schoolyard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54306/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The school to which the Deputy refers may apply for the works in question under any future Summer Works Scheme. In the meantime, the school authority can use its Minor Works Grant to address ongoing repairs and maintenance. If health and safety works are identified that require immediate attention, an Emergency Works Application for these works only can be submitted to my Department. Application forms are available on my Department's website.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

305. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when special

educational needs organisers, SENOs, will be allowed to instruct schools to set up special needs classes in cases in which a school refuses same; if this new authority will be exercised before the end of the 2017-18 academic year to ensure students have an appropriate place for September 2018; the way in which limits to SENOs' new authority will be legislated for; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54325/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 was published on 6 July 2016. The Bill passed Committee Stage on 28 June 2017 and will shortly proceed to Report Stage.

In relation to the issues raised by the Deputy, during the Committee Stage debate of the Admissions Bill, I outlined my intention to bring forward proposals at Report Stage to address this issue.

I can confirm that work is ongoing in this regard and my Department officials are currently engaging with the Office of the Attorney General on the development of legislative proposals on this matter which they hope to bring forward to Government for approval shortly.

Departmental Staff Data

306. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of departmental staff employed in Drogheda per departmental premises and within statutory bodies within his remit; and the grades of each. [54351/17]

370. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department is due to increase the number of staff based in Drogheda in addition to those currently employed; the grades that will be assigned to these positions; and the dates on which they will be recruited or allocated. [54955/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 306 and 370 together.

My Department has a regional office of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) based at Drogheda. At present, the staffing at the office consists of 1 Senior Educational Psychologists, 7 Educational Psychologists and 1 Clerical Officer. Currently there are no plans to make any additional appointments to the staffing cohort.

Schools Building Projects Status

307. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the receipt of more than 1,000 signatures from parents regarding the proposed relocation of a school (details supplied) from both the school community in County Wicklow and the school community in Rathnew, County Wicklow, objecting to the proposed site at Merrymeeting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54360/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that the major building project to provide a permanent school building for the school in question is at an advanced stage of architectural planning - Stage 2(b). All statutory approvals, which includes Planning Permission, Fire Certificate and Disability Access Certificate have been secured. Following receipt and review by the Department of the Stage 2(b) submission, the Design Team was instructed to complete the pre-qualification process to select a shortlist of contractors to tender for this project. Once the pre-qualification process is complete, the Department will

be in contact with the Design Team and school regarding the further progression of the project.

I also wish to advise the Deputy that the school Patron and Board of Management are fully supportive of the development of the new school building by my Department at Merrymeeting.

School Accommodation Provision

308. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application by a school (details supplied) for two additional permanent classrooms in the interests of the health and safety of the school community. [54369/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The school referred to by the Deputy applied to my Department for funding to replace an existing prefab. The school was advised that it is my Department's intention to replace all purchased temporary accommodation with permanent accommodation, where the need is established, over the lifetime of the Department's Capital Programme (2016-2021).

To enable this development, my Department will be carrying out an assessment of the number of prefabs being used in schools to deliver the curriculum. This will also determine whether or not individual prefabs need to be replaced in the context of the long-term accommodation needs of each individual school. When completed, this assessment will quantify the number of prefabs to be replaced.

The school has also recently written to my Department seeking additional accommodation. The correspondence will be considered and a response will be furnished to the school authority subsequently.

Schools Property

309. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if consideration has been given to asking schools to develop plans for traffic entering and egressing school grounds and surrounding areas to ease traffic congestion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54379/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In general, individual school authorities are responsible, in the first instance, for ensuring the safety and welfare of children and others in their care. In the case of traffic entering and leaving a school site, the school authority is expected to have a plan in place to manage this in accordance with its own particular circumstances. It is open to existing schools to apply for funding to address any on-site traffic management concerns where the school considers this a priority issue. The mechanism for applying for funding for works of this nature is my Department's Summer Works Scheme

In the case of new school projects, my Department's Technical Guidance Document – TGD-020 - sets out the general principles of Universal Design in schools, which includes guidance on car parking, set-down/pick up areas. Traffic management requirements arising out of the project are identified and mitigation measures are submitted as part of the planning application.

Schools Relocation

310. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if consideration has been given to a school (details supplied) being located outside its catchment area; his plans to make provision for a site within its catchment area or to request Dublin Bus to link Finglas with Broombridge; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54380/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The school to which the Deputy refers opened in September 2017 to serve the Scribblestown/Finglas West school planning area.

The school is temporarily accommodated in the Broombridge Educate Together National School building at Bannow Road, Dublin 7 (which is in my ownership) as a short-term arrangement, pending delivery of the school's permanent accommodation in the Scribblestown/Finglas West school planning area.

In the interim, my Department will continue to liaise with the school patron with regard to existing temporary accommodation arrangements.

A potential permanent site for the school has been identified and is being progressed.

The matter raised by the Deputy in relation to Dublin Bus is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport.

Special Educational Needs

311. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the actions needed to fully implement the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (details supplied); and the associated cost of each action, in tabular form. [54411/17]

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

The Sections of the EPSEN Act which have not been implemented are those which would have conferred a statutory entitlement to – - an educational assessment for all children with special educational needs.

- consequent development of a statutory individual educational plan (IEP).
- the delivery of detailed educational services on foot of this plan.
- an independent appeals process.

Legal advice provided to my Department indicates that the EPSEN Act, as it is currently constituted, may not be implemented on a phased, or age cohort, basis.

The NCSE estimated, in an implementation Plan in 2006, that additional investment over a period of years of up to €235m per annum, across the education and health sectors, would be required to fully implement the EPSEN Act. My Department's opinion is that the level of investment required could be significantly greater than that envisaged in the NCSE report. However, a total estimate of this amount has not been quantified.

Revised estimates of the amount of additional expenditure required to fully implement the remaining sections of the EPSEN Act have not recently been conducted. The level of additional expenditure required would have to take into account annual demographic growth and service developments in the area of special educational needs, pricing adjustments and salary cost differentials on an ongoing basis. Estimates would also have to be made as to the number of pupils who might currently qualify for the statutory service provisions envisaged by the EPSEN Act. Under the Programme for a Partnership Government I have committed to consulting with stakeholders on how best to progress aspects of the Act on a non-statutory basis.

At present, all schools are encouraged to use Education Plans. My Department's Inspectorate's advice is that the majority of schools are now using some form of individual education planning for children with special needs. In line with Circular 30/2014, schools are also required to put in place Personal Pupil Plan including a care plan for all pupils availing of SNA support.

Guidelines for schools on educational planning and monitoring of outcomes and the manner in which they should conduct educational planning, through the Student Support File, are contained in the Guidelines for Schools: Supporting Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools, available at www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/Guidelines-for-Primary-Schools-Supporting-Pupils-with-Special-Educational-Needs-in-Mainstream-Schools.pdf.

Educational planning is an essential element of a whole-school approach to meeting pupils' needs. Educational plans should be differentiated in line with a pupil's needs. A pupil's support plan should include clear, measurable learning targets, and specify the resources and interventions that will be used to address student needs in line with the Continuum of Support process. Individualised support plans for pupils should be developed through a collaborative process involving relevant teachers, parents/guardians, the pupils themselves and outside professionals, as necessary. The individualised planning process should include regular reviews of learning targets as part of an ongoing cycle of assessment, target setting, intervention and review.

Providing power to the National Council for Special Education, as envisaged under Section 10 of the EPSEN Act, to designate a school place for a person with special educational needs, is currently being considered in the context of the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016.

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

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

This new model for allocating support to pupils with special educational needs has been implemented from September 2017. Circular 0013/2017 for primary schools and Circular 0014/2017 for post primary schools which were published on 7th March 2017 sets out the details of the new model for allocating special education teachers to schools. The revised allocation model replaces the generalised allocation process at primary and post primary school level for learning support and high incidence special educational needs, and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) allocation process which provided additional resource teaching supports to schools, to support pupils assessed as having Low Incidence disabilities. The Guidelines for Schools: Supporting Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools also provides guidance on the organisation, deployment and use of their

special education teachers. One of the benefits of this new approach is that schools will have greater flexibility as to how they will deploy their resources.

The NCSE is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of the SNA scheme, in consultation with other relevant Departments and State Agencies, including the National Disability Authority (NDA), to identify the most appropriate form of support options to provide better outcomes for students with Special Educational Needs, having regard to the significant amount of State investment in this area.

In response to a progress report from the NCSE on the comprehensive assessment, the NCSE were requested to establish a working group, comprising relevant stakeholders, to assist in proposing a better model for providing care supports so as to provide better outcomes for students with special educational needs who have additional care needs. This Working Group has commenced its work and the work will run in tandem with the completion of the overall Comprehensive Assessment of the SNA Scheme.

It is intended that the reports of the Working Group and of the Review will be completed in Spring 2018.

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

Schools Building Projects Status

312. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of re-building works for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54422/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Major School Building Project to which the Deputy refers, is at an advanced stage of architectural planning - Stage 2(b).

All statutory approvals have been secured.

Following the necessary appointment of a replacement Mechanical & Electrical Engineer, the Design Team in conjunction with the new Engineer are working on a revised M and E Report, which will be submitted to my Department upon completion.

When the revised stage 2b submission has been received and reviewed, my Department will revert to the school at that time with a timeframe for the further progression of the project.

Institutes of Technology Funding

313. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount of surplus or deficit recorded by Letterkenny Institute of Technology in each of the years 2007 to 2017, by year and yearly amount, in tabular form; the cumulative surplus or deficit being run by the institute; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54452/17]

314. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the income earned or received by Letterkenny Institute of Technology including for current and capital purposes, by the State or by way of private companies, by income stream in each of the years 2007 to

2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54453/17]

315. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amounts allocated to Letterkenny Institute of Technology in terms of core grant, fees and student contribution, by income stream in each of the years 2007 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54454/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 313 to 315, inclusive, together.

My Department allocates the recurrent funding to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for direct disbursement to the HEA designated higher education institutions including Institutes of Technology (IoTs) such as Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT).

Upon my appointment as Minister I commenced a programme of reinvestment in the education sector. This included an increase in annual recurrent funding to LYIT by €2.3m.

In their financial statements y/e 31 August 2016, the institute achieved a reduced deficit of €137k (1,358k in 2015) and will meet this deficit through accumulated reserves.

In 2017, the institute was budgeting for an operating surplus for the first time in six years and confirmed in late 2017 that this was on target for achievement.

However, an annual deficit of €1.4m per annum is currently being attributed to School of Tourism, Killybegs. This is a function of relatively low student numbers coupled with relatively high staff numbers. To seek in part to address this issue, I, approved the provision of ring-fenced funding of €750k per annum for 4 years from 2017 to 2020. This funding was approved following recommendations of the 2014 Working Group which was appointed to examine the financial viability of the Killybegs campus. The institution is working closely with a financial expert and the HEA to ensure a financially viable future for the campus.

I have attached the following tables in reply to the queries:

- 1: Letterkenny IT Records of Annual Surplus/Deficit 2007-2016 (calendar year)
- 2: Letterkenny IT Income - state vs non state - Income sources 2007-2016 (academic year)*
- 3: Letterkenny IoT summary - core grant, fees and student contribution by income stream (calendar year)

***Please note the most recent figures available are for the 2015/16 academic year.**

Table 1. LYIT - Surplus/Deficit recorded 2007-2016

	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
-										
Operating Surplus (Deficit)	-137	-1,358	-1,154	-1,032	-1,594	-414	2,964	551	914	445
Transfer from/to Capital Development Reserve						-294	-526	-306	-185	-159
Accumulated Surplus (Deficit)at beginning of year	1,735	3,093	4,247	5,279	6,873	7,581	5,143	4,898	4,169	3,501
Accumulated surplus received from VEC on amalgamation of TCK										382
Accumulated Surplus (Deficit) at end of year	1,598	1,735	3,093	4,247	5,279	6,873	7,581	5,143	4,898	4,169

Table 2.

	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10	2008/09	2007/08
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual
	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000
Income									
State Grant	12,413	11,755	11,499	12,496	12,860	14,775	18,715	19,548	19,894
Tuition Fees	11,170	10,085	9,810	9,303	9,227	9,119	9,586	7,663	6,464
Research Grants and Contracts	1,595	1,586	1,283	1,160	1,049	1,159	1,358	1,335	1,053
Other Income	3,319	2,883	3,412	3,226	2,970	2,983	2,635	2,967	3,161
Interest Income	1	64	97	222	299	166	119	49	99
	28,498	26,373	26,101	26,407	26,405	28,202	32,413	31,562	30,671
State									
State Grant	12,413	11,755	11,499	12,496	12,860	14,775	18,715	19,548	19,894
Tuition Fees	8,378	7,385	6,873	7,417	7,619	5,455	5,299	4,426	5,499
Research Grants and Contracts	1,468	1,454	1,156	960	713	1,008	1,019	1,001	790
Other Income	1,494	1,291	1,411	1,472	1,325	1,491	1,407	1,476	1,632
Interest Income	1	64	97	222	299	166	119	49	99
	23,754	21,949	21,036	22,567	22,816	22,895	26,559	26,500	27,914
Non-State									
State Grant									
Tuition Fees	2,792	2,700	2,937	1,886	1,608	3,664	4,287	3,237	965
Research Grants and Contracts	127	132	127	200	336	151	339	334	263
Other Income	1,825	1,592	2,001	1,754	1,645	1,492	1,228	1,491	1,529
Interest Income									
	4,744	4,424	5,065	3,840	3,589	5,307	5,854	5,062	2,757
Overall Total Income	28,498	26,373	26,101	26,407	26,405	28,202	32,413	31,562	30,671
Total Capital Grants	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10	2008/09	2007/08
State Grants HEA	384	621	482	497	1,314	309	278	925	1,818
State Grants Other			76	543	3,007	10,206	764	3,878	1,402
Total State	384	621	558	1,040	4,321	10,515	1,042	4,803	3,220
Non State Grants	429	4,224	1,074	426	221	103	51	96	140
Total Capital Grants	813	4,845	1,632	1,466	4,542	10,618	1,093	4,899	3,360

Table 3

			Estimated				Estimated
	2007 Core Grant	2007 Fees	2006/07 Student Services Charge	2007 Total	2008 Core Grant	2008 Fees	2007/08 Student Services Charge
Letterkenny IoT	€ 19,522,891	€ 2,287,036	€ 1,446,400	€ 23,256,327	€ 20,106,021	€ 2,740,280	€ 1,607,100

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			Estimated				Estimated		
2008 Total	2009 Core Grant	2009 Fees	2008/09 Student Services Charge	2009 Total	2010 Core Grant	2010 Fees	2009/10 Student Services Charge	2010 Total	2011 Core Grant
€ 24,453,401	€ 19,186,442	€ 2,414,155	€ 1,944,000	€ 23,544,597	€ 15,750,574	€ 3,824,874	€ 3,654,000	€ 23,229,448	€ 16,162,338

	Estimated				Estimated			
2011 Fees	2010/11 Student Services Charge	2011 Total	2012 Core Grant	2012 Fees	2011/12 Student Contribution	2012 Total	2013 Core Grant	2013 Fees
€ 3,502,894	€ 3,448,500	€ 23,113,732	€ 15,211,281	€ 2,100,250	€ 4,820,000	€ 22,131,531	€ 13,660,835	€ 1,598,052

	Estimated				Estimated				Estimated
	2012/13 Student Contribution	2013 Total	2014 Core Grant	2014 Fees	2013/14 Student Contribution	2014 Total	2015 Core Grant	2015 Fees	2014/15 Student Contribution
Letterkenny IoT	€ 5,656,500	€ 20,915,387	€ 12,767,211	€ 1,639,092	€ 6,315,000	€ 20,721,303	€ 12,886,087	€ 1,103,044	€ 7,414,000

Estimated				Estimated		draft	draft	Estimated	
2014/15 Student Contribution	2015 Total	2016 Core Grant	2016 Fees	2015/16 Student Contribution	2016 Total	2017 Core Grant	2017 Fees	2016/17 Student Contribution	2017 Total
€ 7,414,000	€ 21,403,131	€ 13,223,361	€ 1,003,430	€ 8,157,000	€ 22,383,791	€ 15,467,359	€ 1,149,469	€ 7,782,000	€ 24,398,828

Third Level Funding

316. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amounts allocated to each higher education institute in terms of core grant, fees and student contribution in each of the years 2007 to 2017, by institute and income category, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54455/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department allocates recurrent funding to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for direct disbursement to HEA designated higher education institutions. The HEA allocates this funding as a block grant to the institutions. As autonomous bodies, the internal disbursement of this funding, along with any funding it receives from private sources, is a matter for the individual institution.

Please see the following tables providing the information requested by the Deputy.

1: University & Colleges allocation 2007-2017

-			Estimated				Estimated	
	2007 Grant	2007 Fees	2006/07 Student Services Charge	2007 Total	2008 Grant	2008 Fees	2007/08 Student Services Charge	2008 Total
UCD	€ 130,147,216	€ 49,016,559	€ 9,432,000	€ 188,595,775	€ 136,669,590	€ 49,736,444	€ 9,564,225	€ 195,970,259

16 January 2018

-			Estimated				Estimated	
	2007 Grant	2007 Fees	2006/07 Student Services Charge	2007 Total	2008 Grant	2008 Fees	2007/08 Student Services Charge	2008 Total
UCC	€ 84,684,019	€ 42,397,043	€ 8,109,600	€ 135,190,662	€ 90,648,769	€ 47,680,516	€ 8,530,500	€ 146,859,785
NUIG	€ 70,673,954	€ 33,126,661	€ 6,540,800	€ 110,341,415	€ 75,678,968	€ 34,404,814	€ 6,689,100	€ 116,772,882
NUIM/MU	€ 31,612,511	€ 16,863,070	€ 3,208,800	€ 51,684,381	€ 33,703,286	€ 20,552,585	€ 3,582,150	€ 57,838,021
TCD	€ 96,376,037	€ 35,177,312	€ 7,106,400	€ 138,659,749	€ 101,882,625	€ 33,253,291	€ 7,378,800	€ 142,514,716
UL	€ 49,968,291	€ 27,726,584	€ 5,509,600	€ 83,204,475	€ 51,417,462	€ 30,780,246	€ 5,769,225	€ 87,966,933
MIC	€ 11,303,870	€ 7,995,804	€ 1,787,200	€ 21,086,874	€ 12,413,556	€ 8,901,860	€ 1,881,000	€ 23,196,416
DCU	€ 37,433,154	€ 17,622,720	€ 3,839,200	€ 58,895,074	€ 37,720,547	€ 21,339,887	€ 4,177,800	€ 63,238,234
DCU/SPD	€ 12,495,935	€ 6,256,732	€ 1,323,200	€ 20,075,867	€ 13,687,905	€ 6,849,028	€ 1,402,500	€ 21,939,433
DCU/Mater Dei	€ 2,541,284	€ 1,165,023	€ 256,800	€ 3,963,107	€ 2,623,840	€ 1,288,631	€ 242,963	€ 4,155,434
NCAD	€ 10,415,162	€ 2,433,064	€ 564,000	€ 13,412,226	€ 10,853,678	€ 2,961,900	€ 580,800	€ 14,396,378
RIA	€ 3,675,200	€ -	€ -	€ 3,675,200	€ 3,911,223	€ -	€ -	€ 3,911,223
St. Angela's College	€ 3,280,000	€ 595,228	€ 354,400	€ 4,229,628	€ 3,884,082	€ 940,190	€ 389,400	€ 5,213,672
RCSI	€ 2,277,500	€ 1,841,200	€ 228,800	€ 4,347,500	€ 1,512,101	€ 2,055,070	€ 242,550	€ 3,809,721
Total	€ 546,884,133	€ 242,217,000	€ 48,260,800	€ 837,361,933	€ 576,607,630	€ 260,744,462	€ 50,431,013	€ 887,783,105

Contd.

-			Estimated				Estimated	
	2009 Grant	2009 Fees	2008/09 Student Services Charge	2009 Total	2010 Grant	2010 Fees	2009/10 Student Services Charge	2010 Total
UCD	€ 125,680,854	€ 49,899,530	€ 10,654,200	€ 186,234,584	€ 94,164,423	€ 58,454,342	€ 18,577,500	€ 171,196,265
UCC	€ 85,419,264	€ 41,369,734	€ 9,396,900	€ 136,185,898	€ 66,648,639	€ 49,371,437	€ 16,404,000	€ 132,424,076
NUIG	€ 71,708,538	€ 34,581,093	€ 7,621,200	€ 113,910,831	€ 55,685,787	€ 41,588,367	€ 13,303,500	€ 110,577,654
NUIM/MU	€ 31,511,501	€ 20,781,596	€ 4,238,100	€ 56,531,197	€ 24,715,517	€ 24,600,813	€ 7,543,500	€ 56,859,830
TCD	€ 93,514,620	€ 35,105,600	€ 8,360,100	€ 136,980,320	€ 70,534,156	€ 41,456,996	€ 14,601,000	€ 126,592,152
UL	€ 52,024,607	€ 30,021,549	€ 6,553,800	€ 88,599,956	€ 39,441,038	€ 35,293,504	€ 11,253,000	€ 85,987,542
MIC	€ 11,595,096	€ 8,508,315	€ 2,106,900	€ 22,210,311	€ 9,788,413	€ 9,767,640	€ 3,598,500	€ 23,154,553
DCU	€ 35,198,746	€ 18,513,530	€ 4,803,300	€ 58,515,576	€ 28,199,247	€ 23,194,556	€ 8,349,000	€ 59,742,803
DCU/SPD	€ 12,233,043	€ 6,402,542	€ 1,546,200	€ 20,181,785	€ 10,973,708	€ 7,154,930	€ 2,596,500	€ 20,725,138

Questions - Written Answers

-			Estimated				Estimated	
	2009 Grant	2009 Fees	2008/09 Student Services Charge	2009 Total	2010 Grant	2010 Fees	2009/10 Student Services Charge	2010 Total
DCU/Mater Dei	€ 2,416,566	€ 1,130,480	€ 289,350	€ 3,836,396	€ 1,996,100	€ 1,439,272	€ 527,250	€ 3,962,622
NCAD	€ 9,966,471	€ 2,786,700	€ 641,700	€ 13,394,871	€ 8,684,724	€ 2,959,000	€ 1,108,500	€ 12,752,224
RIA	€ 3,890,500	€ -	€ -	€ 3,890,500	€ 3,525,500	€ -	€ -	€ 3,525,500
St. Angela's College	€ 4,675,841	€ 733,750	€ 423,900	€ 5,833,491	€ 3,918,854	€ 1,008,295	€ 654,000	€ 5,581,149
RCSI	€ 2,586,649	€ 2,179,581	€ 289,800	€ 5,056,030	€ 1,894,250	€ 2,320,848	€ 490,500	€ 4,705,598
Total	€ 542,422,296	€ 252,014,000	€ 56,925,450	€ 851,361,746	€ 420,170,356	€ 298,610,000	€ 99,006,750	€ 817,787,106

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-			Estimated				Estimated	
	2011 Grant	2011 Fees	2010/11 Student Services Charge	2011 Total	2012 Grant	2012 Fees	2011/12 Student Contribution	2012 Total
UCD	€ 91,810,552	€ 57,374,756	€ 19,170,000	€ 168,355,308	€ 85,568,782	€ 53,226,709	€ 26,388,000	€ 165,183,491
UCC	€ 65,199,883	€ 49,943,521	€ 16,377,000	€ 131,520,404	€ 60,820,545	€ 44,106,560	€ 21,974,000	€ 126,901,105
NUIG	€ 54,807,950	€ 41,605,892	€ 13,678,500	€ 110,092,342	€ 52,802,918	€ 39,363,972	€ 18,918,000	€ 111,084,890
NUIM/MU	€ 21,611,421	€ 25,632,265	€ 7,990,500	€ 55,234,186	€ 20,561,024	€ 23,557,251	€ 10,902,000	€ 55,020,275
TCD	€ 69,905,017	€ 41,384,230	€ 15,039,000	€ 126,328,247	€ 65,825,257	€ 39,330,604	€ 20,414,000	€ 125,569,861
UL	€ 37,727,510	€ 35,339,497	€ 11,512,500	€ 84,579,507	€ 42,823,244	€ 31,858,087	€ 15,232,000	€ 89,913,331
MIC	€ 8,805,264	€ 9,220,232	€ 3,562,500	€ 21,587,996	€ 8,849,915	€ 8,645,780	€ 4,816,000	€ 22,311,695
DCU	€ 29,515,573	€ 23,055,580	€ 8,493,000	€ 61,064,153	€ 29,427,554	€ 22,994,246	€ 12,012,000	€ 64,433,800
DCU/SPD	€ 9,026,596	€ 6,898,995	€ 2,599,500	€ 18,525,091	€ 9,039,325	€ 6,249,439	€ 3,416,000	€ 18,704,764
DCU/Mater Dei	€ 1,821,441	€ 1,360,560	€ 531,750	€ 3,713,751	€ 1,681,347	€ 1,302,680	€ 740,000	€ 3,724,027
NCAD	€ 8,223,667	€ 3,181,400	€ 1,102,500	€ 12,507,567	€ 7,410,694	€ 2,997,960	€ 1,501,000	€ 11,909,654
RIA	€ 3,285,500	€ -	€ -	€ 3,285,500	€ 3,108,500	€ -	€ -	€ 3,108,500
St. Angela's College	€ 5,236,195	€ 1,123,356	€ 636,000	€ 6,995,551	€ 4,929,715	€ 1,144,699	€ 892,000	€ 6,966,414
RCSI	€ 3,211,580	€ 2,468,506	€ 531,000	€ 6,211,086	€ 2,842,920	€ 2,525,356	€ 726,000	€ 6,094,276
Total	€ 410,188,149	€ 298,588,790	€ 101,223,750	€ 810,000,689	€ 395,691,740	€ 277,303,343	€ 137,931,000	€ 810,926,083

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-			Estimated				Estimated	
	2013 Grant	2013 Fees	2012/13 Student Contribution	2013 Total	2014 Grant	2014 Fees	2013/14 Student Contribution	2014 Total
UCD	€ 78,685,509	€ 46,281,190	€ 29,812,500	€ 154,779,199	€ 68,927,208	€ 44,893,833	€ 33,502,500	€ 147,323,541
UCC	€ 55,429,887	€ 40,571,382	€ 24,216,750	€ 120,218,019	€ 49,402,291	€ 34,951,815	€ 26,455,000	€ 110,809,106
NUIG	€ 50,365,019	€ 33,731,748	€ 21,348,000	€ 105,444,767	€ 43,146,929	€ 31,810,203	€ 23,102,500	€ 98,059,632
NUIM/MU	€ 23,192,011	€ 19,541,728	€ 12,609,000	€ 55,342,739	€ 20,317,724	€ 22,064,498	€ 14,680,000	€ 57,062,222
TCD	€ 60,844,986	€ 32,652,366	€ 23,143,500	€ 116,640,852	€ 53,592,864	€ 35,883,425	€ 25,767,500	€ 115,243,789
UL	€ 35,460,454	€ 26,996,773	€ 17,757,000	€ 80,214,227	€ 35,256,560	€ 29,342,006	€ 19,897,500	€ 84,496,066
MIC	€ 7,560,259	€ 6,791,020	€ 5,496,750	€ 19,848,029	€ 7,114,180	€ 7,144,489	€ 6,105,000	€ 20,363,669
DCU	€ 27,217,736	€ 23,130,077	€ 14,233,500	€ 64,581,313	€ 26,121,866	€ 18,787,070	€ 16,512,500	€ 61,421,436
DCU/SPD	€ 8,116,245	€ 5,054,615	€ 4,007,250	€ 17,178,110	€ 8,009,254	€ 5,550,832	€ 4,557,500	€ 18,117,586
DCU/Mater Dei	€ 1,611,669	€ 1,091,924	€ 825,750	€ 3,529,343	€ 1,396,478	€ 949,485	€ 846,250	€ 3,192,213
NCAD	€ 6,994,247	€ 2,806,417	€ 1,665,000	€ 11,465,664	€ 6,139,716	€ 2,781,384	€ 2,110,000	€ 11,031,100
RIA	€ 2,927,500	€ -	€ -	€ 2,927,500	€ 2,705,500	€ -	€ -	€ 2,705,500
St. Angela's College	€ 4,066,983	€ 1,427,536	€ 1,023,750	€ 6,518,269	€ 3,765,400	€ 1,271,965	€ 1,307,500	€ 6,344,865
RCSI	€ 2,736,480	€ 1,990,859	€ 852,750	€ 5,580,089	€ 2,657,520	€ 2,415,751	€ 970,000	€ 6,043,271
Total	€ 365,208,985	€ 242,067,635	€ 156,991,500	€ 764,268,120	€ 328,553,491	€ 237,846,756	€ 175,813,750	€ 742,213,997

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-			Estimated				Estimated	
	2015 Grant	2015 Fees	2014/15 Student Contribution	2015 Total	2016 Grant	2016 Fees	2015/16 Student Contribution	2016 Total
UCD	€ 64,129,511	€ 45,160,334	€ 36,954,500	€ 146,244,345	€ 63,901,004	€ 42,979,880	€ 40,539,000	€ 147,419,884
UCC	€ 46,805,087	€ 37,198,732	€ 29,768,750	€ 113,772,569	€ 47,419,342	€ 38,798,134	€ 33,720,000	€ 119,937,476
NUIG	€ 39,429,507	€ 31,912,993	€ 25,269,750	€ 96,612,250	€ 39,504,142	€ 32,345,560	€ 28,560,000	€ 100,409,702
NUIM/MU	€ 19,825,156	€ 22,959,474	€ 17,726,500	€ 60,511,130	€ 20,786,732	€ 22,459,889	€ 21,483,000	€ 64,729,621
TCD	€ 49,415,523	€ 34,861,611	€ 28,520,250	€ 112,797,384	€ 50,131,520	€ 33,026,082	€ 31,059,000	€ 114,216,602
UL	€ 32,992,677	€ 28,288,447	€ 22,244,750	€ 83,525,874	€ 36,265,930	€ 28,072,749	€ 25,275,000	€ 89,613,679
MIC	€ 8,614,026	€ 7,311,793	€ 6,888,750	€ 22,814,569	€ 9,347,853	€ 8,054,663	€ 8,910,000	€ 26,312,516
DCU	€ 24,438,398	€ 22,458,526	€ 19,327,000	€ 66,223,924	€ 30,797,578	€ 25,021,873	€ 24,600,000	€ 80,419,451
DCU/SPD	€ 9,481,034	€ 5,589,133	€ 4,977,500	€ 20,047,667	€ 9,324,112	€ 4,628,074	€ 4,752,000	€ 18,704,186
DCU/Mater Dei	€ 1,312,930	€ 997,678	€ 969,375	€ 3,279,983	€ 1,391,702	€ 620,194	€ 700,500	€ 2,712,396

Questions - Written Answers

-			Estimated				Estimated	
	2015 Grant	2015 Fees	2014/15 Student Contribution	2015 Total	2016 Grant	2016 Fees	2015/16 Student Contribution	2016 Total
NCAD	€ 6,680,368	€ 4,501,585	€ 2,697,750	€ 13,879,703	€ 6,386,919	€ 4,059,133	€ 3,045,000	€ 13,491,052
RIA	€ 2,725,500	€ -	€ -	€ 2,725,500	€ 2,831,015	€ -	€ -	€ 2,831,015
St. Angela's College	€ 3,838,466	€ 1,415,567	€ 1,518,000	€ 6,772,033	€ 3,720,767	€ 1,496,311	€ 1,689,000	€ 6,906,078
RCSI	€ 2,491,000	€ 2,045,947	€ 948,750	€ 5,485,697	€ 2,504,000	€ 1,869,866	€ 1,032,000	€ 5,405,866
Total	€ 312,179,183	€ 244,701,820	€ 197,811,625	€ 754,692,628	€ 324,312,616	€ 243,432,408	€ 225,364,500	€ 793,109,524

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-			Estimated	
	2017 Grant	2017 Fees	2016/17 Student Contribution	2017 Total
UCD	€ 64,640,801	€ 44,256,972	€ 40,536,000	€ 149,433,773
UCC	€ 49,866,481	€ 41,154,920	€ 34,740,000	€ 125,761,401
NUIG	€ 41,398,321	€ 32,782,327	€ 28,908,000	€ 103,088,648
NUIM/MU	€ 21,879,826	€ 24,429,869	€ 22,101,000	€ 68,410,695
TCD	€ 50,700,433	€ 33,949,362	€ 30,924,000	€ 115,573,795
UL	€ 42,453,816	€ 29,759,818	€ 26,487,000	€ 98,700,634
MIC	€ 10,038,139	€ 8,242,680	€ 9,411,000	€ 27,691,819
DCU	€ 31,888,014	€ 31,927,271	€ 31,290,000	€ 95,105,284
DCU/SPD	€ 8,543,331	€ -	€ -	€ 8,543,331
DCU/Mater Dei	€ 1,457,588	€ -	€ -	€ 1,457,588
NCAD	€ 6,976,749	€ 4,237,333	€ 2,457,000	€ 13,671,082
RIA	€ 3,004,922	€ -	€ -	€ 3,004,922
St. Angela's College	€ 4,292,579	€ 1,611,670	€ 1,668,000	€ 7,572,249
RCSI	€ 2,708,700	€ 1,968,777	€ 1,023,000	€ 5,700,477
Total	€ 339,849,700	€ 254,320,999	€ 229,545,000	€ 823,715,698

IoT allocation 2007-2017

-			Estimated				Estimated	
	2007 Core Grant	2007 Fees	2006/07 Student Services Charge	2007 Total	2008 Core Grant	2008 Fees	2007/08 Student Services Charge	2008 Total
Athlone IoT	€ 24,132,749	€ 3,811,658	€ 2,132,000	€ 30,076,407	€ 24,851,576	€ 3,949,592	€ 2,074,050	€ 30,875,218
IoT Blanchardstown	€ 11,872,575	€ 1,566,517	€ 779,200	€ 14,218,292	€ 12,229,964	€ 1,951,193	€ 772,200	€ 14,953,357
IoT Carlow	€ 20,157,319	€ 4,262,495	€ 1,942,400	€ 26,362,214	€ 21,954,748	€ 4,178,050	€ 1,958,550	€ 28,091,348
Cork IoT	€ 54,037,586	€ 8,290,413	€ 4,323,200	€ 66,651,199	€ 55,502,090	€ 9,449,825	€ 4,451,700	€ 69,403,615
Dundalk IoT	€ 22,836,884	€ 4,329,153	€ 2,364,800	€ 29,530,836	€ 23,601,401	€ 4,238,713	€ 2,444,475	€ 30,284,589
Dun Laoghaire IAD&T	€ 11,704,547	€ 3,211,999	€ 1,134,400	€ 16,050,945	€ 12,113,839	€ 3,414,061	€ 1,174,800	€ 16,702,700

16 January 2018

Galway-Mayo IoT	€ 36,101,098	€ 6,720,870	€ 3,440,800	€ 46,262,768	€ 36,976,405	€ 7,302,328	€ 3,538,425	€ 47,817,158
Letterkenny IoT	€ 19,522,891	€ 2,287,036	€ 1,446,400	€ 23,256,327	€ 20,106,021	€ 2,740,280	€ 1,607,100	€ 24,453,401
Limerick IoT	€ 24,661,720	€ 5,645,361	€ 2,701,600	€ 33,008,680	€ 25,262,982	€ 6,883,020	€ 2,781,900	€ 34,927,902
Tipperary Institute				€ -				€ -
IoT Sligo	€ 23,899,521	€ 5,410,226	€ 2,670,800	€ 31,980,547	€ 24,433,381	€ 6,115,641	€ 2,661,450	€ 33,210,472
IoT Tallaght	€ 21,957,347	€ 2,843,397	€ 1,547,200	€ 26,347,943	€ 22,528,121	€ 3,119,805	€ 1,382,700	€ 27,030,626
IoT Tralee	€ 20,405,743	€ 2,816,413	€ 1,643,200	€ 24,865,355	€ 21,065,405	€ 2,309,260	€ 1,479,225	€ 24,853,890
Waterford IoT	€ 38,989,791	€ 9,661,257	€ 4,028,800	€ 52,679,848	€ 40,134,565	€ 10,203,661	€ 4,386,525	€ 54,724,751
D.I.T.	€ 116,223,105	€ 17,493,435	€ 6,760,000	€ 140,476,540	€ 119,759,504	€ 18,117,537	€ 6,805,425	€ 144,682,466
TOTAL IOTs	€ 446,502,875	€ 78,350,226	€ 36,914,800	€ 561,767,901	€ 460,520,002	€ 83,972,966	€ 37,518,525	€ 582,011,493

2: IoT allocation 2007-2017

-			Estimated				Estimated	
	2009 Core Grant	2009 Fees	2008/09 Student Services Charge	2009 Total	2010 Core Grant	2010 Fees	2009/10 Student Services Charge	2010 Total
Athlone IoT	€ 23,768,297	€ 3,505,742	€ 2,289,600	€ 29,563,639	€ 19,727,283	€ 4,736,492	€ 4,435,500	€ 28,899,275
IoT Blanchardstown	€ 11,981,165	€ 1,820,847	€ 979,200	€ 14,781,212	€ 9,678,354	€ 2,720,340	€ 2,029,500	€ 14,428,194
IoT Carlow	€ 20,044,556	€ 3,709,969	€ 2,224,800	€ 25,979,325	€ 16,739,940	€ 5,443,282	€ 4,048,500	€ 26,231,722
Cork IoT	€ 52,640,903	€ 8,388,454	€ 5,088,600	€ 66,117,957	€ 44,308,634	€ 12,067,597	€ 9,366,000	€ 65,742,231
Dundalk IoT	€ 22,361,545	€ 3,750,993	€ 2,839,500	€ 28,952,038	€ 18,615,407	€ 6,265,154	€ 5,292,000	€ 30,172,561
Dun Laoghaire IAD&T	€ 11,571,285	€ 3,034,731	€ 1,380,600	€ 15,986,616	€ 9,554,668	€ 4,791,174	€ 2,701,500	€ 17,047,342
Galway-Mayo IoT	€ 35,091,893	€ 6,463,016	€ 3,853,800	€ 45,408,709	€ 29,369,853	€ 7,146,943	€ 6,859,500	€ 43,376,296
Letterkenny IoT	€ 19,186,442	€ 2,414,155	€ 1,944,000	€ 23,544,597	€ 15,750,574	€ 3,824,874	€ 3,654,000	€ 23,229,448
Limerick IoT	€ 24,131,047	€ 6,115,206	€ 3,151,800	€ 33,398,053	€ 20,226,867	€ 7,182,833	€ 5,691,000	€ 33,100,700
Tipperary Institute								€ -
IoT Sligo	€ 23,221,088	€ 5,460,610	€ 3,012,300	€ 31,693,998	€ 19,386,056	€ 6,698,642	€ 5,568,000	€ 31,652,698
IoT Tallaght	€ 21,601,142	€ 2,772,667	€ 1,540,800	€ 25,914,609	€ 17,988,618	€ 3,730,441	€ 3,072,000	€ 24,791,059
IoT Tralee	€ 20,069,533	€ 2,038,699	€ 1,669,500	€ 23,777,732	€ 16,418,860	€ 3,608,175	€ 3,121,500	€ 23,148,535
Waterford IoT	€ 38,073,182	€ 9,069,804	€ 4,887,000	€ 52,029,985	€ 31,892,806	€ 9,798,336	€ 8,098,500	€ 49,789,642
D.I.T.	€ 113,185,418	€ 16,078,613	€ 7,651,800	€ 136,915,831	€ 94,425,340	€ 19,661,838	€ 13,858,500	€ 127,945,678
Total IoTs	€ 436,927,495	€ 74,623,505	€ 42,513,300	€ 554,064,300	€ 364,083,261	€ 97,676,121	€ 77,796,000	€ 539,555,382

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Questions - Written Answers

			<i>Estimated</i>				<i>Estimated</i>	
-	2011 Core Grant	2011 Fees	2010/11 Student Services Charge	2011 Total	2012 Core Grant	2012 Fees	2011/12 Student Contribution	2012 Total
Athlone IoT	€ 19,632,248	€ 4,346,432	€ 4,813,500	€ 28,792,180	€ 20,048,878	€ 3,584,403	€ 6,412,000	€ 30,045,281
IoT Blanchardstown	€ 9,221,117	€ 2,949,290	€ 2,458,500	€ 14,628,907	€ 9,173,587	€ 2,565,254	€ 3,696,000	€ 15,434,841
IoT Carlow	€ 15,801,864	€ 5,614,084	€ 4,995,000	€ 26,410,948	€ 16,093,189	€ 4,465,562	€ 6,360,000	€ 26,918,751
Cork IoT	€ 41,992,336	€ 10,453,532	€ 9,544,500	€ 61,990,367	€ 43,248,689	€ 9,557,823	€ 12,292,000	€ 65,098,512
Dundalk IoT	€ 20,974,254	€ 5,144,025	€ 5,920,500	€ 32,038,779	€ 21,119,918	€ 4,827,667	€ 6,956,000	€ 32,903,585
Dun Laoghaire IAD&T	€ 8,596,769	€ 4,165,247	€ 2,950,500	€ 15,712,516	€ 8,357,915	€ 3,242,222	€ 3,786,000	€ 15,386,137
Galway-Mayo IoT	€ 27,837,562	€ 7,435,183	€ 7,243,500	€ 42,516,245	€ 27,583,927	€ 5,201,113	€ 9,692,000	€ 42,477,040
Letterkenny IoT	€ 16,162,338	€ 3,502,894	€ 3,448,500	€ 23,113,732	€ 15,211,281	€ 2,100,250	€ 4,820,000	€ 22,131,531
Limerick IoT	€ 19,211,964	€ 7,163,394	€ 6,076,500	€ 32,451,857	€ 19,621,344	€ 5,436,899	€ 8,780,000	€ 33,838,243
Tipperary Institute								
IoT Sligo	€ 18,458,475	€ 6,397,667	€ 5,667,000	€ 30,523,141	€ 18,833,259	€ 4,299,956	€ 7,272,000	€ 30,405,215
IoT Tallaght	€ 16,209,212	€ 4,450,725	€ 3,745,500	€ 24,405,438	€ 15,540,863	€ 3,659,777	€ 5,044,000	€ 24,244,640
IoT Tralee	€ 17,004,040	€ 3,438,540	€ 3,294,000	€ 23,736,580	€ 16,171,259	€ 2,275,969	€ 4,522,000	€ 22,969,228
Waterford IoT	€ 33,098,814	€ 10,403,871	€ 9,015,000	€ 52,517,685	€ 33,449,806	€ 7,684,199	€ 11,434,000	€ 52,568,005
D.I.T.	€ 84,480,366	€ 19,535,117	€ 14,461,500	€ 118,476,983	€ 80,926,750	€ 15,684,166	€ 19,908,000	€ 116,518,916
TOTAL IOTs	€ 348,681,358	€ 95,000,001	€ 83,634,000	€ 527,315,359	€ 345,380,666	€ 74,585,260	€ 110,974,000	€ 530,939,926

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			<i>Estimated</i>				<i>Estimated</i>	
-	2013 Core Grant	2013 Fees	2012/13 Student Contribution	2013 Total	2014 Core Grant	2014 Fees	2013/14 Student Contribution	2014 Total
Athlone IoT	€ 19,314,649	€ 2,511,109	€ 7,395,750	€ 29,221,508	€ 17,710,081	€ 2,197,381	€ 8,027,500	€ 27,934,962
IoT Blanchardstown	€ 9,298,387	€ 1,729,123	€ 4,632,750	€ 15,660,260	€ 8,741,082	€ 2,066,945	€ 5,537,500	€ 16,345,527
IoT Carlow	€ 16,113,520	€ 3,125,468	€ 7,436,250	€ 26,675,238	€ 15,003,952	€ 3,228,264	€ 8,113,750	€ 26,345,965
Cork IoT	€ 40,603,668	€ 6,160,373	€ 14,080,500	€ 60,844,541	€ 36,531,204	€ 6,000,109	€ 15,885,000	€ 58,416,313
Dundalk IoT	€ 18,967,627	€ 2,142,633	€ 7,935,750	€ 29,046,010	€ 17,284,775	€ 2,696,982	€ 8,685,000	€ 28,666,757
Dun Laoghaire IAD&T	€ 8,203,080	€ 2,010,297	€ 4,428,000	€ 14,641,377	€ 7,533,168	€ 2,234,250	€ 4,762,500	€ 14,529,918

			<i>Estimated</i>				<i>Estimated</i>	
-	2013 Core Grant	2013 Fees	2012/13 Student Contribution	2013 Total	2014 Core Grant	2014 Fees	2013/14 Student Contribution	2014 Total
Galway-Mayo IoT	€ 26,092,741	€ 3,466,187	€ 10,738,125	€ 40,297,053	€ 24,260,088	€ 3,342,049	€ 11,737,500	€ 39,339,636
Letterkenny IoT	€ 13,660,835	€ 1,598,052	€ 5,656,500	€ 20,915,387	€ 12,767,211	€ 1,639,092	€ 6,315,000	€ 20,721,303
Limerick IoT	€ 19,358,567	€ 3,707,435	€ 10,170,000	€ 33,236,002	€ 17,798,168	€ 3,411,162	€ 11,017,500	€ 32,226,830
Tipperary Institute	€ 7,567,000			€ 7,567,000	€ 7,057,500			€ 7,057,500
IoT Sligo	€ 18,891,886	€ 3,027,337	€ 8,199,000	€ 30,118,223	€ 18,140,538	€ 2,757,863	€ 9,125,000	€ 30,023,401
IoT Tallaght	€ 14,126,602	€ 2,057,833	€ 5,501,250	€ 21,685,685	€ 12,793,193	€ 2,484,382	€ 6,302,500	€ 21,580,075
IoT Tralee	€ 14,561,811	€ 1,394,869	€ 4,909,500	€ 20,866,180	€ 13,072,929	€ 1,398,808	€ 5,285,000	€ 19,756,737
Waterford IoT	€ 32,246,348	€ 5,612,383	€ 13,133,250	€ 50,991,981	€ 29,001,133	€ 5,325,110	€ 14,495,000	€ 48,821,242
D.I.T.	€ 73,008,688	€ 11,777,927	€ 23,413,500	€ 108,200,115	€ 63,430,537	€ 12,021,102	€ 26,872,500	€ 102,324,139
TOTAL IOTs	€ 332,015,409	€ 50,321,026	€ 127,630,125	€ 509,966,560	€ 301,125,558	€ 50,803,497	€ 142,161,250	€ 494,090,305

			<i>Estimated</i>				<i>Estimated</i>	
-	2015 Core Grant	2015 Fees	2014/15 Student Contribution	2015 Total	2016 Core Grant	2016 Fees	2015/16 Student Contribution	2016 Total
Athlone IoT	€ 18,219,841	€ 1,555,101	€ 9,113,500	€ 28,888,442	€ 18,348,766	€ 1,503,381	€ 9,363,000	€ 29,215,147
IoT Blanchardstown	€ 9,230,434	€ 1,574,562	€ 5,931,750	€ 16,736,746	€ 9,667,412	€ 1,247,617	€ 6,414,000	€ 17,329,029
IoT Carlow	€ 15,706,199	€ 2,592,441	€ 8,987,000	€ 27,285,640	€ 16,888,132	€ 2,205,863	€ 9,948,000	€ 29,041,995
Cork IoT	€ 38,497,011	€ 4,360,038	€ 17,949,250	€ 60,806,299	€ 39,566,389	€ 4,496,599	€ 19,749,000	€ 63,811,988
Dundalk IoT	€ 17,874,262	€ 1,392,112	€ 9,652,500	€ 28,918,874	€ 18,249,384	€ 1,719,738	€ 10,653,000	€ 30,622,122
Dun Laoghaire IAD&T	€ 7,308,959	€ 1,797,629	€ 5,038,000	€ 14,144,588	€ 8,105,285	€ 1,319,042	€ 5,583,000	€ 15,007,327
Galway-Mayo IoT	€ 24,412,226	€ 2,522,320	€ 13,252,250	€ 40,186,796	€ 24,234,562	€ 2,837,128	€ 14,331,000	€ 41,402,690
Letterkenny IoT	€ 12,886,087	€ 1,103,044	€ 7,414,000	€ 21,403,131	€ 13,223,361	€ 1,003,430	€ 8,157,000	€ 22,383,791
Limerick IoT	€ 18,840,396	€ 2,667,188	€ 12,388,750	€ 33,896,334	€ 25,148,931	€ 2,825,391	€ 13,887,000	€ 41,861,322
Tipperary Institute	€ 6,865,000			€ 6,865,000				
IoT Sligo	€ 18,514,928	€ 2,024,270	€ 9,443,500	€ 29,982,698	€ 19,348,442	€ 1,737,112	€ 9,975,000	€ 31,060,554
IoT Tallaght	€ 13,393,107	€ 1,924,356	€ 6,792,500	€ 22,109,963	€ 14,075,326	€ 1,579,635	€ 7,416,000	€ 23,070,961
IoT Tralee	€ 13,146,860	€ 1,005,054	€ 5,780,500	€ 19,932,414	€ 13,304,199	€ 926,717	€ 6,486,000	€ 20,716,916
Waterford IoT	€ 29,623,942	€ 3,300,489	€ 14,907,750	€ 47,832,181	€ 30,141,598	€ 3,156,390	€ 16,083,000	€ 49,380,988
D.I.T.	€ 63,376,005	€ 9,524,288	€ 29,933,750	€ 102,834,042	€ 64,891,305	€ 8,526,755	€ 33,114,000	€ 106,532,060
TOTAL IOTs	€ 307,895,257	€ 37,342,890	€ 156,585,000	€ 501,823,146	€ 315,193,092	€ 35,084,798	€ 171,159,000	€ 521,436,890

	<i>Draft</i>	<i>Draft</i>	<i>Estimated</i>	
	2017 Core Grant	2017 Fees	2016/17 Student Contribution	2017 Total
Athlone IoT	€ 19,899,532	€ 1,399,926	€ 9,300,000	€ 30,599,458
IoT Blanchardstown	€ 11,012,832	€ 1,152,500	€ 6,462,000	€ 18,627,332
IoT Carlow	€ 19,020,543	€ 1,967,546	€ 9,795,000	€ 30,783,089
Cork IoT	€ 43,303,927	€ 4,312,872	€ 20,622,000	€ 68,238,799
Dundalk IoT	€ 20,209,268	€ 1,535,422	€ 10,464,000	€ 32,208,690
Dun Laoghaire IAD&T	€ 9,136,078	€ 1,262,802	€ 5,691,000	€ 16,089,880
Galway-Mayo IoT	€ 26,235,086	€ 2,780,416	€ 14,436,000	€ 43,451,502
Letterkenny IoT	€ 15,467,359	€ 1,149,469	€ 7,782,000	€ 24,398,828
Limerick IoT	€ 27,401,474	€ 2,553,354	€ 13,626,000	€ 43,580,828
Tipperary Institute				
IoT Sligo	€ 20,218,028	€ 1,576,988	€ 9,792,000	€ 31,587,016
IoT Tallaght	€ 15,502,061	€ 1,406,570	€ 7,353,000	€ 24,261,631
IoT Tralee	€ 14,401,849	€ 1,352,768	€ 5,889,000	€ 21,643,617
Waterford IoT	€ 32,307,150	€ 4,577,684	€ 15,675,000	€ 52,559,834
D.I.T.	€ 68,685,736	€ 7,511,843	€ 33,288,000	€ 109,485,579
TOTAL IOTs	€ 342,800,923	€ 34,540,160	€ 170,175,000	€ 547,516,083

Third Level Admissions Data

317. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the enrolment figures for Letterkenny Institute of Technology by graduate and undergraduate in each of the years 2007 to 2017, including percentage changes, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54456/17]

318. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the enrolment figures for each higher education institute by graduate and undergraduate in each of the years 2007 to 2017, including percentage changes, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54457/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 317 and 318 together.

I attach, for the information of the Deputy, a table showing details of the enrolment figures for each higher education institution, by graduate and undergraduate students, for the years 2007/08 to 2016/17, including percentage changes for each year.

Institute Type / Institute / Course Level, Enrolment Numbers	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017
Colleges										
Mary Immaculate College, Limerick										
Postgraduate	562	570	511	469	447	456	478	556	578	533

Institute Type / Institute / Course Level, Enrolment Numbers	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017
Undergraduate	2392	2452	2547	2558	2514	2588	2612	2623	3109	3265
Mary Immaculate College, Limerick Total	2954	3022	3058	3027	2961	3044	3090	3179	3687	3798
Mater Dei Institute, Clonliffe Road, Dublin 3.										
Postgraduate										
Undergraduate	397	595	622	591	511	507	471	451	283	
Mater Dei Institute, Clonliffe Road, Dublin 3. Total	460	671	725	726	655	633	581	557	398	
National College of Art and Design										
Postgraduate	132	126	190	169	197	188	171	148	153	143
Undergraduate	822	918	984	976	965	967	1053	1163	1224	1009
National College of Art and Design Total	954	1044	1174	1145	1162	1155	1224	1311	1377	1152
Royal College of Surgeons										
Postgraduate	835	1000	941	1267	1045	1030	928	1377	1162	1186
Undergraduate	1883	1521	1955	2043	2406	2288	2373	2309	2257	2300
Royal College of Surgeons Total	2718	2521	2896	3310	3451	3318	3301	3686	3419	3486
St. Angela's College of Home Economics, Sligo										
Postgraduate	229	253	329	266	238	434	494	575	465	436
Undergraduate	524	649	525	591	698	653	688	740	813	836
St. Angela's College of Home Economics, Sligo Total	753	902	854	857	936	1087	1182	1315	1278	1272
St. Patrick's Col- lege Drumcondra										
Postgraduate	754	958	860	756	708	552	575	533	527	
Undergraduate	1781	1813	1810	1838	1827	1849	1899	1850	1643	
St. Patrick's Col- lege Drumcondra Total	2535	2771	2670	2594	2535	2401	2474	2383	2170	
Colleges Total	10374	10931	11377	11659	11700	11638	11852	12431	12329	9708
Institutes of Tech- nology										
Athlone IT										
Postgraduate	152	194	285	446	376	436	434	466	435	342
Undergraduate	4104	3560	4359	4515	4356	4399	4492	4530	4442	4183
Athlone IT Total	4256	3754	4644	4961	4732	4835	4926	4996	4877	4525
Cork IT										
Postgraduate	371	380	653	422	541	616	706	784	707	758
Undergraduate	8368	8010	8529	8888	9068	9145	9439	9539	9812	10012
Cork IT Total	8739	8390	9182	9310	9609	9761	10145	10323	10519	10770
Dublin Institute of Technology										
Postgraduate	1873	1684	2461	2436	2499	2422	2710	2842	2827	2799
Undergraduate	11876	12372	13434	13542	14251	14578	15526	15697	16496	16269

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Institute Type / Institute / Course Level, Enrolment Numbers	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017
Dublin Institute of Technology Total	13749	14056	15895	15978	16750	17000	18236	18539	19323	19068
Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Tech- nology										
Postgraduate	105	165	160	144	88	100	122	121	202	251
Undergraduate	1584	1719	2022	2061	2176	2161	2121	2096	2063	2061
Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, De- sign and Technol- ogy Total	1689	1884	2182	2205	2264	2261	2243	2217	2265	2312
Dundalk IT										
Postgraduate	154	160	155	164	172	139	117	164	171	229
Undergraduate	3933	4074	4411	4523	4397	4528	4523	4622	4828	4748
Dundalk IT Total	4087	4234	4566	4687	4569	4667	4640	4786	4999	4977
Galway-Mayo IT										
Postgraduate	111	104	137	168	120	158	116	140	193	286
Undergraduate	5880	5758	6342	6421	6325	5966	5790	6062	6234	6096
Galway-Mayo IT Total	5991	5862	6479	6589	6445	6124	5906	6202	6427	6382
IT Blanchardstown										
Postgraduate	64	51	67	47	30	91	142	129	106	119
Undergraduate	1601	1640	2035	2398	2825	3033	3114	3106	3130	2968
IT Blanchardstown Total	1665	1691	2102	2445	2855	3124	3256	3235	3236	3087
IT Carlow										
Postgraduate	34	49	116	168	140	191	436	539	620	640
Undergraduate	3272	4148	4166	4704	4911	5180	5903	5682	6200	6334
IT Carlow Total	3306	4197	4282	4872	5051	5371	6339	6221	6820	6974
IT Sligo										
Postgraduate	288	55	95	133	109	94	92	80	73	77
Undergraduate	4196	3719	3963	4210	4246	4037	3869	3893	3747	3621
IT Sligo Total	4484	3774	4058	4343	4355	4131	3961	3973	3820	3698
IT Tallaght										
Postgraduate	562	191	211	144	82	85	189	297	200	228
Undergraduate	2761	3354	3694	3994	3956	4266	4532	4788	4820	4781
IT Tallaght Total	3323	3545	3905	4138	4038	4351	4721	5085	5020	5009
IT Tralee										
Postgraduate	107	131	81	69	88	71	90	106	134	107
Undergraduate	2140	2336	2585	2736	2793	2822	2725	2896	2756	2731
IT Tralee Total	2247	2467	2666	2805	2881	2893	2815	3002	2890	2838
Letterkenny IT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Postgraduate	41	73	158	136	142	148	210	188	264	282
Undergraduate	2124	2794	3010	2962	2774	3145	3179	3399	3556	3571
Letterkenny IT Total	2165	2867	3168	3098	2916	3293	3389	3587	3820	3853
Limerick IT										
Postgraduate	65	73	111	168	167	200	295	276	252	278
Undergraduate	3380	3918	4713	4843	5445	5476	5676	5799	5847	5654
Limerick IT Total	3445	3991	4824	5011	5612	5676	5971	6075	6099	5932
Tipperary Institute										
Postgraduate	0	1	0	0						
Undergraduate	727	716	721	1017						

Institute Type / Institute / Course Level, Enrolment Numbers	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017
Tipperary Institute Total	727	717	721	1017						
Waterford IT										
Postgraduate	797	941	847	791	810	928	868	792	852	934
Undergraduate	6742	7012	6993	7400	7215	7379	7333	7188	6940	6616
Waterford IT Total	7539	7953	7840	8191	8025	8307	8201	7980	7792	7550
Institutes of Tech- nology Total	67412	69382	76514	79650	80102	81794	84749	86221	87907	86975
Universities										
Dublin City Uni- versity										
Postgraduate	2718	2838	3192	3013	2621	2602	2552	2402	2362	3325
Undergraduate	6515	6802	6909	7225	7722	8158	8334	8516	10310	12608
Dublin City Univer- sity Total	9233	9640	10101	10238	10343	10760	10886	10918	12672	15933
Maynooth Uni- versity										
Postgraduate	1277	1588	1851	1872	2099	1955	1992	1980	2000	2174
Undergraduate	5364	5841	6199	6609	7902	7784	8031	8519	9119	9747
Maynooth Univer- sity Total	6641	7429	8050	8481	10001	9739	10023	10499	11119	11921
National University of Ireland, Galway										
Postgraduate	3462	3663	3944	3757	3647	3539	3573	3618	3834	3968
Undergraduate	11919	12501	12822	13191	13379	13649	13404	13598	14023	13735
National University of Ireland, Galway Total	15381	16164	16766	16948	17026	17188	16977	17216	17857	17703
Trinity College Dublin										
Postgraduate	4552	4781	5017	4776	4778	4493	4278	4369	4626	4707
Undergraduate	10417	10707	11156	11492	11599	11365	11422	11624	11672	11772
Trinity College Dublin Total	14969	15488	16173	16268	16377	15858	15700	15993	16298	16479
University College Cork										
Postgraduate	3074	3636	3893	3817	3871	4046	4150	4293	4395	4449
Undergraduate	12804	12766	13113	13400	14217	14474	14779	14755	15126	15351
University College Cork Total	15878	16402	17006	17217	18088	18520	18929	19048	19521	19800
University College Dublin										
Postgraduate	5639	6005	6993	7003	7201	7483	7578	7489	7716	8052
Undergraduate	16170	16507	16667	16605	16321	16462	17020	17322	17938	18200
University College Dublin Total	21809	22512	23660	23608	23522	23945	24598	24811	25654	26252
University of Limerick										
Postgraduate	2078	2088	2191	2256	2256	2618	2903	2695	2725	2434
Undergraduate	8046	8474	8654	8915	8926	9219	9473	9490	10521	11038
University of Lim- erick Total	10124	10562	10845	11171	11182	11837	12376	12185	13246	13472
Universities Total	94035	98197	102601	103931	106539	107847	109489	110670	116367	121560
Overall Total	171821	178510	190492	195240	198341	201279	206090	209322	216603	218243

Third Level Admissions Data

319. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the overall non-progression rates at each higher education institute for each of the years 2007 to 2017, by institute in both student numbers and percentage terms, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54458/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I have attached, for the information of the Deputy, details of institutional non-progression rates, which reflect whether a student is present in his/her institution in the year following entry.

The data is in two tables, the first of which gives data for the periods 2007/08 to 2008/09; 2012/13 to 2013/14; and 2013/14 to 2014/15 which has been published by the Higher Education Authority (HEA).

The second table gives data for the period 2010/11 to 2011/12, which has also been published by the HEA, but has been presented in a different format.

	2010/11 to 2011/12	2010/11 to 2011/12	2010/11 to 2011/12
Institute	Non-Progression % Level 8	Non-Progression % Level 7	Non-Progression % Level 6
Dublin City University	9%		
University College Dublin	7%		
University College Cork	8%		
NUI, Galway	9%		
University of Limerick	11%		
Maynooth University	10%		
Trinity College Dublin	8%		
Athlone IT	18%	24%	27%
IT Blanchardstown	20%	32%	46%
Cork IT	15%	22%	31%
IT Carlow	13%	23%	29%
Dundalk IT	17%	33%	20%
Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology	14%	32%	N/A
Dublin Institute of Technology	19%	32%	24%
Galway-Mayo IT	24%	31%	37%
Limerick IT	18%	28%	29%
Letterkenny IT	22%	33%	25%
IT Sligo	20%	28%	34%
IT Tallaght	19%	24%	38%
IT Tralee	17%	22%	33%

	2010/11 to 2011/12	2010/11 to 2011/12	2010/11 to 2011/12
Institute	Non-Progression % Level 8	Non-Progression % Level 7	Non-Progression % Level 6
Waterford IT	15%	24%	35%
St.Patrick's College Drumcondra	2%		
Mary Immaculate College Limerick	5%		
Mater Dei Institute of Education	6%		
National College of Art and Design	7%		
Others	4%		
	2007/08 to 2008/09	2012/13 to 2013/14	2013/14 to 2014/15
Institute	Non-Progression* (% (Number))	Non-Progression* (% (Number))	Non-Progression* (% (Number))
Dublin City Univer- sity	11% (191)	12% (272)	13% (304)
University College Dublin	9% (325)	11% (440)	10% (429)
University College Cork	9% (296)	10% (303)	10% (333)
NUI, Galway	9% (236)	13% (385)	12% (363)
University of Lim- erick	9% (179)	13% (294)	12% (271)
Maynooth University	10% (162)	9% (175)	9% (199)
Trinity College Dublin	8% (212)	7% (206)	9% (242)
Athlone IT	21% (175)	21% (250)	21% (224)
IT Blanchardstown	24% (80)	29% (232)	29% (256)
Cork IT	21% (392)	20% (347)	22% (377)
IT Carlow	24% (232)	21% (240)	17% (185)
Dundalk IT	24% (297)	21% (246)	18% (219)
Dun Laoghaire Insti- tute of Art, Deisgn and Technology	16% (82)	15% (83)	17% (92)
Dublin Institute of Technology	16% (400)	20% (695)	17% (592)
Galway-Mayo IT	28% (482)	29% (445)	25% (398)
Limerick IT	23% (220)	24% (330)	27% (401)
Letterkenny IT	22% (174)	24% (217)	25% (211)
IT Sligo	23% (231)	25% (311)	25% (279)
IT Tallaght	30% (183)	23% (186)	24% (197)
IT Tralee	18% (93)	27% (200)	22% (155)
Waterford IT	22% (384)	21% (414)	19% (363)

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	2007/08 to 2008/09	2012/13 to 2013/14	2013/14 to 2014/15
Institute	Non-Progression* (% (Number))	Non-Progression* (% (Number))	Non-Progression* (% (Number))
St.Patrick's College Drumcondra	3% (16)	4% (25)	4% (25)
Mary Immaculate College Limerick	5% (33)	5% (35)	4% (31)
Mater Dei Institute of Education	4% (3)	12% (11)	9% (7)
National College of Art and Design	5% (7)	6% (11)	10% (7)
St. Angela's College, Sligo	N/A	10% (15)	13% (22)

*Note: Non-progression rates refer to all NFQ levels (level 8 for Universities and Colleges and level 6,7 and 8 for Institutes of Technology).

Third Level Staff

320. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the whole-time equivalent positions at Letterkenny Institute of Technology by category in each of the years 2007 to 2017, in tabular form [54459/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I attach for the Deputy's information details of the whole time equivalent staffing numbers for Letterkenny Institute of Technology as at 31 December for the years 2007 to 2017.

Letterkenny IT - Whole Time Equivalent Staff

	Core Academic	Core Non academic	Other Academic	Other Non academic	Total
Dec-07	183.76	150.66	16.00	21.10	371.52
Dec-08	184.53	131.38	13.00	12.34	341.25
Dec-09	163.34	143.99	14.32	33.63	355.28
Dec-10	170.78	141.09	16.58	33.74	362.19
Dec-11	176.73	134.19	2.00	22.56	335.48
Dec-12	177.96	129.94	2.00	22.12	332.02
Dec-13	183.85	126.65	2.00	28.81	341.31
Dec-14	179.84	132.01	2.00	24.86	338.71
Dec-15	187.20	127.58	2.00	32.21	348.99
Dec-16	197.63	129.51	2.00	26.52	355.66
Dec-17	203.55	130.74	2.00	24.96	361.25

DEIS Status

321. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the primary and post-primary schools in County Donegal which enjoy DEIS status; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54460/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The list of primary and post primary schools that have DEIS status, including those requested by the Deputy in County Donegal, is available on my Department's website at the following link: https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/deis_school_list.xls

Traveller Education

322. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to restore the position of resource teachers for Travellers in view of the fact that they are now recognised as a separate ethnic group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54468/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The policy of my Department in relation to Traveller education is underpinned by the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021 which was launched by my colleague the Minister Justice and Equality in June 2017. The strategy was developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders including Traveller representative groups.

Education provision for Traveller children in school has been mainstreamed in accordance with my Department's policy in this area. To assist with full implementation of mainstreaming, a number of Traveller-specific supports have been retained in the system. These include 141 additional learning support teaching posts and a higher level of pupil capitation to support some 11,000 identified Traveller pupils in primary and post-primary education. The current cost of this additional provision is approximately €10 million annually.

It is important to note that additional resources provided in the education system are allocated on the basis of identified individual educational need rather than that of ethnic or cultural background.

Schools Building Projects Status

323. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a school project (details supplied) in County Kildare. [54481/17]

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 is currently finalising the stage 2b documentation and expects to submit the finalised Stage 2b Report to my Department shortly.

Upon receipt and review of this outstanding documentation, my Department will revert to the school's Board of Management with regard to the further progression of the project at that time.

Schools Building Projects

324. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address a mat-

ter regarding the retaining wall of a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54486/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department has sought an update from the Consultant Architect working on the major building project to which the Deputy refers and understands that there is a low wall retaining a planter for shrubs and plants opposite the blank gable to classrooms 5 and 13. It ranges in height from approx. 600mm to 775mm. It runs parallel to the existing retaining wall to the southern boundary. The retaining wall built for the adjacent school will not be moved as part of this project. The wall to the planter is 3450mm away from the blank gable to classroom 5 (classroom 13 sits over classroom 5). The retaining wall already built is 5 metres away from this blank gable.

School Management

325. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the escalating insurance premiums faced by primary and post-primary schools; if his Department has data in this regard for 2016 and 2017; his plans to address the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54519/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Responsibility for procurement of insurance and payment of same rests with Board of Management in respect of school operated by them. My department does not hold records in relation to insurance costs for schools. If a particular school has a query in relation to the cost of insurance it should raise this directly with its insurance provider.

Boards of Management should take a proactive approach when it comes to sourcing insurance in order to ensure best value is obtained and to ensure compliance with public procurement procedures.

Schools Procurement Unit which has a national remit is available to advise and assist schools in relation to procurement matters.

Physical Education

326. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the capital funding he plans to put in place for schools to be able to effectively teach physical education as a leaving certificate subject. [54520/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Two new physical education elements at senior cycle will be introduced to schools on a phased basis from September 2018:

1. Leaving Certificate Physical Education (an optional subject for examination in the Leaving Certificate);
2. A Senior Cycle Physical Education Framework (not for examination).

As part of the process of identifying schools to participate in Phase 1 of the implementation of Physical Education in Senior Cycle commencing in September 2018, a circular letter (ref 0080/2017) was recently issued by my Department to all post-primary schools inviting them to apply. The letter advised of the selection criteria that would be used to assist in selecting the Phase 1 schools. These criteria include the requirement that schools have suitable facilities in-

cluding indoor and/or outdoor spaces for learning in Physical Education.

Phase 1 of the implementation process will involve a small cohort of schools who have the capacity to introduce Physical Education as a Leaving Certificate subject and/or the Senior Cycle Physical Education Framework in September 2018. The deadline for applications to participate in Phase 1 is 16 January. Planning for the subsequent rollout of the subject and framework as an option for all schools will require further consideration regarding the capacity of schools to offer these elements.

Schools Building Projects Status

327. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status and progress of the building project for a school (details supplied); when each stage is expected to be achieved up to and including the completion of the new building; the target date for the opening of the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54529/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy may be aware, the project to which he refers has been devolved for delivery to the local Education and Training Board (ETB).

Planning permission has been received for the project which is at the detailed design stage. In this regard, the Stage 2B submission was recently submitted to my Department for examination. The outcome of this examination will be conveyed to the ETB as soon as it is available. As the project is still in architectural planning, it is not possible to say at this stage when the new building will be completed.

School Accommodation Provision

328. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to address the shortage of secondary school places in Dublin 8 in view of the fact that recent communication from his Department suggests that the area will be serviced by a secondary school in Sandymount; if his attention has been drawn to the difficulties that students from Dublin 8 would have accessing Sandymount at peak hours; and if he has further plans to provide pupils and parents from Dublin 8 with the same educational opportunities available to others. [54541/17]

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 (SPAs). 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 the 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.

The new post-primary school to open in September 2018 referenced by the Deputy was announced in November 2015 as a regional solution to cater for increased demographic pressure that was anticipated across a number of School Planning Areas on the basis of demographic exercises which were conducted at that time. The School Planning Areas are Dublin 2_Dublin 4 SPA, Dublin 6_Clonskeagh SPA, and Dublin 8 SPA. It is expected that the pressure on schools for school places across these SPAs will be alleviated when the new school referenced by the Deputy has opened.

As with other school planning areas nationwide, the demographic data for the area referred to by the Deputy is being kept under ongoing review by my Department to take account of updated data.

School Placement

329. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a required school place in Clane, County Kildare, will be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54552/17]

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.

Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 provides for an appeal by a parent or guardian to the Secretary General of my Department, or in the case of an Education and Training Board (ETB) school to the ETB in the first instance, where a Board of Management of a school, or a person acting on behalf of the Board, refuses to enrol a student in a school, expels a student or suspends a student for 20 or more days in any school year. 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 (Tusla) 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.

School Services Staff

330. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has discussed with the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform plans to reinstate school secretaries in primary schools onto his Department's pay base in order that they will be on a pay scale, receive holiday pay and sick payments and be entitled to a pension (details supplied). [54560/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Schemes were initiated in 1978 and 1979 for the employment of Clerical Officers and Caretakers in primary and secondary schools. Staff employed on these schemes are paid directly by my Department and are not paid via grant funding. The 1978 and 1979 schemes are being phased out and have been superseded by a more extensive capitation grant scheme.

The majority of primary and voluntary secondary schools in the Free Education Scheme now receive capitation grant assistance to provide for secretarial, caretaking and cleaning services. Capitation related grants are issued to the majority of primary and post-primary schools to employ such staff. Within the capitation grant schemes, it is a matter for each individual school to decide how best to apply the grant funding to suit its particular needs.

Where a school uses the capitation grant funding to employ a secretary, such staff are employees of individual schools. My Department therefore does not have any role in determining the pay and conditions under which they are engaged. These are matters to be agreed between the staff concerned and the school authorities. My Department has no plans to develop an alternative scheme for schools to employ secretaries separate to the current system of capitation grant assistance.

Notwithstanding the above, in 2015 my Department agreed to engage with the union side in relation to the pay of school secretaries and caretakers who are employed using grant funding and to enter an arbitration process. The Arbitrator recommended a cumulative pay increase of 10% between 2016 and 2019 for school secretaries and caretakers comprehended by the terms of the arbitration process and that a minimum hourly pay rate of €13 for such staff be phased in over the period 2016 to 2019. In December 2017 my Department issued circular letter 0078/2017 for primary schools and circular letter 0079/2017 for voluntary secondary schools, setting out the application of the third phase increases of the Arbitrator's recommendations. The circulars are available at:

Circular 0078/2017: www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0078_2017.pdf.

Circular 0079/2017: www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0079_2017.pdf.

The increases recommended by the Arbitrator are binding and must be applied by all schools who employ staff to whom the Arbitrator's recommendation applies. The circulars issued by my Department set out the revised rates of grant funding for schools and an application process whereby schools can apply for additional funding in order to enable them to pay the revised rates set out in the circulars.

School Accommodation

331. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost in providing accommodation for a school (details supplied) from July 2005 to 2017, including land purchase, land rental, building rental, prefabricated and temporary classrooms, architectural building design services and all related surveys, reports and investigations; the person or body to which costs were paid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54562/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to confirm to the Deputy that the costs associated with providing accommodation for the school in question amounts to approximately €2,969,500. This includes the purchase of the school site to facilitate the construction of two schools.

These costs were paid to the following :

Board of Management of the school

SNC Engineering

Downes Associates

Apex Surveys Ltd

Ground Investigations Ireland Ltd

MLQ Ltd

Opperman Associates Ltd

Austen Associates.

Apprenticeship Data

332. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of female apprentices in apprenticeship schemes at the end of 2017; and the measures being taken to encourage greater female participation in apprenticeships. [54566/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): At the end of 2017 there was a total of 151 female apprentices registered on the 34 apprenticeship schemes currently on offer, which represents an increase of over 150% on the 2016 figure of 60.

The 2014 Review of Apprenticeship in Ireland acknowledged that the number of women employed in craft apprenticeships is low as they operate in sectors that have traditionally low levels of female employment. SOLAS offers a bursary to employers to encourage them to employ female apprentices in these areas. Despite this the number of female apprentices in the craft apprenticeships remains low.

Currently the Apprenticeship Council is overseeing the expansion of the apprenticeship system in Ireland into a range of new sectors of the economy, following two calls for new apprenticeship proposals from employers and education and training providers. To date nine new apprenticeship programmes are operational and we are now seeing a strong increase in female participation in many of these new programmes, particularly in the financial and hospitality sectors. With further new apprenticeships to get underway this year, many of which that are in sectors where there is a different gender balance in the workplace, it is expected, as these new apprenticeships are rolled out, that this will lead to a continued increase in female participation.

As set out in our Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland, my Department will, in conjunction with SOLAS, review the pathways to participation in apprenticeship in a range of diverse groups, including female participation. The review will be completed later this year.

Furthermore, a digital campaign to promote apprenticeship is now underway with a dedicated Twitter feed #Generation Apprenticeship, a new apprenticeship website www.apprenticeship.ie, an Apprenticeship Ireland Facebook page and a LinkedIn page. In all aspects of the digital campaign women feature prominently and there will be a specific focus on encouraging women and girls to consider apprenticeship as a means of launching or developing their careers.

Physical Education Facilities

333. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when physical edu-

cation facilities at a school (details supplied) will be reinstated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54596/17]

334. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when funding will be made available for a school building project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54597/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 333 and 334 together.

As the Deputy is aware, a building project for the school to which he refers is included in my Department's 6 Year Construction Programme.

The process of acquiring a suitable site to facilitate the proposed building project has recently been completed. The project brief is now being finalised with a view to progressing the project into architectural planning.

In addition, I wish to advise the Deputy that an application by the school for additional temporary classroom accommodation was recently approved by my Department.

Technological Universities

335. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of meetings his Department has held separately or jointly with board representatives of Waterford Institute of Technology and Carlow Institute of Technology in 2017 at which the proposed south east technological university has been discussed. [54617/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): I visited the Institute of Technology Carlow on 30 June 2017 and met with the Chairperson of the Governing Body, President and members of the Senior Management Team to discuss a range of matters relating to higher education including the development of a technological university for the South East (TUSE).

I also met with the Chairperson of Waterford Institute of Technology's Governing Body on 20 September 2017. A number of matters relating to higher education, including the TUSE project, were discussed at the meeting.

The institutes of technology in a consortium lead on the progression of their plans to seek designation as a technological university.

The Government is supporting the progression of technological university development in both the advancement currently of the Technological Universities Bill through the legislative process and in the provision of significant Exchequer funding to the four consortia of institutes of technology currently involved in projects to develop technological universities.

Most recently in November 2017 my Department, through the Higher Education Authority (HEA), allocated some €4.64 million in funding across the relevant consortia. Further Exchequer funding has been allocated for TU development in 2018. The HEA interacts directly with all consortia in the context of the funding process for TU development.

In addition, in implementing the Systems Performance Framework for Higher Education, progress on the development of TU projects has been a key part of the HEA's conversations with relevant individual institutions as part of the strategic dialogue process. Within this process, the HEA has provided detailed feedback to the institutions involved including those

comprising the TUSE consortium.

School Accommodation Provision

336. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of prefabs in use in primary and secondary schools in County Waterford; the corresponding figures at the end of 2007 and 2012; and the current average cost per prefab to the Exchequer. [54618/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that the number of rented prefabs in use in primary and post primary schools in County Waterford is as follows.

2007 - 48

2012 - 54

2017 - 8

The current average rental cost of a prefab for mainstream classroom use is approximately €15,000 per annum.

Third Level Admissions Data

337. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the overall percentage of second level school students in each county who have gone on to third level education in the past ten years. [54619/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The information requested by the Deputy on progression rates to third level from post-primary by geographic area is not available. The Department calculates progression rates at overall national level only for the purposes of compiling projections of third level demand.

The most recent projections of demand for third level can be found on the Department's website at the following link:

www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Statistical-Reports/Projections-of-demand-for-full-time-Third-Level-Education-2015-2029.pdf

School Attendance Data

338. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and percentage of students in each county who have dropped out of secondary education after the junior certificate and before the leaving certificate over the past ten years. [54620/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Information on the junior and leaving certificate retention rate by county is available in the attached table.

The latest information available is on the cohort of pupils who began post-primary education in 2010, and would have completed their Leaving Certificate in 2015 and 2016.

More detailed information is available in the retention reports published on the Department's website at the following link:

www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Statistical-Reports/Other-Statistical-Reports.html.

Retention Rates of Pupils in Second Level Schools (2001 Entry Cohort Onwards) by County, Statistical Indicator and Year

County	Indicator	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Carlow	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	800	842	863	804	838
Cavan	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	788	775	815	756	770
Clare	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	1388	1357	1332	1315	1384
Cork	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	6423	6611	6622	6398	6309
Donegal	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	2261	2337	2262	2162	2228
Dublin	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	14608	14486	14639	14627	13894
Galway	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	3066	3058	3292	3161	3139
Kerry	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	1956	1874	1980	1895	1890

Questions - Written Answers

County	Indicator	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Kildare	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	2341	2350	2500	2530	2599
Kilkenny	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	1175	1214	1220	1198	1180
Laois	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	812	814	792	806	718
Leitrim	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	460	446	410	454	427
Limerick	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	2547	2634	2652	2642	2587
Longford	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	585	594	615	593	563
Louth	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	1779	1770	1844	1843	1696
Mayo	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	1873	1803	1842	1810	1747
Meath	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	1673	1699	1831	1890	1817

County	Indicator	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Monaghan	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	909	942	889	926	864
Offaly	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	986	929	995	952	931
Roscommon	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	508	546	543	565	558
Sligo	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	926	772	824	859	799
Tipperary	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	2276	2205	2309	2277	2220
Waterford	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	1395	1462	1426	1422	1268
Westmeath	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	1303	1372	1298	1381	1351
Wexford	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	1908	1907	1959	2020	1891
Wicklow	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	1532	1667	1577	1662	1616

Questions - Written Answers

County	Indicator	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
All Counties	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	56278	56466	57331	56948	55284
Carlow	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	96.6%	96.4%	96.5%	97.1%	95.8%
Cavan	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	97.2%	96.9%	96.4%	96.8%	97.0%
Clare	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	95.6%	95.4%	95.1%	94.6%	96.0%
Cork	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	95.7%	96.2%	94.8%	95.5%	97.2%
Donegal	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	96.2%	95.1%	96.0%	94.5%	96.6%
Dublin	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	95.9%	95.3%	94.6%	93.4%	95.1%
Galway	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	97.1%	95.6%	95.7%	95.5%	95.3%

County	Indicator	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Kerry	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	96.8%	96.5%	96.0%	96.1%	96.0%
Kildare	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	96.8%	96.0%	95.4%	95.1%	96.7%
Kilkenny	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	97.5%	97.4%	96.8%	96.5%	97.4%
Laois	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	95.4%	96.1%	94.6%	94.7%	95.4%
Leitrim	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	97.8%	96.9%	95.1%	95.2%	97.2%
Limerick	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	94.7%	94.6%	93.9%	93.2%	95.8%
Longford	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	93.8%	96.5%	95.1%	94.9%	95.4%
Louth	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	96.2%	95.3%	94.8%	93.4%	95.9%

Questions - Written Answers

County	Indicator	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Mayo	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	96.4%	96.9%	96.2%	95.2%	96.6%
Meath	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	95.9%	97.0%	94.7%	94.3%	95.0%
Monaghan	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	98.3%	96.3%	96.4%	94.3%	97.5%
Offaly	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	95.0%	96.9%	95.9%	94.3%	96.6%
Roscommon	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	97.0%	95.8%	93.9%	94.7%	96.3%
Sligo	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	97.2%	95.2%	94.8%	95.0%	95.9%
Tipperary	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	96.7%	95.5%	95.4%	95.0%	96.1%
Waterford	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	95.5%	94.7%	94.7%	94.0%	97.3%

County	Indicator	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Westmeath	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	95.0%	93.4%	94.6%	94.9%	94.4%
Wexford	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	96.0%	94.8%	94.6%	94.8%	95.8%
Wicklow	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	94.8%	95.7%	95.3%	94.2%	93.8%
All Counties	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	96.1%	95.7%	95.1%	94.5%	95.9%
Carlow	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	773	812	833	781	803
Cavan	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	766	751	786	732	747
Clare	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	1327	1295	1267	1244	1329
Cork	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	6147	6360	6278	6110	6132

Questions - Written Answers

County	Indicator	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Donegal	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	2175	2222	2172	2043	2152
Dublin	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	14009	13805	13848	13662	13210
Galway	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	2977	2923	3150	3019	2990
Kerry	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	1893	1808	1901	1821	1814
Kildare	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	2266	2256	2385	2406	2513
Kilkenny	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	1146	1182	1181	1156	1149
Laois	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	775	782	749	763	685
Leitrim	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	450	432	390	432	415

County	Indicator	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Limerick	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	2412	2492	2490	2462	2477
Longford	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	549	573	585	563	537
Louth	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	1711	1687	1748	1721	1626
Mayo	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	1806	1747	1772	1723	1688
Meath	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	1604	1648	1734	1782	1726
Monaghan	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	894	907	857	873	842
Offaly	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	937	900	954	898	899
Roscom- mon	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	493	523	510	535	537

Questions - Written Answers

County	Indicator	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Sligo	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	900	735	781	816	766
Tipperary	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	2201	2106	2203	2163	2133
Waterford	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	1332	1385	1350	1337	1233
Westmeath	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	1238	1281	1228	1311	1275
Wexford	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	1832	1808	1853	1915	1812
Wicklow	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	1452	1595	1503	1566	1516
All Counties	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	54065	54015	54508	53834	53006
Carlow	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	81.5%	78.0%	79.5%	85.7%	87.4%

County	Indicator	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Cavan	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	84.4%	85.8%	86.5%	87.7%	90.1%
Clare	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	83.5%	83.9%	85.3%	85.6%	91.7%
Cork	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	81.1%	81.4%	80.9%	84.8%	89.9%
Donegal	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	81.2%	80.7%	83.5%	84.9%	89.4%
Dublin	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	78.6%	79.1%	80.1%	81.7%	88.5%
Galway	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	83.4%	83.8%	83.0%	86.2%	90.1%
Kerry	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	82.9%	83.0%	83.0%	85.3%	91.3%
Kildare	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	82.2%	81.1%	82.8%	85.7%	90.7%

Questions - Written Answers

County	Indicator	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Kilkenny	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	80.9%	81.5%	83.8%	84.6%	91.1%
Laois	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	81.8%	83.8%	79.7%	82.3%	88.6%
Leitrim	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	88.9%	88.8%	85.9%	87.0%	91.6%
Limerick	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	80.1%	80.4%	79.9%	81.9%	88.8%
Longford	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	83.6%	85.9%	83.3%	89.4%	88.5%
Louth	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	82.9%	81.4%	80.9%	83.6%	89.0%
Mayo	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	86.0%	85.4%	87.3%	88.6%	92.4%
Meath	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	82.5%	84.3%	84.1%	87.0%	90.8%

County	Indicator	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Monaghan	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	82.1%	81.3%	85.6%	86.9%	91.2%
Offaly	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	80.5%	82.6%	84.3%	86.1%	88.8%
Roscommon	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	87.0%	83.5%	84.7%	86.7%	91.1%
Sligo	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	85.4%	83.2%	85.9%	87.8%	89.4%
Tipperary	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	83.9%	80.5%	83.0%	85.0%	90.9%
Waterford	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	84.0%	80.9%	83.2%	84.5%	90.7%
Westmeath	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	83.3%	81.1%	85.7%	88.0%	88.9%
Wexford	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	80.2%	80.0%	81.7%	85.5%	87.8%

Questions - Written Answers

County	Indicator	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Wicklow	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	76.7%	77.9%	79.6%	83.1%	87.4%
All Counties	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	81.3%	81.3%	82.2%	84.5%	89.5%
Carlow	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	652	657	686	689	732
Cavan	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	665	665	705	663	694
Clare	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1159	1139	1136	1126	1269
Cork	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	5209	5381	5357	5426	5672
Donegal	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1836	1886	1889	1836	1992
Dublin	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	11482	11458	11726	11950	12300

County	Indicator	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Galway	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	2557	2563	2732	2725	2828
Kerry	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1622	1555	1643	1616	1726
Kildare	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1924	1906	2070	2168	2357
Kilkenny	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	951	989	1022	1014	1075
Laois	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	664	682	631	663	636
Leitrim	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	409	396	352	395	391
Limerick	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	2040	2118	2119	2164	2297
Longford	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	489	510	512	530	498

Questions - Written Answers

County	Indicator	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Louth	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1475	1441	1492	1541	1509
Mayo	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1611	1540	1608	1604	1614
Meath	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1380	1432	1540	1644	1650
Monaghan	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	746	766	761	805	788
Offaly	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	794	767	839	820	827
Roscommon	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	442	456	460	490	508
Sligo	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	791	642	708	754	714
Tipperary	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1910	1775	1916	1935	2017

County	Indicator	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Waterford	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1172	1183	1186	1202	1150
Westmeath	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1085	1113	1112	1215	1201
Wexford	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1530	1526	1601	1727	1660
Wicklow	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1175	1299	1255	1381	1412
All Counties	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	45770	45845	47058	48083	49517

Contd.

County	Indicator	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Carlow	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	801	790	802	791	863
Cavan	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	800	813	813	897	884
Clare	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	1402	1357	1353	1458	1454

Questions - Written Answers

County	Indicator	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Cork	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	6181	6213	6327	6750	6742
Donegal	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	2228	2158	2225	2226	2299
Dublin	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	13998	13828	13987	14445	14520
Galway	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	2979	3041	3043	3110	3200
Kerry	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	1776	1836	1884	1974	2001
Kildare	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	2561	2609	2709	2776	2923
Kilkenny	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	1124	1145	1114	1177	1211
Laois	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	778	813	730	678	742
Leitrim	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	404	431	448	434	436

County	Indicator	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Limerick	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	2459	2552	2525	2643	2656
Longford	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	586	596	638	598	624
Louth	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	1791	1780	1862	1890	1926
Mayo	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	1677	1654	1696	1699	1711
Meath	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	1843	1983	2030	2222	2431
Monaghan	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	871	842	874	862	890
Offaly	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	945	1022	1075	1189	1283
Roscommon	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	531	590	542	584	530
Sligo	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	760	783	801	795	856

Questions - Written Answers

County	Indicator	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Tipperary	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	2165	2172	2234	2345	2332
Waterford	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	1349	1386	1447	1414	1524
Westmeath	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	1319	1320	1345	1375	1367
Wexford	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	1959	1929	1928	2060	2068
Wicklow	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	1630	1580	1643	1696	1748
All Counties	Entrants to First Year of Junior Cycle (Number)	54917	55223	56075	58088	59221
Carlow	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	96.3%	94.9%	94.3%	94.6%	95.1%
Cavan	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	96.8%	96.1%	97.5%	96.0%	95.4%
Clare	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	95.5%	96.8%	97.9%	96.6%	96.8%

County	Indicator	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Cork	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	97.1%	97.7%	97.4%	97.3%	98.0%
Donegal	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	96.1%	97.0%	97.6%	96.2%	96.8%
Dublin	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	96.0%	96.7%	96.5%	96.6%	97.3%
Galway	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	95.7%	95.9%	96.7%	97.3%	97.7%
Kerry	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	96.3%	97.1%	96.6%	96.1%	97.8%
Kildare	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	96.8%	97.5%	97.5%	96.6%	97.7%
Kilkenny	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	98.2%	98.1%	98.2%	97.7%	98.3%
Laois	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	96.9%	96.7%	96.0%	96.5%	97.8%

Questions - Written Answers

County	Indicator	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Leitrim	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	97.0%	97.2%	98.2%	96.3%	97.5%
Limerick	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	96.2%	96.5%	96.6%	96.5%	97.5%
Longford	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	94.4%	96.0%	95.1%	95.7%	96.6%
Louth	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	96.5%	96.7%	97.2%	95.9%	97.5%
Mayo	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	97.1%	97.8%	96.8%	98.2%	97.9%
Meath	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	96.4%	97.8%	97.2%	96.6%	97.2%
Monaghan	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	97.0%	97.4%	97.1%	96.8%	97.3%
Offaly	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	96.5%	96.5%	96.9%	95.7%	97.6%

County	Indicator	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Roscommon	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	97.4%	95.4%	97.1%	95.2%	96.2%
Sligo	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	98.2%	98.6%	98.0%	97.4%	98.3%
Tipperary	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	97.0%	97.4%	97.1%	97.6%	97.6%
Waterford	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	97.5%	97.1%	96.5%	97.2%	96.5%
Westmeath	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	95.8%	96.0%	96.8%	95.3%	96.5%
Wexford	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	95.5%	97.1%	96.3%	96.3%	96.7%
Wicklow	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	94.1%	98.6%	96.8%	96.4%	97.5%
All Counties	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (%)	96.4%	96.9%	96.9%	96.7%	97.4%

Questions - Written Answers

County	Indicator	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Carlow	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	771	750	755	748	821
Cavan	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	774	781	793	861	843
Clare	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	1339	1313	1324	1408	1407
Cork	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	5999	6070	6161	6568	6608
Donegal	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	2141	2094	2171	2141	2225
Dublin	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	13435	13370	13498	13954	14127
Galway	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	2849	2915	2945	3026	3126
Kerry	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	1710	1782	1819	1897	1957

County	Indicator	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Kildare	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	2479	2543	2642	2682	2855
Kilkenny	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	1104	1123	1094	1150	1190
Laois	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	754	786	701	654	726
Leitrim	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	392	419	440	418	425
Limerick	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	2366	2462	2438	2550	2589
Longford	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	553	572	607	572	603
Louth	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	1728	1721	1809	1813	1877
Mayo	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	1628	1617	1642	1668	1675

Questions - Written Answers

County	Indicator	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Meath	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	1777	1939	1973	2146	2362
Monaghan	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	845	820	849	834	866
Offaly	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	912	986	1042	1138	1252
Roscommon	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	517	563	526	556	510
Sligo	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	746	772	785	774	841
Tipperary	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	2099	2116	2171	2289	2277
Waterford	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	1315	1346	1397	1374	1470
Westmeath	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	1264	1267	1302	1310	1319

County	Indicator	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Wexford	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	1871	1872	1857	1984	1999
Wicklow	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	1534	1558	1590	1635	1705
All Counties	First Year Entrants who sat the Junior Certificate (Number)	52902	53557	54331	56150	57655
Carlow	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	90.0%	84.9%	86.0%	84.6%	86.2%
Cavan	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	90.3%	88.8%	89.9%	91.4%	89.0%
Clare	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	90.2%	89.9%	89.6%	89.4%	91.5%
Cork	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	91.9%	90.9%	91.0%	91.8%	92.1%
Donegal	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	89.0%	90.6%	91.1%	91.1%	91.7%

Questions - Written Answers

County	Indicator	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Dublin	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	89.2%	89.1%	89.7%	88.6%	90.0%
Galway	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	90.0%	89.5%	90.2%	91.4%	91.2%
Kerry	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	92.0%	91.8%	92.5%	92.0%	93.2%
Kildare	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	91.7%	90.8%	92.1%	90.2%	91.8%
Kilkenny	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	94.2%	91.3%	91.6%	91.1%	92.8%
Laois	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	90.5%	89.7%	89.0%	90.3%	89.0%
Leitrim	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	91.4%	91.0%	92.6%	90.1%	91.1%
Limerick	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	89.7%	90.1%	90.6%	90.7%	91.3%

County	Indicator	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Longford	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	87.1%	88.9%	88.9%	90.1%	87.5%
Louth	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	89.6%	89.4%	92.1%	87.1%	91.1%
Mayo	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	91.8%	92.9%	90.0%	91.4%	91.9%
Meath	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	92.8%	92.9%	92.5%	91.7%	93.3%
Monaghan	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	90.7%	89.6%	91.2%	91.6%	92.3%
Offaly	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	88.1%	88.7%	90.9%	88.8%	91.0%
Roscommon	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	94.0%	90.9%	90.8%	90.2%	91.9%
Sligo	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	93.0%	92.3%	92.1%	91.1%	93.8%

Questions - Written Answers

County	Indicator	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Tipperary	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	90.4%	91.2%	91.6%	92.0%	92.8%
Waterford	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	92.6%	90.0%	90.7%	91.3%	91.1%
Westmeath	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	90.5%	90.0%	90.4%	89.5%	91.4%
Wexford	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	90.6%	91.7%	90.5%	90.6%	90.6%
Wicklow	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	86.1%	87.2%	89.0%	89.2%	91.5%
All Counties	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (%)	90.2%	90.1%	90.6%	90.2%	91.2%
Carlow	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	721	671	690	669	744
Cavan	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	722	722	731	820	787

County	Indicator	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Clare	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1265	1220	1212	1303	1330
Cork	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	5677	5648	5756	6197	6209
Donegal	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1983	1956	2027	2028	2107
Dublin	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	12483	12325	12540	12798	13068
Galway	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	2680	2723	2746	2843	2920
Kerry	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1634	1686	1743	1816	1865
Kildare	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	2348	2368	2496	2504	2683
Kilkenny	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1059	1045	1020	1072	1124

Questions - Written Answers

County	Indicator	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Laois	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	704	729	650	612	660
Leitrim	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	369	392	415	391	397
Limerick	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	2206	2300	2288	2397	2425
Longford	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	510	530	567	539	546
Louth	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1605	1591	1714	1646	1754
Mayo	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1539	1537	1526	1553	1573
Meath	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1710	1843	1878	2038	2267
Monaghan	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	790	754	797	790	821

County	Indicator	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Offaly	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	833	906	977	1056	1168
Roscommon	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	499	536	492	527	487
Sligo	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	707	723	738	724	803
Tipperary	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1957	1980	2046	2157	2165
Waterford	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1248	1247	1312	1291	1388
Westmeath	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1194	1188	1216	1231	1250
Wexford	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1775	1768	1744	1866	1874
Wicklow	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	1403	1377	1462	1513	1600

County	Indicator	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
All Counties	First Year Entrants who sat the Leaving Certificate (Number)	49621	49765	50783	52381	54015

Prior to the 2005 entry cohort the estimated rate of retention at second level corresponds to the estimated percentage of entrants to Junior Cycle in a given year who complete second level with a Leaving Certificate (including Leaving Certificate Applied) in publicly-aided school.

For all entry cohorts educational pathways outside the publicly-aided school system such as Youthreach and apprenticeship training are not taken into account.

For Further Information go to (<http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Statistical-Report-s/Other-Statistical-Reports.html>) See Background Notes

Education Funding

339. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the capital funding his Department has allocated to projects in County Waterford at primary, post-primary and third level since 1 January 2011. [54621/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Capital funding provided by my Department in respect of education sector projects in County Waterford for the period 1st January, 2011 to 31st December, 2017 is as follows:

Primary - €55m

Post Primary - €15.7m

Third Level - €16.4m

TOTAL - €87.1m

The total amount excludes monthly unitary payments amounting to €1.2m that have been issued since mid-2014 in respect of PPP Schools Bundle 3 which comprises eight schools, one of which is located in Co Waterford.

Schools Building Projects Status

340. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to provide an extension at a school (details supplied) in County Waterford. [54622/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The school to which the Deputy refers is one of eight new schools which was delivered in March 2014 under the Department's Schools Bundle 3 Public Private Partnership (PPP) programme.

It is my Department's intention to provide an extension to the school to meet the demand for additional school accommodation in the area referred to by the Deputy.

In that context, a planning application to proceed with the extension has been lodged with

Waterford City and County Council. My Department has since responded to a request for further information from the Council in that respect. Subject to the decision of the Council on the matter, it is our intention to then proceed to the final stages of preparing the project for construction and delivery.

DEIS Status

341. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the 257 schools which met the criteria for DEIS status but did not receive it as reported in a newspaper (details supplied); and the location of each. [54649/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The 79 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 and met the criteria for inclusion under DEIS Plan 2017. 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 was a first step in a process and the fact that a school was not included in September 2017 does not preclude its inclusion at a later date, should the assessment indicate a level of disadvantage that warrants additional supports.

In the context of future planning for DEIS and the preparation of briefing for the estimates process for Budget 2018 analysis was conducted as to the cost of extending DEIS further by admitting schools with levels below the highest concentrations of disadvantage. It was in the context of this cost analysis, for a possible extension of the DEIS scheme at lower concentrations of disadvantage, that the figure of 257 schools arose. There has been no question of excluding schools. It is important to note that these 257 schools did not meet the criteria of those schools admitted in September 2017.

In relation to the location of the 257 schools, the levels of disadvantage in individual schools is not in the public domain and release of this information would give rise to speculation as to the levels of disadvantage in individual schools. Therefore it is not possible to provide this information to you.

It is important to note that for the first time, I have 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. A detailed document explaining the methodology used in the Identification process is available on the Department's website at www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Identification-Process.pdf.

A further assessment of all schools taking account of updated school data and the HP Index, based on the 2016 National Census is currently underway. Schools are being advised to ensure that their POD/PPOD data is fully correct and up to date including Eircode which can now be recorded by schools on both POD and PPOD databases. It is intended to have the process completed by the end of Q1 2018.

This will allow new pupil data and the changes in the profile of small areas between 2011 and 2016 to be taken into account in measuring the profile of schools. Schools at the high threshold of disadvantage may be identified in this process. It is intended, subject to available resources, to bring any such additional schools into the scheme .

School Catchment Areas

342. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of children from Wexford town's secondary school catchment area who attend schools outside their residential catchment area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54652/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The information requested by the Deputy is not available in the format requested. As the Deputy may be aware, my Department uses a Geographical Information System to identify where the pressure for school places across the country will arise. The System 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 provision is dependent on the particular circumstances of each case and may 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.

My Department is keeping the school planning areas across the country under ongoing review to take into account of updated enrolment data and also the impact of capacity increases in the school planning areas.

Teacher Training Provision

343. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to provide teachers and SNAs with mental health training; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54653/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department promotes a comprehensive and whole-school approach in schools to the promotion of positive mental health focusing on the entire school community, including teachers and SNAs, as well as groups and individual young people with identified need. This spans the curriculum in schools, whole-school ethos, quality of teaching, learning and assessment, student support and pastoral care, guidance counselling and the provision of professional development for teachers. It also involves accessing other supports such as educational psychology services. Additionally, schools engage in a wide range of sport and cultural activities which provide an important opportunity for students to experience success and personal growth. The whole school staff shares responsibility for general student wellbeing.

All primary initial teacher education programmes include psychology of education, sociology of education and curricular studies including the implementation of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum which is taught at all class levels. The SPHE curriculum provides particular opportunities to foster the personal development, wellbeing, and social and emotional health of the individual child.

The Wellbeing in Post Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (2013) and Wellbeing in Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (2015) provide a Framework for Schools to present in an integrated way the existing

elements of good practice to promote positive mental health, and direct them to new practices as appropriate. They provide clear information for schools and for agencies supporting schools on how to address issues of mental health promotion.

Professional development training and supports are provided by my Department to support teachers in the promotion of Wellbeing and in addressing and dealing with mental health issues. These supports cover a continuum: from whole-school and classroom level, to support for some children and support for a few children. Continuing professional development is provided to primary and post-primary schools through the following services and supports:

- The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- Guidance Counselling service/provision
- The National Council for Special Education Support Service (NCSE)
- Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)
- Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT).

Supports are also provided through Association of Teachers' Education Centres in Ireland (ATECI) summer courses, Festival of Education in Learning and Teaching Excellence (Féilte), Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN), National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) and Centre for School Leadership.

A key theme of my Department's Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 is the promotion of Wellbeing, with a number of objective and proposed actions specifically targeting the promotion of wellbeing in our school communities. These include:

- Publishing a Wellbeing Policy Statement in 2018 and commencing, as resources permit, a national programme to support all schools to implement the national Wellbeing in Post Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (2013) and Wellbeing in Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (2015)
- Implementing the new Junior Certificate area of learning entitled Wellbeing
- Extending Pupil Resilience and Teacher Classroom Management Programmes to all DEIS schools
- Increasing the capacity of NEPS by 65 educational psychologists to deliver an enhanced educational psychological service to schools
- Enhancing Guidance Counselling at second level
- Working closely with the Department of Health and other departments on the National Task Force on Youth Mental Health
- Support of wellbeing initiatives to ensure that mental resilience and personal wellbeing are integral parts of the education and training system.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

344. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an appeal by a school (details supplied) regarding its allocation of SNA hours. [54657/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), which is an independent statutory agency, is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for allocating a quantum of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support for each school annually taking into account the assessed care needs of children qualifying for SNA support enrolled in the school. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support.

The criteria by which SNA support is allocated to pupils is set out in my Department's Circular 0030/2014. In considering applications for SNA supports for individual pupils, the SENOs take account of the pupils' needs and consider the resources available to the school to identify whether additionality is needed or whether the school might reasonably be expected to meet the needs of the pupils from its current level of resources.

SNAs are not allocated to individual children but to schools as a school based resource.

Details of SNA allocations which have been made to schools for the 2017/18 school year have been published by the NCSE on their website at <http://ncse.ie/statistics>.

Where a school has received its allocation of SNA support for 2017/18, but wishes new enrolments or assessments to be considered, which were not taken into account when the initial allocation was made, they may continue to make applications to the NCSE.

The NCSE Appeals Process may be invoked in the following instances:

- a parent or a school where it is considered that a child was not granted access to SNA support on the grounds that Department policy was not met in accordance with Circular 0030/2014.
- a school may also appeal a decision, where the school considers that the NCSE, in applying Department policy, has not allocated the appropriate level of SNA supports to the school to meet the special educational and/or care needs of the child(ren) concerned.

All schools have the contact details of their local SENO and parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child's special educational needs, using the contact details available at <http://ncse.ie/seno-contact-list>.

As the matter raised in this question refers to a particular school, I have arranged for the NCSE to reply directly to the Deputy.

Teaching Qualifications

345. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to ensure that third level students with leaving certificate grades are not subject to a new grading system that may cause them distress as they intend to pursue a professional master of education primary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54684/17]

346. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to allow an exemption for students who commenced third level education prior to September 2017 with the aim of progressing into a professional master of education; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54685/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 345 and 346 together.

I understand that the Deputy's is referring to the criteria for entry to primary Initial Teacher

Education.

In addition to the CAO points required (in the case of the Bachelor of Education) or the third level award requirement (in the case of the Postgraduate Masters in Education) for entry to programmes of primary Initial Teacher Education, my Department specifies minimum entry requirements in the core subjects: Maths, English and Irish. This is to ensure that primary teachers have the capacity to lead in these significant areas of student learning.

In October 2017, I announced changes to these minimum entry requirements, as follows:

Entry 2018 - Irish: H5, English: H7/O5, Maths: H7/O6

Entry 2019 and entry 2020 - Irish: H4, English: H7/O4, Maths: H7/O4

The changes that I introduced took account of advice to me provided by the Teaching Council, which had engaged in a consultation process around a number of matters relating to entry to initial teacher education. Many of the issues identified were complex and the Council commissioned the ESRI to carry out a research to inform its deliberation.

The changes also had regard to the Department's policy "Supporting a Better Transition from Second Level to Higher Education – Implementation and Next Steps" (2015).

In determining the revised entry requirements, care was taken not to disadvantage those students who have already commenced the senior cycle and who intend sitting the Leaving Certificate examinations in 2018. Accordingly, I decided that the minimum entry grades for entry to primary Initial Teacher Education programmes should be increased for 2019 and 2020, rather than from 2018.

The revision of entry criteria for primary initial teacher education is part of a wider range of actions being implemented or developed to achieve the objective of developing the continuum of teacher education to equip teachers with the right skills for 21st century teaching and learning, and the overall vision of making the Irish education and training system the best in Europe over the next decade.

Further changes to the minimum entry requirements from 2021 onwards will be considered in the light of experience, relevant policy developments and following consultation with relevant stakeholders.

I do not plan to further adjust the minimum entry requirements or to allow exemptions to the requirements, in advance of this.

Minor Works Scheme Applications

347. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the grant aid assistance through the minor works programme which will be allocated to a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54707/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I am pleased to advise that on 5th December, 2017 I announced the Minor Works Grant 2017/2018 for primary schools across the country and payment issued to the school referred to by the Deputy on 12th December, 2017.

The funding will allow minor works to be carried out on the physical infrastructure of schools or on the purchase of items of furniture and equipment.

School Funding

348. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the grant aid opportunities which are available to primary schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54708/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Funding for primary schools is dealt with on a per capita basis. The two main grants are the capitation grant to cater for day to day running costs such as heating, lighting, cleaning, insurance, general up-keep etc., and the ancillary services grant to cater for the cost of employing ancillary services staff.

The following are links to the most recent circulars published on my Department's website in relation to capitation and ancillary grants:

www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0078_2017.pdf.

www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0028_2016.pdf.

The Primary Payments Grant Calendar which outlines additional grants payable to primary schools is published on my Department's website and is available at:

www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/Grants-and-Additional-Support/primary-grant-calendar-2017-2018.pdf.

Schools Building Projects Status

349. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a school building project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54720/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In July 2017 the Stage 2b (Detailed Design) for this project was approved, pending the completion of the process to carry out a shortlisting of suitably qualified building contractors and sub-contractors. The relevant shortlisting contract notices were posted to the Official Journal of the European Community (OJEU) and the Government's E-tenders website on 27 September and 8 October respectively. Tenders for this shortlist are currently being reviewed and the Prequalification process is nearing completion.

My Department anticipates that, following the tender process to appoint a Building Contractor, this project will go on site and commence construction in the first half of 2018.

Schools Building Projects Status

350. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of a new secondary school for Swords, County Dublin, as announced in November 2015; if locations for the proposed school have been identified; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54723/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The proposed location for the new post-primary school referred to by the Deputy is in Mooretown, Swords.

This school building project is on my Department's Rapid Design & Build Programme and the project is currently at architectural planning stage.

Schools Site Acquisitions

351. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of a new secondary school for the Malahide and Portmarnock areas of County Dublin as announced in November 2015; if locations for these proposed schools have been identified; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54724/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware, a project to provide permanent accommodation for the new post primary school to serve Malahide/Portmarnock is included on my Department's Capital Programme.

Officials in my Department are working with officials in Fingal County Council in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the identification and acquisition of a suitable site for this school and the process is ongoing.

My Department has been in contact with the school patron to appraise them of progress in this regard.

Schools Site Acquisitions

352. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of a permanent site for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54725/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware, the project to provide permanent accommodation for the school in question is included on my Department's Capital Programme.

Officials in my Department are working with officials in the relevant local authority in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the identification and acquisition of a suitable site for this school and the process is ongoing.

My Department is in contact with the school patron to appraise them of progress in this regard.

Schools Site Acquisitions

353. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of a new site for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54726/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The site for the school referred to by the Deputy has recently been purchased by the St. Laurence O'Toole Diocesan Trust on behalf of the Board of Management for the school.

The site purchase was completed in October 2017.

Officials from my Department will shortly be in contact with the school regarding the time-frame for progression of this project.

Schools Site Acquisitions

354. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a new school building project for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54727/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware the building project for the school in question is included on my Department's capital programme.

A new school site is required to accommodate this project and officials in my Department have been in contact with the school patron and trustees in relation to the site acquisition.

Schools Building Projects Status

355. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the next phase of the school building project for a school (details supplied) in County Dublin will commence; the status of this project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54728/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that construction commenced on the 3rd January 2018 on the school referred to by him.

Subject to no issues arising it is envisaged that construction will take approximately 18 months.

Schools Site Acquisitions

356. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of a new site for a school (details supplied) as announced in November 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54729/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware, a project to provide permanent accommodation for the school in question is included on my Department's Capital Programme.

Officials in my Department continue to liaise with officials in the relevant local authority in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the acquisition of a suitable site for this school. Discussions with relevant parties regarding the potential acquisition of a preferred site option are currently in progress with a view to advancing matters as expeditiously as possible.

While I am not in a position to provide further information at this time, I can assure the Deputy that my Department is in communication with the school patron and representatives to keep them apprised of progress and they will be informed of the proposed location as soon as it is possible to do so.

Departmental Funding

357. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the name and number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from his Department 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 amount of money they have spent on this particular campaign during that time; the number of organisations here that are in

receipt of funding from his Department that have expended resources seeking the retention of the eighth amendment; the amount of funding these organisations have received from the State in the past five years; and the amount of money they have spent on this particular campaign during that time. [54764/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Funding which my Department makes available to outside bodies would be for specific purposes related to my Department's policy remit.

In making funding allocations to outside bodies, the Department does not seek information regarding whether the body in question has expended any of its own resources seeking the repeal of the Eight Amendment.

However, if the Deputy wishes to provide the details of particular organisations, I would be happy to provide information on any Departmental funding provided for purposes related to education and training.

Schools Amalgamation

358. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an agreement has been signed on the acquisition of a new site to combine schools (details supplied); the location of the site; when the work on the new school will commence and is expected to be completed; the number of pupils it is expected to accommodate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54778/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy may be aware, a project to provide permanent accommodation for the schools in question is included on my Department's Capital Programme.

Officials in my Department are liaising with officials in the relevant local authority in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the acquisition of a suitable site to facilitate the building project. The location for the schools, on the Cement Road in Drogheda, has been agreed and all parties are currently working to finalise the terms of this proposed acquisition and advance matters as quickly as possible.

Subsequent to the completion of the site acquisition process, subject to no issues arising, the project to deliver the new schools will progress into architectural planning. The number of pupils to be accommodated in the new schools is currently being determined.

Schools Building Projects

359. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason for the excessive delay in work commencing on a school (details supplied); the expected timeframe for the new facility; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54779/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The new building for the school to which the Deputy refers has been devolved for delivery to the local County Council and the project is currently advancing through the necessary architectural planning process. The project is currently completing Stage 2(a) of that process which is the detailed design stage. When the Stage 2(a) submission is received and approved by my Department, the project will then progress to stage 2(b) which includes applications for planning permission, Fire Safety Certification, Disability Access Certification and the preparation of tender documents. It is not

possible to put a timeframe on the project now as this is dependent in the first instance on a smooth passage through the statutory planning processes.

DEIS Eligibility

360. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a school (details supplied) can now be categorised as a DEIS school in view of a report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54786/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): 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 www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Identification-Process.pdf.

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.

A further assessment of all schools 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 Eircode 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.

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.

Departmental Legal Costs

361. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount paid by the State in fees to legal professionals for the purposes of defending the O'Keeffe case and other cases of day school sex abuse litigation; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[54806/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The State Claims Agency are mandated to manage these cases on behalf of the State. The legal fees paid in respect of these cases since the beginning of 2011 to end of 2017 are set out as follows.

Table 1: Claims created 2011 – 2017

Table 1 outlines day school claims created under the Minister for Education and Skills between 2011 and 2017 inclusive.

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Grand Total
29	2	2	101	33	25	8	200

Table 2: Payments made 2011 – 2017

Table 2 outlines the legal fee payments made under the Minister for Education and the number of claims relating to these payments from 2011 – 2017 inclusive.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016**	2017**	Grand Total***
Payment – Agency Legal Costs****	€5,173	€4,532	€1,330	€91,052	€96,444	€304,391	€461,410	€964,331
Payment – Plaintiff Legal costs****	€11,284	-	-	€104,550	€40,944	€11,400	€110,700	€278,878
Payments Total****	€16,456	€4,532	€1,330	€195,602	€137,388	€315,791	€572,110	€1,243,309
No of related claims	12	5	2	75	26	75	88	157*

* The total number of unique claims transacted over the reporting period will not equate to the sum of the claims in each year as there may be payments made for a single claim across multiple years

**The higher figures in 2016 and 2017 in respect of the agency legal costs reflect payments to the agency's solicitors and counsel in respect of advices concerning the implications of the ECtHR judgement in *Louise O'Keefe v Ireland*

***The figures for each year are rounded to the nearest euro. However, the Grand Total in each case is the actual total of all the annual rounded figures.

****As well as the payments total of €1,243,309, a further amount of €15,473.40 was paid in 2015 in respect of cost of counsel employed to carry out a review of closed Day school claims.

State Examinations

362. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when there will be a detailed marking scheme for the leaving certificate art curriculum; and the reason schools have not had a detailed marking scheme for the State examinations for the 2017-18 school year. [54815/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations.

In view of this I have forwarded the Deputy's query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to the Deputy.

State Examinations

363. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a detailed marking scheme was provided in the past for the leaving certificate arts curriculum. [54816/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations.

In view of this I have forwarded the Deputy's query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to the Deputy.

State Examinations

364. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a union (details supplied) agreed to implement a new course without a new marking scheme being in place for the leaving certificate arts curriculum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54817/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations.

In view of this I have forwarded the Deputy's query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to the Deputy.

State Examinations

365. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of students who took art examinations in the 2016-17 academic year as part of the leaving certificate arts curriculum. [54818/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations.

In view of this I have forwarded the Deputy's query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to the Deputy.

Schools Refurbishment

366. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if funding will be

provided to a school (details supplied) to carry out necessary works; the assistance that can be provided to the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54901/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has no record of receiving an application from the school referred to for additional accommodation.

Any application received will be considered and a response will be conveyed to the school authority subsequently. An application form may be accessed on my Department's website www.education.ie.

Broadband Service Provision

367. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 184 of 28 November 2017, the date for the provision of the service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54906/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The need to improve broadband connectivity to primary schools is recognised in the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020, and as noted access to high speed broadband is one of the indicators identified in the Digital Strategy Action Plan. An interdepartmental working group has been established to determine how best to address broadband connectivity to primary schools in collaboration with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, in the context of the National Broadband Plan and the Intervention Strategy, and proposed industry provision.

Significant improvement has been made in recent years with the number of primary schools on broadband speeds of greater than 30mbs having increased from less than 100 in 2012 to over 1000 by the end of 2017. In Wicklow in 2012, no primary school had access to broadband speeds of 30mbs or greater, now some 30 primary schools in Wicklow have access to broadband speeds of 30mbs or greater.

The school referred to by the Deputy has the best broadband solution available (5 Mbp/s), given the infrastructure in that area. The service was last reviewed in 2015 in the context of contract renewal, and the available options will be reviewed again later this year

The school is included in the National Broadband Plan Intervention area (NBP), the Government's National Broadband Plan aims to ensure high speed broadband access (minimum 30 megabits per second) to all premises in Ireland with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment tasked with implementing this rollout. The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment is currently in the formal procurement process to select a company or companies who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network in the State intervention area.

The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment has 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.

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 roll out high speed broadband to 300,000 premises by the end of 2018.

School Transport Applications

368. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the case of a person (details supplied) under the school transport scheme will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54911/17]

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 115,000 children, including almost 12,000 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 of my Department's Post Primary School Transport Scheme children are eligible for school transport where they reside not less than 4.8 kilometres from and are attending their nearest Post Primary School/Education Centre as determined by my Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

Bus Éireann has advised that the child in question is not attending her nearest post primary school and is therefore not eligible for school transport.

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only. Concessionary transport 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;
- routes will not be extended or altered, 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; no additional State cost will be incurred.

Bus Éireann has confirmed that there are spare seats available on an existing service, on a concessionary basis.

The terms of the Post Primary School Transport Scheme are applied equitably on a national basis.

School Attendance Data

369. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 186 of 28 November 2017, the number of post-primary students aged 12 to 18 years of age in each of the 314 school planning areas used by the geographical information system. [54917/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The information requested by the Deputy is not available broken down by school planning area.

The overall number of 12 to 18 year old post primary students is available in the following table, broken down by the local authority area of the school they attend. The information given is from the 2016/2017 academic year, which is the latest year for which data is available.

Local Authority	Age							
	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Total
Carlow County Council	331	996	966	933	910	825	481	5,442
Cavan County Council	322	948	921	957	893	823	320	5,184
Clare County Council	443	1,476	1,549	1,538	1,417	1,330	429	8,182
Cork City Council	671	1,879	1,908	1,984	1,878	1,700	1,129	11,149
Cork County Council	1,395	5,054	5,283	5,080	4,930	4,588	2,846	29,176
Donegal County Council	851	2,346	2,294	2,368	2,233	2,009	815	12,916
Dublin City Council	2,410	5,039	5,295	5,176	4,992	4,706	2,150	29,768
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	1,004	2,558	2,465	2,620	2,393	2,339	1,299	14,678
Fingal County Council	1,562	4,142	4,084	3,940	3,514	3,002	1,261	21,505
Galway City Council	330	961	979	895	900	683	258	5,006
Galway County Council	695	2,554	2,535	2,534	2,372	2,071	963	13,724
Kerry County Council	539	1,869	1,994	1,984	1,866	1,646	589	10,487
Kildare County Council	1,250	3,377	3,436	3,238	3,109	2,651	1,262	18,323
Kilkenny County Council	511	1,283	1,323	1,362	1,264	1,097	640	7,480
Laois County Council	285	953	868	810	788	660	301	4,665
Leitrim County Council	188	477	462	451	412	396	150	2,536

Questions - Written Answers

	Age							
Limerick City Council	478	1,182	1,177	1,171	1,155	1,062	528	6,753
Limerick County Council	491	1,510	1,516	1,491	1,409	1,289	660	8,366
Longford County Council	193	680	706	738	675	562	231	3,785
Louth County Council	993	2,126	2,126	2,215	2,025	1,547	505	11,537
Mayo County Council	488	1,710	1,775	1,769	1,749	1,611	965	10,067
Meath County Council	903	2,702	2,709	2,670	2,495	2,018	737	14,234
Monaghan County Council	406	876	901	926	915	906	404	5,334
Offaly County Council	492	1,314	1,350	1,276	1,187	1,011	411	7,041
Roscommon County Council	193	581	589	619	545	498	213	3,238
Sligo County Council	331	849	867	870	795	724	330	4,766
South Dublin County Council	1,843	3,944	3,949	3,871	3,668	2,895	1,331	21,501
Tipperary (NR) County Council	373	1,157	1,135	1,176	1,287	1,067	590	6,785
Tipperary (SR) County Council	389	1,129	1,088	1,174	1,124	1,057	471	6,432
Waterford City Council	381	803	823	868	763	692	279	4,609
Waterford County Council	293	746	798	745	737	657	299	4,275
Westmeath County Council	509	1,492	1,549	1,589	1,479	1,330	532	8,480
Wexford County Council	704	2,259	2,271	2,168	1,988	1,870	905	12,165

	Age							
Wicklow County Council	725	1,976	1,978	2,003	1,787	1,645	875	10,989
Total	22,972	62,948	63,669	63,209	59,654	52,967	25,159	350,578

Question No. 370 answered with Question No. 306.

School Transport Applications

371. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address a matter regarding school transport for persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54960/17]

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 115,000 children, including almost 12,000 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 of 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, having regard to ethos and language.

Bus Éireann has advised that the pupils referred to by the Deputy reside under the distance criteria and are therefore not eligible for school transport under the terms of the Scheme.

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply to Bus Éireann on a concessionary basis for school transport on a dedicated service subject to a number of conditions.

The service referred to by the Deputy is a public scheduled services, and concessionary seats are not available on these services.

The terms of the Post Primary School Transport Scheme are applied equitably on a national basis.

Schools Building Projects

372. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a project (details supplied); if this project is still on course to commence in early 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54964/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The school referred to by the Deputy has recently been authorized to proceed to tender for the appointment of a Building Contractor. When the tender process has been completed and the tender report received and considered my Department will revert directly to the school regarding progression of the project to construction stage.

Schools Extra Curricular Activities

373. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an organisation (details supplied) or its affiliate organisations sought or gained access to deliver its educational programmes to schools in the past five years; and the details of same. [54979/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The organisation referred to has not made any approach to my Department regarding access to deliver educational programmes to schools. The board of management is the body charged with the direct governance of a school and is therefore responsible for making decisions as to what external organisations it uses to supplement the curriculum.

Schools Building Projects Status

374. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the progress of an extension to a secondary school (details supplied) in County, Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54984/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Deputy will be aware that a building project for the school in question is included on my Department's 6 Year Construction Programme.

My Department has carried out a site visit to the school in the context of progressing the school project. Schedules of Accommodation, for the purpose of the school project brief are being devised and my Department will be in further contact with the school when this has been finalised.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

375. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the location in which a person (details supplied) can access an ASD class. [55008/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): It is the policy of my Department that all children with Special Educational Needs, including those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in school settings through the primary and post primary school network.

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

Decisions about placement should be based on individual needs and take into account a number of factors including parental wishes, availability of evidence-based treatments and well-trained staff and individual factors such as targets for intervention and management of behaviours.

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

Others may have such complex needs that they are best placed in a special school.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), through its network of Special Educa-

tional Needs Organisers (SENOs), co-ordinates special needs education provision at local level and arranges for the delivery of special educational supports to schools. It is also the role of the NCSE to make appropriate arrangements to establish special classes in schools in communities where the need for such classes has been identified.

The NCSE is aware of emerging need from year to year, and where special provision is required it is planned and established to meet that need.

The NCSE has advised my Department that the child referred to by the Deputy is attending a mainstream class and accessing SNA support. Recent professional reports indicate that the child will require a special class placement. The NCSE local SENO has identified a number of special class placement options for the 2018/19 school year to the child's Parent's.

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, to seek to enrol their child, by applying in writing, to the school/s of their choice as early as possible.

In this regard, where Parents have been unsuccessful in enrolling their child in a special class placement for the 2018/19 school year, they should update their local SENO to inform the planning process.

The NCSE is continuing to work with schools, parents, NEPS, health professionals and other staff who are involved in the provision of services for children with special educational needs, to ensure that each child has a placement appropriate to their needs for the 2018/19 school year.

The NCSE pamphlet on moving between and mainstream and special settings provides information and practical guidance for Parent's on supporting their child to make a successful transition. It is available on the NCSE website at <http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/02157-NCSE-2016-Changing-Schools-SpecialtoMainstream-final-08.02.16.pdf>.

Schools Building Projects

376. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress of the next planned phase of the development at a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55006/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The building project for the school to which the Deputy refers is currently at Stage 2a of architectural planning – Developed Design Stage.

The Board of Management has recently submitted a Brief Change Request which is currently being reviewed by my Department.

Once the review is complete, my Department will contact the Board of Management with regards the further progression of the project.

Schools Extra Curricular Activities

377. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a joint application for funding for a music generation programme for children and young persons by Tipperary ETB and Tipperary County Council was refused; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55048/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Music Generation programme is a music education initiative which was established in 2009 and is co-funded by philanthropic sources, by my Department, and by local Music Education Partnerships (MEPs). The aim of the programme is to provide vocal and instrumental music tuition in non-mainstream settings for young people 18 years and under. 11 MEPs were established under the first phase of the programme.

In January 2017, Music Generation announced an open call for potential MEPs to apply for inclusion in Phase 2 of the programme. This phase of Music Generation will be initially supported by philanthropic funding, with Exchequer support from my Department becoming available from 2020.

Applications for inclusion in Phase 2 of the programme were assessed against stated selection criteria by an expert selection committee established by Music Generation and which included representation from my Department. The nine new MEP areas for Phase 2 were announced by the board of Music Generation in September 2017.

The number of applications received for Phase 2 of the programme exceeded the number of MEPs that could be supported by the available funding, with the result that some applicants were inevitably disappointed not to be selected for this phase.

I can advise, however, that as part of the launch in December last of A Plan to Enable the Creative Potential of Every Child and Young Person, it was announced that the Government would support the rollout of Music Generation nationwide by 2022. The plan is part of the Government's Creative Ireland programme and was launched by the Taoiseach, together with myself, the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform. My Department will work with Music Generation to discuss the details and logistics of the nationwide roll-out and more details will be announced at a later date.

Aitheantas Scoileanna

378. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Catherine Connolly** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna maidir leis an aighneacht atá curtha faoina bhráid ag Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna na Gaillimhe agus Ros Comáin (GRET) ag lorg aitheantas do Choláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin, céard é stádas na haighneachta sin; go háirithe, an bhfuil cinneadh déanta ina taobh; mura bhfuil cinneadh déanta, cén uair a dhéanfar cinneadh; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [55054/17]

408. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna cén uair a thabharfar aitheantas do scoil (sonraí tugtha) mar scoil neamhspleách; cén chúis atá leis an moill ar an gcinneadh seo; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [1261/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Tógfaidh mé Ceisteanna Uimh. 378 agus 408 le chéile.

Is mian liom a chur in iúl don Teachta go bhfuil iarratas ar stádas neamhspleách i leith Choláiste Eoin, Inis Meáin, á bhreithniú faoi láthair. Is i gcomhthéacs na scoileanna oileánda go léir atáthar ag breithniú iarratas na scoile seo le coiste tras-Rannach. Tabharfar an cinneadh

d'údarás na scoile a luaithe atá an próiseas breithniúcháin curtha i gcrích.

Schools Building Projects

379. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to carry out an in-depth site analysis for the building of a school (details supplied) on its existing site as early as possible in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55122/17]

380. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address a matter regarding acquiring a site for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55123/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 379 and 380 together.

As the Deputy is aware, a building project for the school referred to is included in my Department's 6 Year Capital Programme.

In the context of progressing the proposed project, my Department recently met with representatives of the school and its Patron where it was agreed that a technical site visit would be arranged. My Department will be in further contact with the school as soon as possible in that regard.

School Transport Provision

381. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the level of consultation, dialogue and engagement that is required of schools and other relevant agencies, including ETBs, with bus operators, including Bus Éireann, in advance of change of times for the school day; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55139/17]

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 115,000 children, including almost 12,000 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.

It is a matter for individual school authorities to decide the opening and closing times of their school. Bus Éireann has no role in this process but in doing so and particularly in circumstances where children rely on school transport services to get to school, it is reasonable to expect that the implications for families and for the operation of school transport services will be considered. Although not always made aware of changes in school times in advance, Bus Éireann is available to work with schools to advise what is operationally feasible bearing in mind that in most cases the bus providing the school transport service to one school is also required to operate a separate service to another school as part of a local network of coordinated school transport services.

Consultation between all parties would help to ensure that the most efficient service can be provided for the benefit of the families and schools served as well as continuing to provide the local network of services in the most economic fashion on behalf of the taxpayer.

Student Universal Support Ireland Administration

382. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason for the introduction by SUSI of the third party representative process (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55159/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Deputy will be aware that the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will take effect across the EU on 25 May 2018. As part of its due diligence process, SUSI has reviewed and updated its data processes and procedures.

SUSI processes data relating to up to 400,000 individuals in any one year and is obliged to ensure that personal information is processed in accordance with all relevant legislation.

Under GDPR, the concept of assumed and implicit consent to process data will no longer exist and data controllers like SUSI, must therefore ensure that they obtain explicit consent from individuals to process their data for whatever reason.

SUSI commissioned an independent audit and review of data protection procedures in 2016. On foot of the recommendations to mitigate against any potential data breach and to ensure that processes are operationalised and embedded in time for compliance with GDPR, SUSI has determined that in order to handle or process requests made by any third party on behalf of applicants and other parties to student grant applications, a form of consent or third party authorisation process is necessary.

Schools Administration

383. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the fact that independent bodies such as an organisation (details supplied) send resource packs to schools which causes concern for parents that their children may be exposed to unsuitable materials; if it is at the discretion of the teacher or school to review such packs; if training has been provided to teachers to allow them to identify if material is unsuitable or biased; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55160/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): A number of independent bodies regularly offer supports to schools to assist in delivery of the curriculum. The board of management of each school is the body charged with the direct governance of a school and is responsible for making decisions as to what external resources schools and teachers can use to supplement the curriculum and how these should be utilised.

My Department provides clear guidance to schools on the engagement of outside speakers and their use of resources in the delivery of elements of the curriculum, in particular in relation to Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). These guidelines are outlined in circulars 0022/2010 and circular 0023/2010 for primary and post-primary schools respectively. These circulars, which will shortly be revised, state that all materials proposed for use by external providers must be approved in advance by the principal and Board of Management, be age and stage appropriate for pupils and be in line with the ethos of the school, and the principles of the SPHE curriculum. There is also a requirement to take account of all relevant school policies and procedures, including the school's child protection policy, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) policy and substance misuse policy. Interventions and external inputs should be evaluated by the school principal, teachers, and pupils (as appropriate) in terms of the content, approach, methodology and proposed learning outcomes.

Home Tuition Scheme Provision

384. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of children in receipt of pre-school home tuition based on special educational needs; the number of households receiving home tuition in which there is more than one child in receipt of the home tuition; the number of these who are under and over three years of age, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55163/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The purpose of the Home Tuition Grant Scheme is to provide a compensatory educational service for:

(a) Early educational intervention for children with autism who meet the schemes eligibility criteria

(b) Students with special educational needs seeking an educational placement in a recognised school

(c) Students, enrolled in schools, with significant medical conditions which has caused, and is likely to continue to cause, major disruption to their attendance at school

The preferred approach is that children are educated in school settings where children may have access to fully qualified teachers, individualised education programmes, special needs assistants, school curriculum with the option, where possible and appropriate, of full or partial integration and interaction with other students.

Accordingly, Home Tuition is provided as an interim measure only for children for whom a placement in a recognised school is not available and should not be regarded as an optional alternative to a school placement.

In relation to the early intervention strand of the scheme, the Home Tuition Grant is provided for children aged between 2.5 and 3 years of age with an ASD diagnosis.

When these children reach the age of 3 they will be eligible to enrol in a state supported early intervention or preschool setting. Home Tuition is provided for children with ASD over 3 years of age (who will not reach the age of 6 during the 2017/18 school year), who meet the schemes eligibility criteria, and for whom an early intervention placement is not available, as confirmed by the NCSE.

Children with Special Educational Needs, including those with ASD, who are over the age of four may avail of Home tuition where a school placement is not available as confirmed by the NCSE, through the local Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO).

Home Tuition Grant allocations to siblings will be reflective of the school grouping principle i.e. where the pupil teacher ratio in school settings can result in one teacher being allocated to a class of six students with children of mixed age and ability at the appropriate educational level (i.e. primary or post primary). However, in recognition that siblings may have differentiated needs, my Department allocates additional hours to siblings on initial application without the requirement for supporting documentation. Applications for separate allocations for siblings are considered on a case by case basis.

Home Tuition Grant applications are received on an ongoing basis throughout the school year. For the 2017/18 school year to date, my Department is providing home tuition grants for 110 children with special educational needs aged 2.5 to 3 years, 484 aged 3 - 5 years of age and 38 children aged 6 years and over.

This includes 12 households that have more than one child with special educational needs in receipt of the Home Tuition grant. Of these 24 children, 2 are aged under 3 years, 16 are aged 3-6 years and 6 are over 6 years of age.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

385. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the case of a person (details supplied) with special needs will be examined whereby the person is to be transferred back into mainstream class in January 2019 owing to the withdrawal of a teacher. [55166/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In accordance with Circular 0042/2011, 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. School staffing schedules are reviewed and updated each year by the NCSE and special schools are allocated staffing accordingly.

With regard to the special school referred to by the Deputy, an additional teaching post was allocated to the school from September to December 2017, to cater for the specific special educational needs of an individual pupil, following consideration of the case by the NCSE, NEPS and my Department’s Inspectorate.

This provision will continue for the coming school term, as the particular pupil is re-integrated with other pupils in the school.

The NCSE will continue to monitor and review the position for the remainder of this school year.

DEIS Eligibility

386. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if DEIS status will be considered for a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55185/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): 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 www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Identification-Process.pdf.

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.

A further assessment of all schools 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 Eircode 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.

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.

School Placement

387. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the procedure in place for a family that is unable to find a second level place in their area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55186/17]

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.

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

Over the period 2011 to 2017 a total of 600 additional permanent school places were provided in the second level sector in County Kildare.

Large scale projects currently under construction in County Kildare will provide a further 1,500 additional permanent places in the sector.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

388. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the procedure in place for a family with a child with mild learning difficulties that is unable to secure a second level place for the child in their area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55187/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): 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 agency, is responsible through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), for planning and coordinating the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs. Each SENO works in an assigned local area with parents, schools, teachers, psychologists, health professionals and other staff who are involved in the provision of services in that area for children with special educational needs.

Parents/guardians of children with special needs who may need advice or are experiencing difficulties in locating a school placement should contact their local SENO for information on available places. The local SENO contact details are available on www.ncse.ie.

The enrolment of a child to a school, however, is a matter in the first instance for the parents of the child and the Board of Management of a school. My Department has no role in relation to processing applications for enrolment to schools. Parents are advised to seek to enrol their child, by applying in writing, to their 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 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 pupil, 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 this Department.

Special Educational Needs Staff

389. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the case of a person (details supplied) will be reviewed and the reinstatement of a SNA considered. [55192/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), which is an independent statutory agency, is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for allocating a quantum of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support for each school annually taking into account the assessed care needs of children qualifying for SNA support enrolled in the school. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support.

The criteria by which SNA support is allocated to pupils is set out in my Department's Circular 0030/2014. In considering applications for SNA supports for individual pupils, the SENOs take account of the pupils' needs and consider the resources available to the school to

identify whether additionality is needed or whether the school might reasonably be expected to meet the needs of the pupils from its current level of resources.

SNAs are not allocated to individual children but to schools as a school based resource. The NCSE has confirmed to my Department that the child to which the Deputy refers has never had access to SNA support allocated by the NCSE.

Details of SNA allocations which have been made to schools for the 2017/18 school year have been published by the NCSE on their website at <http://ncse.ie/statistics>.

Where a school has received its allocation of SNA support for 2017/18, but wishes new enrolments or assessments to be considered, which were not taken into account when the initial allocation was made, they may continue to make applications to the NCSE.

The NCSE Appeals Process may be invoked in the following instances:

- a parent or a school where it is considered that a child was not granted access to SNA support on the grounds that Department policy was not met in accordance with Circular 0030/2014.
- a school may also appeal a decision, where the school considers that the NCSE, in applying Department policy, has not allocated the appropriate level of SNA supports to the school to meet the special educational and/or care needs of the child(ren) concerned.

All schools have the contact details of their local SENO and parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child's special educational needs, using the contact details available at <http://ncse.ie/seno-contact-list>.

As the matter raised in this question refers to an individual child, I have arranged for the NCSE to reply directly to the Deputy.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

390. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a school (details supplied) in County Kildare will be considered for a special class to support children with mild and moderate learning difficulties. [55195/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department's policies focus on ensuring that all children can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in school settings through the primary and post primary school network.

A range of placement options for pupils with special educational needs is provided, in order to ensure that all pupils can receive a school placement. Many pupils with special educational needs will be able to attend a local mainstream school, whereas for pupils who have needs which require more specialist interventions, special class and special school placements are provided for.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), is responsible for processing applications from primary and post primary schools for special educational needs supports, including the establishment of special classes in various geographical areas as required. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support.

The NCSE welcomes expressions of interest from schools in opening special classes to meet the demand for special class provision. In deciding on the location of a special class SENOs

take into account both the present and the future potential need for special class provision and they must be satisfied that the special class is sustainable and appropriately located. SENOs liaise with relevant professionals in their area to arrive at an informed decision.

The NCSE continues to monitor and review the requirement for special class places in particular areas and has capacity to establish such new special classes where necessary, subject to the willingness of schools to open classes. All schools have the names and contact details of their local SENO. Parents are encouraged to liaise with the local SENO to discuss placement options for their child.

Special classes within mainstream schools are intended for children who, by virtue of their level of Special Educational Needs, cannot reasonably be educated in a mainstream class setting, but who can still attend their local school in a special class with a lower pupil–teacher ratio and access to Special Needs Assistant support.

The NCSE has advised that the SENO for the school to which the Deputy refers, has had ongoing contact with the school in regard to the establishment of a special class for students with a diagnosis of ASD. In this regard, the NCSE has issued sanction to the school for the establishment of an ASD class to commence in September 2018.

The NCSE has also advised that no request has been received from the school or from parents in the area, to establish a special class for students with a Mild or Moderate learning difficulties.

There are currently 6 special classes for students with mild/moderate GLD in mainstream schools (3 primary & 3 post primary) in Co Kildare. A list of all special classes is available on the NCSE's website at www.ncse.ie.

Departmental Properties

391. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the vacant properties and land not in use, owned, rented or leased by his Department or by bodies and agencies under the aegis of his Department by square footage for buildings and acres for land, in tabular form; the address and location of these properties; and the last date of occupancy or use of these properties. [55210/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that the information requested by him is being collated and will be forwarded to his office as soon as possible.

School Catchment Areas

392. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there is a second level school with a catchment area that covers the Rathborne, Pelletstown and Royal Canal Park area (details supplied); and the provisions for second level schools for young persons in this area. [55229/17]

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. The areas referred to by the Deputy are located in the Cabra_Phibsboro_Dublin 7 school planning area which is currently served by 8 post-primary schools:

1. St Vincents CBS Glasnevin;
2. St Paul's CBS;
3. Coláiste Mhuire;
4. St Declans College;
5. St Dominics College;
6. St Marys Secondary School;
7. St Josephs Secondary School; and
8. Cabra Community College.

Public Sector Pay

393. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the payment of increments in 2018 to public servants who are members of unions (details supplied) and who voted against the new public service pay deal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55230/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Under the provisions of the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017, if the Irish Congress of Trade Unions notifies the Workplace Relations Commission in writing on behalf of a recognised trade union that the union assents to be bound by the Public Service Stability Agreement, then that notification shall be treated as a notification by the union that it assents to be so bound. I understand that the Irish Congress of Trade Unions has notified the Workplace Relations Commission that its affiliate unions have assented to be bound by the Public Service Stability Agreement. Accordingly, members of such unions including ASTI, TUI and INTO are covered by the Agreement.

As such, all teachers who are due to receive an increment in 2018 will receive it with effect from the normal due date of the increment. The Act provides that public servants who are not covered by the Public Service Stability Agreement will have the payment of increments suspended from 1 January 2018 until 31 December 2020, among other measures.

From 1st January 2018, a newly qualified teacher straight out of college will commence on a starting salary of €35,958.

Departmental Reviews

394. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the workload review regarding lecturers in the institutes of technology, as promised in the previous public service pay agreement, will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55231/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In May 2016 agreement was reached with the TUI in the context of the Lansdowne Road Agreement and under the auspices of the WRC that a review of lecturing would be carried out.

Officials in my Department are in ongoing discussions with the parties to the agreement with a view to agreeing a format for the review as soon as possible.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

395. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the supports which can be accessed by high functioning young persons on the autistic spectrum who are not attending school. [55242/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department provides for the education of all children through the provision of recognised schools. Recognised schools must fulfil a number of conditions regarding curriculum, inspection and other matters.

It is the policy of my Department that all children with Special Educational Needs, including those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in recognised school settings through the primary and post primary school network.

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

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) policy advice on Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (2016) found that Students are generally well supported in schools with appropriate curriculum; extensive teacher and SNA supports; improving range of educational placements supported by improved accommodation and equipment; improved teacher knowledge and understanding and a generally good standard of provision at primary and post primary levels.

The NCSE policy advice noted that ASD is a spectrum condition, so some students with ASD may require little support in school and are relatively independent in their learning, while others require significant levels of support.

The NCSE Policy Advice also states that International Research findings suggest that most students with ASD should be considered for inclusion in mainstream education with their peers, where inclusion is well-planned and well-resourced.

Decisions about placement should be based on individual needs and take into account a number of factors including parental wishes, availability of evidence-based treatments and well-trained staff and individual factors such as targets for intervention and management of behaviours.

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

Others may have such complex needs that they are best placed in a special school.

There is therefore not one preferred educational environment for children with ASD, rather there is a model which takes into account the assessed educational needs of individual pupils.

The NCSE, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), is responsible for planning and co-ordinating the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs in conjunction with schools and the Health Service Executive (HSE). This includes the establishment of special class and special school placements in various geographical areas where there is an identified need.

The local SENOs are available to assist parents to identify appropriate educational placements for children with special educational needs and to discuss their child's special educational needs. The local SENO contact details are available on www.ncse.ie.

The NCSE also works in collaboration with the Educational Welfare Services (EWS) of the Child and Family Agency which is the statutory agency that can assist parents who are experiencing difficulty in securing a school place for their child or can offer assistance where a child is out of school.

The local service is delivered through the national network of Educational Welfare Officers (EWO). Contact details are available at www.tusla.ie/get-in-touch/education-and-welfare/.

Where there is no placement available for a child with Special Educational Needs, my Department will consider applications under the Home Tuition Grant Scheme, where a student can receive up to 20 hours home tuition per week as an interim measure until a placement becomes available. The availability of a school placement is assessed by the NCSE having regard to, although not limited to, the relevant diagnosis and relevant professional report.

The Home Tuition Grant Scheme also provides a compensatory educational service for Students, enrolled in schools, with significant medical conditions which has caused, and is likely to continue to cause, major disruption to their attendance at school.

Where parents choose to educate their children in places other than recognised schools they are not eligible to avail of resources, including the Home Tuition Grant, which they may have accessed through enrolling or seeking to enrol their child in a recognised school.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

396. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a school (details supplied) in County Wicklow will be equipped with a special needs unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55243/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The school referred to by the Deputy is one of six projects which are being delivered under the Department's Schools Bundle 5 Public Private Partnership (PPP) programme. Construction commenced at the end of July 2016 and is expected to be completed in Quarter 1 of 2018. When completed, this replacement Post Primary school building will provide for 450 student places.

The schedule of accommodation agreed for the school under reference did not include provision of a Special Needs Unit; therefore, it does not form part of the school project.

Teacher Discipline

397. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the circumstances in which an employer may commence or cease at different stages the procedures set out in circular 0071/2014, in tabular form. [55247/17]

398. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the circumstances in which an employer may commence or cease at different stages the procedures set out in circular 0059/2009 prior to it being superseded by circular 0071/2014, in tabular form. [55248/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 397 and 398 together.

The procedures set out in Circular 0071/2014 (and Circular 0059/2009 prior to its being superseded by 0071/2014) contain two strands – a strand dealing with issues of professional competence as a teacher and a second strand dealing with work and conduct issues.

The different stages set out in each strand are as follows:

1. Professional Competence Strand

Stage	Description	Potential Outcome
Stage 1	Informal Stage	(i) No further action; or(ii) Progression to Stage 2
Stage 2	Initiation of formal process	(i) No further action; or(ii) Progression to Stage 3
Stage 3	External review by an Inspector	(i) No further action; or(ii) Progression to Stage 4
Stage 4	Disciplinary Hearing	(i) No further action; or(ii) Disciplinary action is taken by the Chief Executive as follows:- Final written censure- Deferral of an increment- Withdrawal of increment(s)- Suspension with or without pay- Dismissal
Stage 5	Appeal	(i) No further action; or(ii) the disciplinary action proposed by the Chief Executive should be amended; or(iii) the case should be re-considered by the Chief Executive; or (iv) The disciplinary action proposed by the Chief Executive proceeds.

2. Work and Conduct Issues Strand

Stage	Description	Potential Outcome
Informal Stage		(i) No further action; or(ii) Initiation of formal process
Stage 1	Initiation of formal process	(i) No further action; or(ii) Verbal Warning issued
Stage 2	Continuation of formal process	(i) No further action; or(ii) Written Warning issued
Stage 3	Continuation of formal process	(i) No further action; or(ii) Final Written Warning issued

Stage	Description	Potential Outcome
Stage 4	Disciplinary Hearing	(i) No further action; or(ii) Disciplinary action is taken by the Chief Executive as follows- Final written censure- Deferral of an increment- Withdrawal of increment(s)- Demotion - Other disciplinary action short of suspension or dismissal- Suspension with or without pay- Dismissal
Stage 5	Appeal	(i) No further action; or(ii) the disciplinary action proposed by the Chief Executive should be amended; or(iii) the case should be re-considered by the Chief Executive; or (iv) The disciplinary action proposed by the Chief Executive proceeds.

In cases of gross misconduct, any or each of Stage 1 to 3 of the disciplinary procedure may not apply depending on the gravity of the alleged offence.

The procedures may be commenced or ceased at different stages by the employer depending on the circumstances of the individual case concerned. For example, where an employer considers that a conduct issue has been satisfactorily dealt with through the issuing of a written warning, then the procedure would cease after Stage 2. Where an employer considers that a conduct issue is sufficiently grave, they may begin the disciplinary process at Stage 4 as provided for in the procedures.

Special Educational Needs Data

399. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of special education needs organisers in County Wicklow, in tabular form; the number of vacancies and the recommended staffing level for County Wicklow in each of the years 2011 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55252/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of Special Needs Organisers (SENOs), for fulfilling the functions of the NCSE Council within a designated area in relation to the identification of and delivery and co-ordination of education services to children with disabilities.

The NCSE employs SENOs to provide a nationwide system of local services. Locally based SENOs consult widely with parents/guardians, teachers, health care professionals, school authorities, HSE and other relevant government agencies.

There are currently 83 sanctioned SENO posts in the NCSE. These include 1 Head of Local Services, 9 Senior SENO posts and 73 SENO posts.

Since 2014, the number of SENO posts have increased from 67 to 73 while the NCSE's SENO management structure was strengthened in 2014, with the creation of a new professional post of Head of Local Services to directly manage the SENO grades.

From 21st March 2017, the Special Education Support Service (SESS), the National Behavioural Support Service (NBSS) and the Visiting Teacher Service for Children who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Children who are Blind/Visually Impaired (VTHVI) transferred from my Department to the NCSE and joined with the services already being provided by NCSE's SENOs and administrative staff to form a new NCSE Support Service. This new service aims to develop schools' capacity to include students with special educational needs and to promote a continuum of educational provision which is inclusive and responsive.

A list of SENOs and their Contact details by county is available on the NCSE website at <http://ncse.ie/seno-contact-list>.

I have arranged for the NCSE to reply directly to the Deputy regarding the information requested relating to SENO posts in Co Wicklow from 2011 to 2017.

Student Support Schemes

400. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there are exceptions to the rule that a person who has studied to degree level in the UK and benefitted from free fees there cannot avail of any State support here to study an entirely different subject to degree level here, even if the person is studying a subject here in which there is a defined skills shortage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55253/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The main support available to assist students with the cost of higher education is the student grant scheme.

One of the criteria in the student grant scheme relates to 'progression'. This means that a student must be moving from year to year within a course, having successfully completed the previous year or be transferring from one course to another, where the award for the subsequent course is of a higher level than the previous course.

The objective of this policy is to help as many students as possible to obtain one qualification at each level of study. If an individual already holds a degree regardless of where it was obtained, s/he is not eligible for funding at the same level again.

If the person to whom the Deputy refers is ineligible for a SUSI grant then there are some other options which could be pursued.

Students in third-level institutions experiencing exceptional financial need can apply for support under the Student Assistance Fund. This Fund assists students, in a sensitive and compassionate manner, who might otherwise be unable to continue their third level studies due to their financial circumstances. Details of this fund are available from the Access Office in the college attended.

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

Disability Act Employment Targets

401. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the circulation of a form by the education and training board management instructing staff to declare disability they may have or had including episodic illnesses. [55274/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Disability Act 2005 requires public bodies to promote and support the employment of people with disabilities and to achieve a target of 3% of staff with disabilities. It also provides a framework for monitoring the employment targets through Monitoring Committees in Government Departments. The role of the Monitoring Committees is to monitor and, in consultation with the National Disability Authority (NDA), encourage compliance with the Act by all public bodies under its aegis.

Under the relevant legislation, aegis bodies of my Department are required to provide my Department's Monitoring Committee with data on the number of people with disabilities employed in their organisations during the preceding year for inclusion in an annual report on compliance. The National Disability Authority has developed a suite of forms which are used by bodies for the collection of this data. These forms provide for the confidential and anonymous disclosure by staff of a disability and this information is used solely for statistical purposes. While staff are encouraged to report disabilities for the purpose of this Part 5 process, the collation of data is largely reliant on the voluntary disclosure of such disabilities by individuals.

Eighteen aegis bodies of my Department are obliged to report under the Act. However, in accordance with the guidance of the NDA and in keeping with the spirit of the Act, which promotes accessibility in as many areas of the public service as is practicable, some thirty two other bodies, including the Education and Training Boards, also provide statistical information to my Department's Monitoring Committee on the numbers of people with disabilities employed in their organisations.

Schools Building Projects Applications

402. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application for additional accommodation by a school (details supplied). [1036/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I can confirm that the school referred to by the Deputy has recently submitted an application to my Department for additional accommodation.

The application will be considered and a decision will be conveyed to the school authority as soon as the assessment process has been completed.

Education and Training Boards

403. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress to date in the provision of the new headquarters for the Louth and Meath Education and Training Board, LMETB, in Drogheda; the original timeframe agreed with his Department; the reason for the delay in commencing construction; if the LMETB has been queried by his Department regarding the delays on the Drogheda site and, if not, the reason; the action he will take to ensure construction commences; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1051/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy may be aware, the project to which he refers has been devolved for delivery to the local Education and Training Board (LMETB).

The project has been mainly delayed due to design issues. Having tendered for the project, additional security issues for the proposed building became apparent. These required a change in brief with the consequent design alterations. The project is currently at stage 2 B of the architectural planning process and a revised stage 2 B cost plan, to include the additional works, was recently submitted to my Department for consideration.

My Department is currently reviewing its programme for capital expenditure in 2018 and 2019. Building projects, including the new HQ for LMETB, will be considered in that context.

School Curriculum

404. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the selection process for schools that were selected to teach the new leaving certificate computer science subject; the number of schools that were offered the programme in County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1063/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The introduction of Computer Science as a Leaving Certificate subject is part of this Government's overall commitment to embed digital technology in teaching and learning. I asked my Department to accelerate the introduction of this exciting new subject into the first phase of schools to September 2018.

As part of the process of identifying schools to participate in Phase 1 of the implementation of Leaving Certificate Computer Science, my Department issued a circular letter (ref 0067/2017) to all post-primary schools inviting them to apply. This letter advised that a small cohort of schools would be selected for this initial phase. The letter also advised of the section criteria that would be used to assist in selecting the Phase 1 schools, viz.

- There is support from the Board of Management and senior leadership within the school, in consultation with the school community, for this initiative;
- The school is willing to offer Computer Science as a Leaving Certificate subject on the time-table from September 2018;
- The school can identify a teacher (or teachers) with relevant experience and/or qualifications who are willing to teach Computer Science and participate in the required professional development within school time;
- Teachers are willing to participate in some professional development in their own time if and when the need arises;
- The school has a viable number of students interested in studying Computer Science as a Leaving Certificate subject.

A Steering Group chaired by my Department was established to oversee the implementation of the new subject. The applications received from schools to participate in Phase 1, over 130 of them, were examined and assessed by a sub-group of this steering group. The 40 schools identified by the Selection sub-group, which included a spread by geographical area and school type, were subsequently approved by the Steering Group.

While many of the applications received from schools were of high quality, the requirement

to have a relatively small number of schools comprising the Phase 1 cohort meant that some schools would be inevitably disappointed. However, it is my Department's intention, following the experience of the Phase 1 implementation, to ultimately offer Computer Science as a Leaving Certificate option to all interested schools.

Schools that were unsuccessful in their application to participate in Phase 1 have been notified accordingly. While understanding the Deputy's request for specific details in relation to schools in Louth that may have applied for inclusion in Phase 1, it is not the place of the Department to provide details of unsuccessful applicants. Unsuccessful schools were not advised that such details would be shared.

School Transport Availability

405. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a school run (details supplied) in County Tipperary which was deemed eligible for school transport for ten families will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1116/18]

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 115,000 children, including almost 12,000 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 of my Department's Primary School Transport Scheme children are eligible for transport where they reside not less than 3.2 kilometres from and are attending their nearest primary school as determined by the Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

A minimum number of 10 eligible children residing in a distinct locality, as determined by Bus Éireann, are required before consideration may be given to the establishment or retention of school transport services, provided this can be done within reasonable cost limits.

Bus Éireann has advised that in the case referred to by the Deputy, there are currently 7 eligible children who have applied for school transport to the school referred to by the Deputy.

Where there are not enough eligible pupils residing in an area to warrant the establishment of a service, a remote area transport grant may be paid by the Department to the parent/guardian of the eligible pupils concerned. Bus Éireann will forward the applicants' details to the Department, which will then contact families directly regarding the Remote Area Grant.

The terms of the Primary School Transport Scheme are applied equitably on a national basis

Schools Building Projects Applications

406. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application for a sports hall by a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1160/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that the position in relation to the application by the school referred to is that due to competing

demands on my Department's capital budget imposed by the need to prioritise the limited funding available for the provision of essential classroom accommodation it is not possible to fund the provision of a General Purpose Room at this time.

Cóiríocht Scoile

407. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna cén uair a cheadófar deontas, a bhfuil iarratas déanta ina leith, do scoil (sonraí tugtha) chun cóiríocht níos feiliúnaí a chur ar fáil ann; cén chúis atá leis an moill ar an gceadú; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [1260/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Is mian liom a chur in iúl don Teachta nach bhfuair mo Roinn iarratas le déanaí ón scoil dá ndearnadh tagairt maidir le cóiríocht bhreise a sholáthar.

Bheadh de rogha ag an scoil iarratas a chur isteach chuig mo Roinn dá mba rud é gur aithin siad easnamh cóiríochta; is féidir foirmeacha iarratais a fháil ar láithreán gréasáin mo Roinne www.education.ie. Is sa chomhthéacs thuas a bhreithneofar an t-iarratas.

Question No. 408 answered with Question No. 378.

Na hOileáin amach ón gcósta

409. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna ar thug sé cuairt, ó ceapadh é mar Aire, ar aon cheann de na bunscoileanna nó na meánscoileanna ar na hoileáin amach ón gcósta chun tuiscint a fháil ar na dúshláin atá roimh na scoileanna seo; más rud é nár thug, an bhfuil sé i gceist aige cuairt mar sin a thabhairt go luath; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [1262/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Níl cuairt tugtha agam ar scoileanna na n-oileán ach aithním go mór na dúshláin ar leith atá ag scoileanna na n-oileán. Coimeádtar cuiri ó scoileanna i m'oifig agus áirítear iad le linn cuairteanna réigiúnacha go dtí an ceantar.

Ardaíodh an-chuid de na saincheisteanna ina bhfuil tionchar acu ar scoileanna ar na hoileáin ag an gComhdháil ETBI ar a d'fhreastail mé. Déanfaidh m'oifigigh cíoradh ar an tuairisc is déanaí ó Choiste Oireachtais na Gaeilge, na Gaeltachta agus na nOileán chun féachaint ar chén tacaíocht gur féidir a thabhairt do na scoileanna seo le bealach chun cinn.

Scoileanna Oileáin

410. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna an bhfuil sé i gceist aige beartas faoi leith a fhorbairt i leith na meánscoileanna ar na hoileáin amach ón gcósta; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [1263/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Chun a fhiafraí den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna an bhfuil sé i gceist aige beartas faoi leith a fhorbairt i leith na meánscoileanna ar na hoileáin amach ón gcósta; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh.

Aithním na dúshláin bhreise atá ag scoileanna na n-oileán. Ag tabhairt na dúshláin seo san

áireamh, leag mé amach figiúirí difriúla do cheapadh agus do choinneáil múinteoirí ranga príomhshrutha i mbunscoileanna na n-oileán i mBúiséad 2017.

Tá tuairisc ón gCoiste Oireachtais na Gaeilge, na Gaeltachta agus na nOileán, dar dáta Meán Fómhair 2017, faighte agam ina nochtann an Coiste a dtuairimí mar gheall ar na dúshláin bhreise atá ag scoileanna na n-oileán. D'iarr mé ar m'oifigigh féachaint ar an tuairisc seo agus ar riachtanais scoileanna na n-oileán uile, iar-bhunscoileanna na n-oileán san áireamh. Thosaigh obair an ghrúpa ag deireadh na bliana 2017 agus déanfar dul chun cinn leis an obair seo in 2018. Déanfaidh an grúpa oibre cíoradh ar an tuairisc chun féachaint ar chén tacaíocht gur féidir a thabhairt do na scoileanna chun é seo a thabhairt chun cinn.

Third Level Charges

411. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason an additional fee of €100 has been added to the existing course fee (details supplied) for students in receipt of a SUSI grant; the persons to whom these additional fees apply; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1282/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware an additional fee of €100 has been added to the existing course fee (details supplied) for all students, including those in receipt of a SUSI grant:

This additional €100 material fee has been added to existing course fee to cover the costs of course related material. This fee includes items such as laboratory manuals, printed material, field trips, glassware, software licenses, and project materials. The material fee applies to all full time students on all full time programmes, which includes students in receipt of a SUSI grant.

Higher education institutions, are autonomous bodies and therefore the day to day operation of the institution, are matters for the Governing Authority of each institution. I have been advised that the Fee Schedule 2017-18 was approved by the Governing Body on 22 March 2017.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

412. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there is provision for children with special needs to attend preschool for an additional year rather than commence primary school at six years of age; his views on whether such children would benefit from a second year in preschool rather than commencing primary school at six years of age; his further views on whether some children with additional needs are not ready to complete preschool at three years of age or to commence primary school at five years of age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1297/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department does not provide funding to pre-school services other than to early intervention classes in recognised primary schools or special schools. Supports for childcare, including pre-school education, are provided by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

The principal vehicle for the delivery of pre-school education is the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme which provides early childhood care and education for children of pre-school age.

Since ECCE was first introduced, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs has worked

to improve the pre-school experience for children with disabilities and to optimise their early development.

The two main enhancements are:

- ECCE entitlement currently averages at 61 weeks, up from 38 weeks, and it will expand further to 76 weeks from September 2018. This is in keeping with good international practice.

- The Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) has been introduced with 7 different levels of support for children with disabilities. Over 4,000 children have so far benefited from targeted supports and many multiples of this from universal supports available under AIM.

Details of the supports which are available under AIM can be found at www.preschoolaccess.ie which contains comprehensive information on the access and inclusion model and on how to apply for the new schemes and supports.

Overage exemptions were introduced at the commencement of the ECCE programme in 2010. At that time, the ECCE Programme only operated for a 38 week period, or one programme year.

For some children with special/additional needs, attending preschool five days a week, in the absence of targetted supports such as those provided for under AIM, was considered challenging and so an allowance was made to enable them split ECCE over 2 years, for example, a child may have availed of 3 days ECCE provision in year one and 2 days in year two. Their total ECCE provision remained at 38 weeks.

In order to facilitate this, in the cases where the child would have been over the age limit for ECCE (5 years and 6 months when finishing ECCE) an overage exemption was approved. This flexibility was never intended to conflict with the legislative requirement to start school by age six and the primary school system has a variety of resources to support children with disabilities.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs in collaboration with officials of my Department are currently commissioning a review of the overage exemption arrangements and I understand that the exemption arrangements have been retained pending the completion of that review

The policy of my Department is to ensure that all children with Special Educational Needs can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in age appropriate school settings through the primary and post primary school network.

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

My Department's policy is that all children must be enrolled in the primary school system, whether through placement in mainstream classes, in special classes or in special schools in the September prior to their sixth birthday. If children are not in school by six years of age, under the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Educational Welfare service must be satisfied that the child is receiving a minimum standard of education in a place other than a recognised school. At present there are no plans to amend this policy.

Schools Building Projects Applications

413. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the funding and resources shortfall at a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1300/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The school to which the Deputy refers has submitted an application to my Department for additional accommodation. This application is being assessed and a decision will be conveyed to the school authority as soon as possible.

In addition, my Department is currently reviewing an Emergency Works Scheme application from the school and, again, a decision on this will issue as soon as possible.

With regard to the Special Needs Assistant position at the school, where a school wishes new enrolments or new assessments to be considered, which were not taken into account when a former decision on its Special Needs Assistant requirements was made, it may apply for consideration of this to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) through its local Special Education Needs Organiser. Also, the NCSE has an appeals mechanism for the allocation of learning support and resource teachers which the school can avail of.

DEIS Eligibility

414. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a school (details supplied) in County Donegal remains excluded from the current DEIS programme; the efforts being made to allow for additionality to the existing scheme with the view to including qualifying schools in the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1311/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): 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 www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Identification-Process.pdf.

It is important to note that 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 also 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.

A further assessment of all schools 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 Eircode which can now be recorded by schools on both POD and PPOD databases. The HP Index, based on the 2016 National Census data which is now available.

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.

Summer Works Scheme

415. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the 2018 summer works scheme; if a summer works scheme was offered in 2017; the status of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1375/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The current Summer Works Scheme (SWS) is being applied on a multi-annual basis. The Deputy will also be aware that nearly 50% of schools have applied for inclusion under the scheme which reflects a very high demand.

Almost €80 million has been approved to date under the Summer Works Scheme, in respect of over 640 school projects in categories 1 - 6. Details of the successful school applicants are published on my Department's website www.education.ie.

The 2018 budgetary provision will allow my Department to meet the carry over costs of summer works projects already approved. The assessment of applications in the remaining categories 7-10 as well as proceeding with any future summer works scheme is reliant on the availability of funding.

Schools Building Projects Status

416. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a contractor has been appointed to carry out works on a school (details supplied); the start date for works to commence on site; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1380/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department is currently awaiting the return of the completed tender report and when this is received and considered my Department will revert directly to the school regarding progression of the project to the next stage. Subject to no issues arising with the tender report or the supplementary tender report which will follow, it is anticipated that construction should commence in the second quarter of 2018.

Schools Building Projects Status

417. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the initiatives being taken by his Department to advance the building project for a school (details supplied) in County Kildare. [1391/18]

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 is currently finalising the stage 2b documentation and expects to submit the finalised Stage 2b Report to my Department shortly.

Upon receipt and review of this outstanding documentation my Department will revert to the Board of Management with regard to the further progression of the project at that time.

Schools Building Projects Status

418. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the initiatives being taken by his Department to advance the building project for a new primary school (details supplied) in County Kildare. [1392/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The major building project referred to by the Deputy is at an advanced stage of architectural planning Stage 2b (Detailed Design), which includes the application for statutory approvals and the preparation of tender documents. A decision to grant Planning Permission was received from Kildare County Council on 20 December 2017.

The Design Team is currently working on the Stage 2b report which will be submitted through the Board of Management to my Department.

Upon receipt and review of this report my Department will revert to the Board of Management with regard to the further progression of the project at that time.

Mother and Baby Homes Inquiries

419. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the actions taken by his Department following the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation second interim report recommendation that it re-examine the decision not to include a number of institutions including a location (details supplied) in the residential institutions redress scheme. [1491/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The recommendations regarding redress in the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation Second Interim Report were carefully examined by the Government who considered that it would not be appropriate to deal with the question of redress in advance of any conclusions by the Commission who have, to date, made no findings regarding abuse or neglect.

The Commission was established by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and Minister Zappone is committed to addressing the issues which have already emerged through the

Commission's work without encroaching on their investigation or pre-empting the outcome of that process.

Education and Training Provision

420. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has received a proposal from KWETB for hospitality training in County Kildare for chefs, waiters and so on; if he will approve the setting up of such a training centre in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1517/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): I wish to advise the Deputy that neither my Department nor SOLAS has received a formal proposal from KWETB in relation to the set-up of such a training centre.

Schools Building Projects Status

421. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has appointed a design team for the required refurbishment and extension to a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1518/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Deputy will be aware that a building project for the school to which he refers is included on the 6-year Construction Programme. In this regard, my Department has carried out a site visit to the school. The next step includes the formulation of the accommodation brief for the project and this process is in train. My Department will be liaising with the school in due course in the context of initiating the architectural planning process for the project.

Schools Site Acquisitions

422. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the conveyancing process for the acquisition of a site for schools (details supplied) has been completed; if the site is now in the ownership of his Department; when a design team will be appointed to move both projects forward; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1520/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I can confirm that my Department is in the process of acquiring a site to accommodate the schools to which the Deputy refers. The school patrons have been informed of the proposed location of the schools.

Officials in my Department are liaising with all relevant parties in order to progress the site acquisition. When the site acquisition process has been progressed further, my Department will be in a position to progress the project into architectural planning. At this point I am not in a position to state when a design team will be appointed but I can assure the Deputy that every effort is being made to expedite the site acquisition process.

Schools Building Projects

423. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when tenders will be invited for a project (details supplied); the closing date for receipt of tenders; if they have

been invited; when construction of the new school is likely to commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1521/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The school building project to which the Deputy refers is currently at advanced architectural planning stage. The Department is in the process of setting up a new Design & Build Contractor Framework. It is expected that this framework will be established shortly and tenders will then be invited for this project. It is anticipated that tenders for the school in question will be invited in Q1 2018, with construction anticipated to commence in Q2 2018.

Schools Building Projects

424. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if tenders have been invited for a project (details supplied); if so, the closing date for receipt of tenders; when construction of the new school is likely to commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1522/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The building project referred to by the Deputy is for a new 24 classroom school including a Special Needs Unit, with a floor area of approx. 4,748m².

The project is currently at Stage 2B of Architectural Planning - Detailed Design Stage, which includes applications for all statutory consents, including Planning Permission, Disability Access Certificate and Fire Safety Certificate and also the preparation of tender documentation. Planning Permission for this project was received in August of this year.

The Stage 2B report has just recently been received and reviewed by my Department. A number of issues were identified as needing clarification by the Design Team prior to approval of the Stage 2B submission.

Once a revised Stage 2B submission which addresses these issues has been received and reviewed, my Department will then revert to the school with regard to a timeframe for progression to tender.

Schools Building Projects

425. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if tenders have been invited for a project (details supplied); if so, the closing date for receipt of tenders; when construction of the new school is likely to commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1523/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The major building project referred to by the Deputy is at an advanced stage of architectural planning Stage 2b (Detailed Design), which includes the application for statutory approvals and the preparation of tender documents. All statutory approvals have been secured.

The Stage 2b submission has been reviewed by my Department and comments issued to the school and its Design Team. My Department 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.

These confirmations have recently been received and my Department will shortly revert to the school with regard to the further progression of the project.

Schools Building Projects

426. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if tenders have been invited for a project (details supplied); if so, the closing date for receipt of tenders; when construction of the new school is likely to commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1524/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The major building project referred to by the Deputy is at an advanced stage of architectural planning Stage 2b (Detailed Design), which includes the application for statutory approvals and the preparation of tender documents. All statutory approvals have been secured.

The Stage 2b submission has been received in my Department and is currently being reviewed.

On completion of the review of this report my Department will revert to the Board of Management with regard to the further progression of the project at that time.

School Staff

427. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will sanction the appointment of a principal for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1525/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As part of the Major School Building Projects announcement in November 2015 by my Department and in view of the continued support for an independent Gaelcholáiste, it was confirmed that a Gaelcholáiste to serve the North Kildare area will open in 2019.

Department approval is given for the appointment of a school Principal from 1 September of the school year prior to the opening of a new school.

Schools Building Projects

428. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the fact that progress on the construction of a project (details supplied) is going well and that a school should be in a position to move to its new location in September 2018; if the accommodation required for the project can be agreed upon at this stage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1526/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The project to which the Deputy refers has a 24 month duration. It went on site in May 2017 and is scheduled to be completed in May 2019.

In the meantime, the local Education and Training Board is continuing to examine the options for accommodation for the school to which the Deputy refers. This involves consideration

of the timing and availability of appropriate infrastructure in the area.

Schools Building Projects

429. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will appoint a design team for the required extension to a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1527/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Deputy will be aware that a building project for the school to which he refers is included on the 6-year Construction Programme. In this regard, my Department has carried out a site visit to the school. The next step includes the formulation of the accommodation brief for the project and this process is in train. My Department will be liaising with the school in due course in the context of initiating the architectural planning process for the project.

Schools Refurbishment

430. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has received a request for financial assistance to deal with a flat roof in a school (details supplied) which is in danger of collapsing; if he will sanction funding for the work as a matter of urgency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1528/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department is not in receipt of an application for funding for roof works at the school to which the Deputy refers.

The school may apply for such works under my Department's Emergency Works Grant Scheme. Application forms are available on my Department's website www.Education.ie.

Schools Building Projects

431. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if tenders have been invited for a project (details supplied); if so, the closing date for receipt of tenders; when construction of the new school is likely to commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1529/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy will be aware, the project to which she refers has been devolved for delivery to the local Education and Training Board (ETB).

Planning permission has been received for the project which is at the detailed design stage. In this regard, the Stage 2B submission was recently submitted to my Department for examination. The outcome of this examination will be conveyed to the ETB as soon as it is available. As the project is still in architectural planning, it is not possible to say at this stage when it will proceed to invitation of tenders or construction.

Legislative Reviews

432. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the projects undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation, including the cost, the duration, the

number of staff required and if this process was carried out by his Department or outsourced in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [1563/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Department of Education and Skills has not undertaken any projects to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation in any of the years 2007 to 2017, or to date in 2018.

Schools Building Projects

433. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the development of a new ASD unit and additional classrooms at a school (details supplied) in County Westmeath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1581/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Deputy will be aware that a building project for the school in question is included in my Department's 6 year Construction Programme.

Preparatory work has been initiated to advance the project and my Department will continue to liaise directly with the school authority concerned in the context of progressing the project through the architectural planning process.

In the meantime, my Department recently approved funding to the school for interim temporary accommodation to cater for additional student numbers, including those with special educational needs.

Teacher Data

434. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary and secondary teachers currently on career break from teaching. [1582/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): There are currently 1,707 primary teachers and 557 voluntary secondary and community and comprehensive school teachers on career break. These figures do not include teachers from the Education and Training Board schools. This information would be available from the individual ETB.

Teacher Data

435. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary school teachers that graduated from all of the relevant training colleges or universities since 2014, in tabular form; the number of these graduates that have been successful in securing full-time employment here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1627/18]

437. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of post primary teacher graduates that emerged from the relevant training colleges or universities in each of the years 2014 to 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1629/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 435 and 437 together.

The following tabular statement contains the information requested by the Deputy.

The number of graduates from primary and post primary initial teacher education courses have remained reasonably constant in the last number of years.

My Department does not hold information regarding the number of graduates that have been successful in securing full time employment.

Initial Teacher Education Graduates		
	Primary	Post Primary
2014	1,726	2,018
*2015	920	884
2016	1,928	1,494
2017	1,880	1,535

Teacher Recruitment

436. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary school vacancies that existed in each of the years 2014 to 2017; the number of these that were successfully filled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1628/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The 2017/18 school year sees a significant increase of over 4,000 in teacher numbers in our primary schools compared to the 2013/14 school year.

Teacher allocations to all schools are approved annually by my Department in accordance with established rules based on recognised pupil enrolment. The criteria for the allocation of posts are communicated to school managements annually and are available on the Department website.

The recruitment and appointment of teachers to fill teaching posts is a matter for the individual school authority, subject to procedures agreed under Section 24(3) of the Education Act 1998 (as amended by the Education (Amendment) Act 2012).

The Statistics Section of my Department's website contains extensive data relating to schools at primary level, including teacher numbers. The most recent published information relates to the 2016/17 school year.

Question No. 437 answered with Question No. 435.

Minor Works Scheme

438. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to ensure that the minor works grant scheme is maintained on an annual basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1636/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Since 1997 the Minor Works Grant has issued in each school year with the exception of the 2012/2013 school year. The payment of the Minor Works Grant is not confined to any particular date and can in fact, if paid, be issued during any month of the school year. For the 2002/2003 school year, part of the grant was paid in May 2003, with the balance in October 2003.

As part of our longer term infrastructural planning, my Department will explore whether it will be possible to give greater certainty to primary schools in relation to the payment of the Mi-

nor Works Grant, taking account of the Government's 10 Year Public Capital Investment Plan, which is currently under development.

Apprenticeship Programmes

439. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures his Department is taking to increase the availability and uptake of apprenticeships which lead to careers in the construction industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1644/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): Apprenticeship is a demand driven alternance educational and training programme, which aims to develop the skills of an apprentice in order to meet the needs of industry and the labour market. Consequently, the number of construction related apprentices being registered is determined by employers within the construction sector. My Department is committed to supporting the registration of apprentices across all sectors, including the construction sector, and I understand from SOLAS that the forecast for future apprenticeship registrations in the sector remain strong.

Construction related apprentice registrations increased from 1,677 in 2015 to 2,285 in 2016 which represents an increase of 36%. This trend continued in 2017 with a further increase of 30% on the 2016 figure bringing the total number of construction related registrations to 2,976.

As the Deputy is aware, we are currently expanding the range of apprenticeships on offer to meet the identified skill needs of industry. Arising from our first call for apprenticeship proposals in 2015 an apprenticeship in Engineering Services Management, with the Construction Industry Federation (CIF) as industry lead, is currently being developed into a national apprenticeship programme. In addition, we recently announced 26 new programmes, arising from last year's second call for proposal, to be further developed into national apprenticeships, including a scaffolding apprenticeship, again with the CIF as industry lead and a senior quantity surveyor apprenticeship with the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland as industry lead. These new programmes, once developed, will add to and complement the range of apprenticeships currently on offer in developing the skill needs identified by the sector.

Furthermore, a digital campaign to promote apprenticeship is now underway with a dedicated Twitter feed #Generation Apprenticeship, a new apprenticeship website www.apprenticeship.ie, an Apprenticeship Ireland Facebook page and a LinkedIn page. The campaign seeks to promote the values of the apprenticeship model for both employers and prospective apprentices.

Teacher Recruitment

440. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the shortage of qualified substitute teachers available in primary schools in the Dublin 15 area will be addressed; the efforts under way to address this problem; if his attention has been drawn to the negative impact these shortages are having on staff and pupil morale; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1699/18]

451. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps he is taking to alleviate the severe shortage of substitute teachers in primary schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1887/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 440 and 451 together.

I am aware that schools have reported difficulties in recruiting substitute teachers at primary level and in certain subjects at post primary level, and I am committed to examining all possible means of addressing these issues.

I have recruited some 2,300 extra permanent, full time new teachers in 2016-2017 and 2,900 extra are being recruited in 2017-2018. All of the 2016-2017 posts have been successfully filled and the process for filling the additional posts in the current year is almost complete. We are successfully filling the posts that we are making available.

The final report of the Technical Working Group on teacher supply, 'Striking the Balance' was published on 9th June 2017. While the report focusses on the development of a model of primary teacher supply, the report outlined the work which will be required to establish a long term model of post-primary teacher supply. In October 2017, the Teaching Council, which has an advisory role in this matter, convened a consultative forum on teacher supply with relevant stakeholders with the aim of producing teacher supply proposals and a further meeting is due to take place in the coming weeks which will build on the initial discussions and will further inform our thinking in this matter.

Regarding issues around finding substitution at primary level, there are strong career opportunities in teaching and the number of permanent full-time positions are currently increasing at over 1,000 per year in 2016/2017 and 2017/2018. This increase in the number of permanent primary school teaching positions is providing strong opportunities for graduates to get permanent jobs. Due to the additional permanent positions being created, young teachers have greater opportunities to take on permanent positions, and as a result some schools may be experiencing issues in hiring teachers to fill temporary or substitute roles, which arise in schools for a number of reasons, including covering sick leave and career breaks.

I have already undertaken some measures to increase the pool of teachers available to schools in particular to fill short term vacancies. My Department informed all teachers retiring in 2017 that in order to remain eligible for employment in a state funded teaching post for a period of more than five consecutive days or to supervise the State examinations, a teacher must maintain his/her registration with the Teaching Council. My Department also increased the limits for employment while on career break at primary level to a maximum of 90 days in a school year. In addition, as a longer term measure, under my Department's Gaeltacht Policy, a new Irish-medium B.Ed. (primary teaching) ITE programme is being developed.

We are assessing other policy initiatives to increase the supply of teachers available to primary schools for substitute work and I am committed to examining all possible means to address the issue.

Youth Services

441. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education Training Board's involvement in an organisation's facility (details supplied); if there are plans to decrease its involvement; the plans that exist to continue employment schemes there; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1710/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I am informed by Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB) that the facility referred to is funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. Accordingly, my Department has no

direct role in relation to it.

DDLETB supports individual units of the organisation through the Local Youth Club Grant Scheme and Local Youth Club Equipment Grant Scheme. While administered by DDLETB, both of these schemes are also funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

Schools Building Projects

442. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when construction work will begin on a school project (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1715/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The major building project referred to by the Deputy is at an advanced stage of architectural planning Stage 2b (Detailed Design), which includes the application for statutory approvals and the preparation of tender documents. A decision to grant Planning Permission was received from Kildare County Council on 20th December 2017.

The Design Team is currently working on the Stage 2b report which will be submitted through the Board of Management to my Department.

Upon receipt and review of this report my Department will revert to the Board of Management with regard to the further progression of the project at that time.

Schools Building Projects

443. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when construction will commence on a new school building (details supplied); when the school is expected to be open; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1717/18]

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 is currently finalising the stage 2b documentation and expects to submit the finalised Stage 2b Report to my Department shortly.

Upon receipt and review of this outstanding documentation my Department will revert to the Board of Management with regard to the further progression of the project at that time.

Schools Building Projects

444. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an extension project for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1724/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The school to which the Deputy refers was approved funding under my Department's Additional Accommodation Scheme to provide 1 mainstream classroom & 1 WC for assisted users. The project has been

devolved for delivery to the school authority. The progression of the project is, therefore, a matter for the Board of Management. However, my Department understands that planning permission has been applied for in relation to the proposed project and an outcome is awaited.

Schools Building Projects

445. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the timeframe for the construction and remaining stages of a new building for a college (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1735/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy may be aware, the project to which he refers has been devolved for delivery to the local Education and Training Board (ETB).

Planning permission has been received for the project which is at the detailed design stage. In this regard, the Stage 2B submission was recently submitted to my Department for examination and approval. The outcome of this examination will be conveyed to the ETB as soon as it is available. As the project is still in architectural planning, it is not possible at this time to put a timeframe on when the project will commence on site.

Departmental Contracts Data

446. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the names of all agencies contracted by his Department to provide relationship and sexuality education and social, personal and health education over the course of the past four years; the costs incurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1750/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department has not contracted any agencies to provide relationship and sexuality education and social personal and health education over the course of the past four years. National and international research has consistently shown that the qualified classroom teacher is the best placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with students and that s/he can have a powerful impact on influencing students' attitudes, values and behaviour in all aspects of health education.

Circular 23 of 2010 which issued to all Post-Primary Schools advised that the SPHE/RSE programme should have a substantial skills development element and should not merely be information based. Such skills are developed over time and founded on an on-going relationship based on trust, understanding and mutual respect.

Circular 22 of 2010 which issued to all Primary Schools advised that a whole-school approach to the consistent implementation of SPHE is essential and that the classroom teacher is responsible for the implementation of the SPHE curriculum.

Young people flourish in an environment where there is a whole-school approach to the holistic growth of students and where there is a shared belief in their potential for development, learning and wellbeing.

At primary level, every teacher is fully trained to deliver the SPHE programme, as part of their Initial Teacher Education programme. The Health and Wellbeing Team in the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) provides an extensive programme of continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities to support teachers and schools in the implementation of RSE and SPHE programmes in primary and post-primary schools.

School Accommodation

447. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the lack of space for teaching at a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1772/18]

448. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if alternative sites for appropriate accommodation of a school (details supplied) have been considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1773/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 447 and 448 together.

I wish to advise the Deputy that the school referred to has submitted an application to my Department for capital funding for additional accommodation. The Deputy is aware that the school has indicated that the school site is constrained. My Department will continue to engage with the school authority in the context of assisting the school to meet its additional accommodation needs.

School Accommodation

449. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a decision will issue on an appeal by a school (details supplied) to his Department's buildings and planning unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1774/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I can confirm to the Deputy that my Department approved funding to the school in question to construct a Home Economics Room.

The school has since written to my Department seeking additional accommodation. The school's correspondence will be considered and a decision will be conveyed to the school authority subsequently.

Departmental Staff Data

450. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the proportion of employees in his Department or in organisations under its remit registered disabled. [1855/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Disability Act 2005 requires public bodies to promote and support the employment of people with disabilities and to achieve a target of 3% of staff with disabilities. In this Department in 2016 the percentage of employees with a disability under the definition of the Disability Act 2005 is 3.94%

Under relevant legislation, aegis bodies of my Department are required to provide my Department's monitoring Committee with data on the number of people with disabilities employed in respect of the preceding year for the inclusion in the overall report to National Disability Authority.

Of the eighteen bodies required to report under the legislation, thirteen have reported 3% or higher of their staff as having a disability and overall compliance was up from 3.8% in 2015 to 4% in 2016

Under the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities, which was published in 2015, the Government committed to progressively increasing the public employment target from 3% to 6% and my department and its agencies will continue to work to achieve the new targets.

Question No. 451 answered with Question No. 440.

Post-Leaving Certificate Courses

452. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to address the financial difficulties facing post-leaving certificate students as reported in the recent ESRI evaluation and SOLAS recommendations (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1888/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): Last week, I published the ESRI evaluation of the PLC programme along with the SOLAS response, which sets out 45 recommendations to address the findings of the evaluation and improve the quality of the learner experience, learner outcomes and overall programme efficiency.

A SOLAS led PLC Programme Improvement Advisory Committee, comprised of PLC partners will now be established by SOLAS to oversee development and implementation of a three year programme improvement plan, based on the recommendations set out in the SOLAS response, which include the development of a framework for appropriate learner supports as well as a review of the distribution of PLC places, taking into account a number of factors including the deprivation index.

Quarterly implementation progress reports will be published by SOLAS, following their review by the SOLAS Board, my Department and the National Skills Council.

It should also be noted that eligible PLC learners are entitled to student grant funding under the same terms, conditions and rates as third level students, details of which are available on the SUSI website at www.susi.ie and are also exempt from making the PLC participant contribution.

Eligible PLC learners in receipt of certain payments from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) will also qualify for a Back to Education Allowance (BTEA), details of which are available from DEASP who administer the scheme.

Institutes of Technology

453. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a site was identified in Wexford town for the development of a university campus; if so, the location of same; and the proposed date for the commencement of works. [1904/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Department has agreed to provide funding to enable Institute of Technology Carlow to acquire a site in Co Wexford, with a view to developing a new purpose-built campus on the site.

However, given the commercial sensitivities associated with land acquisitions, I am not in a position to comment on progress with respect to this acquisition at this time.

Student Grant Scheme Administration

454. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the rationale behind SUSI's new third party representation process; and the rationale for not now accepting email consent contrary to its email dated 5 December 2017 outlining the new process. [1906/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In order to respond to information requests made by third parties, including public representatives, on behalf student grant applicants in a manner that is fully compliant with the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 and as reflected the SUSI Data Protection Statement, SUSI must be satisfied that grant applicants and other parties to their grant applications have consented that their personal information may be released to third parties.

This consent may be given in different formats depending on whether the information to which the third party request relates is the information of either the grant applicant themselves or of another party to their application (such as a parent or spouse). In practice, and particularly where the third party request relates to the total household income relevant to a grant application, confirmation in the relevant form is required from the applicant and from each other party to the application.

The preferred form of consent for all parties to an application is that it should be given in writing through the submission of a signed third party authorisation form that is available in the forms section of the SUSI website (www.susi.ie/susi-forms).

However, in the case of requests relating only to the information of grant applicants themselves, the consent can alternatively be given either by e-mail sent by the applicant from their registered SUSI account (as this sufficiently verifies the consent) or it can be given verbally by the applicant over the telephone (where the applicant is present with the third party requester at the time the request is made).

For requests relating to the information of any other party to a grant application such as a parent or spouse, the required consent can only be given in writing through the submission of the signed third party authorisation form. Note that the consent of the applicant is also required to be included in the form in this case as the request concerns their application.

SUSI has notified this procedure to all public representatives from whom it currently receives requests for information on behalf of grant applicants and is notifying the procedure to all other requesters on a case by case basis as new requests are received. I have requested that SUSI issue any necessary clarifications of the procedure that may be required in this regard.

Capitation Grants

455. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has received correspondence from a school (details supplied) in County Donegal; if the school capitation grant will be increased in view of the hardship faced by schools across the country since cuts to the grant were made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1921/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department recently received the correspondence referred to by the Deputy.

I do recognise the need to improve capitation funding for schools having regard to the reductions that were necessary over recent years.

Budget 2018 marks the second year of major reinvestment in the education sector, as we continue to implement the Action Plan for Education, which has the central aim to make the Irish Education and Training service the best in Europe within a decade. In 2018, the budget for the Department of Education will increase by €554 million to over €10 billion.

Capitation funding remains a priority for me to address as part of the Action Plan.

The process is underway for restoring grant funding that is used by schools to fund the salaries of ancillary staff Circular 0079/2017 outlines the current rate increases in order to enable schools implement the arbitration salary increase for grant funded school secretaries and caretakers and to also implement the restoration of salary for cleaners arising from the unwinding of FEMPI legislation.

Schools Building Projects Status

456. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the construction of a new school building; and if confirmation that funding will be included in the upcoming capital programme for a school (details supplied). [1930/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The major building project referred to by the Deputy is at an advanced stage of architectural planning Stage 2b (Detailed Design), which includes the application for statutory approvals and the preparation of tender documents.

The Design Team has submitted written confirmation that it has completed a final review and is satisfied that the tender documents are complete, correct and in compliance with DoES and Building Control (Amendment) Regulations (BC(A)R) tender documentation requirements.

My Department is currently reviewing its programme for capital expenditure in 2018 and 2019. Building projects, including the project for the school to which the Deputy refers, will be considered in that context. Officials from my Department will shortly be in contact with the school regarding a timeframe for progression of this project.

Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board

457. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 204 of 27 June 2017, 224 of 20 September 2017 and 51 of 25 October 2017, when the eligibility review will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1932/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware, the review of Caranua is confined to the issue of eligibility of persons who may access the fund. The initial phase, which involves a review of Caranua's expenditure to date and an estimation of the projected expenditure taking into account applications on hands and anticipated further applications together with an estimation of any possible underspend of the available funding, is nearing completion.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

458. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a special

autism unit will be set up in a school (details supplied). [1952/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department's policy is that children with special educational needs including those with Autism, should be included in mainstream placements with additional supports provided, unless such a placement would not be in their best interests or in the interests of the children with whom they are to be educated, as is provided for under Section 2 of the Education of Persons with Special Needs Act 2004.

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

Some children may be supported in a special class attached to a mainstream school which offers a supportive learning environment to students who are unable to access the curriculum in a mainstream class. These students have the option, where appropriate, of full/partial integration and interaction with other students.

Other children may have such complex needs that the recommendation in their professional reports state that they are best placed in a special school.

Decisions about placement should be based on individual needs and take into account a number of factors including parental wishes, availability of evidence-based treatments and well-trained staff and individual factors such as targets for intervention and management of behaviours.

There is therefore not one preferred educational environment for children with special educational needs, rather there is a model which takes into account the assessed educational needs of individual students.

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

- S/he has a disability (in line with the designation of the special class in question) and
- S/he has significant learning needs that require the support of a special class setting and the reasons why this is the case.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), in consultation with the relevant education partners, is responsible for the establishment of special classes to support children with Special Educational Needs, including Autism, in various geographical areas where there is an identified need.

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

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 can access such placements in schools within their communities.

In the case of existing schools, where a school is not in a position to accommodate a special class within its existing accommodation, it is open to the school to submit an application to the Department for capital funding to (i) re-configure existing spaces within the school building to

accommodate the class or (ii) to construct additional accommodation.

I am aware that the NCSE has approached the school referred to by the Deputy to establish a special class for the coming school year and that my Department is currently reviewing the accommodation needs for the school.

Departmental Properties

459. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when consent and the terms of consent for the sale of an old school building (details supplied) will be given. [1953/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In circumstances where a property has ceased to be used as a school, and a request is received to release the State's interest secured under a charging lease, such requests are considered in the context of the specific circumstances which pertain to the individual property. I can confirm that my Department has received a request from the property owners to release my interest in the property to which the Deputy refers.

Officials from my Department are currently considering a request received in respect of the property referred to by the Deputy and will be in contact with the relevant property owners as soon as possible.

Higher Education Authority Funding

460. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the HEA will provide a breakdown of the funding made available to an institute (details supplied) in 2016 and to date in 2018; if a copy of the agreement made between the HEA and the institute can be provided to indicate the specific spending requirements agreed to at the time; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1955/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In 2014 a working group was established to examine the financial viability of a school of the multi-campus institute referred to by the Deputy. Following the recommendations of this Group my Department approved ring-fenced funding of €750k per annum for 4 years from 2017 to 2020 which equates to a total of €3 million.

The decision is subject to a plan including rebranding, continued part time student growth, increase engagement with the ETB, development of new undergraduate programmes and cost cutting measures which will be put in place.

The appointment of an independent external financial expert, Mr Michael O'Connell, was agreed with the Institute to review the campus and ensure that the overall institute could return to a balanced budget position. This review has been completed and a five year plan to facilitate this has been put in place. This plan is currently being updated following a meeting with HEA in December 2017 and a scheduled meeting is proposed in March 2018. Of the overall grant allocation, the DES has directed that this additional funding is to support the ongoing costs of the Campus and to assist the Institute in implementing the above plans and recommendations to return the institute financial stability.

Early Childhood Care and Education

461. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on a motion (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1991/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The early childhood education and care sector is largely funded and regulated by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The Department of Education and Skills plays an important role in the development and implementation of the two national practice frameworks, *Síolta* (quality) and *Aistear* (curriculum). My Department also supports and advises the Department of Children and Youth Affairs on qualifications and workforce development and is in the process of conducting a review of education and training programmes for early years practitioners. My Department, with its agencies, works to ensure that there is a smooth transition for children from pre-school into the primary school sector and also supports the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in the implementation of AIM – the Access and Inclusion Model for children with disabilities. However, beyond the promotion of this alignment and support for quality, there is no plan to further integrate the schools sector - statutory provision for which lies with the Minister for Education and Skills - with the formal Early Childhood Education and Care sector which is the responsibility of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

Post-Leaving Certificate Courses

462. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the recent ESRI report on post-leaving certificate courses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2029/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): I welcome the ESRI report on the evaluation of the PLC programme which is a strong endorsement of PLC provision. The report provides a solid evidence base to inform future policy development and to ensure provision is planned to meet the needs of learners and employers, taking into account all of the changes that have taken place, particularly in the labour market, since the programme was established in the mid 80s.

It confirms the positive role played by PLCs in providing education for a diverse range of learners, highlighting that on average PLC learners are 16% more likely to be employed and 27% more likely to have progressed to higher education, than those who left education with the Leaving Certificate alone. It also points to a greater need to develop systems to ensure that PLC courses focused on the labour market are aligned with employer requirements and are responsive to changing labour market needs.

Arising from the evaluation, SOLAS will shortly establish the PLC Programme Improvement Advisory Committee, comprised of PLC partners, to oversee development and implementation of a three year programme improvement plan. Based on the recommendations set out in the SOLAS response, implementation of the plan will ensure delivery of high quality education and training supporting learners to achieve their progression and employment goals.

SOLAS will publish quarterly implementation progress reports, following their review by the SOLAS Board and my Department.

Departmental Communications

463. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department uses anti-profanity software in its email systems and online contact forms; if so, the level of human oversight that is applied to the monitoring of this software and its effectiveness; his views on whether persons' legitimate right to petition Government may be blocked unintentionally by errors in the use of such software in determining that which qualifies as profanity being communicated in email and-or online contact forms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2084/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Department of Education in Skills has email filtering in place which endeavours to quarantine incoming emails that are categorised as containing profanities. The email filtering also endeavours to quarantine incoming email categorised as being of excessive size, containing viruses/malware/executables, originating from sites with a poor reputation or spam.

Specifically in relation to profanity, all my Department's incoming email communications are routed through a commercial email filtering system which endeavours to quarantine emails that are categorised as containing profane text or images. The system's profanity filtering capabilities are based on the sender's reputation as well as internal dictionaries and other technology proprietary to the vendor of the email filtering system.

All emails that are quarantined for reasons of profanity are notified to the intended recipient who is advised of the sender and the subject line of the quarantined email. Once the intended recipient declares that the email is business related they are released from quarantine, otherwise they are deleted after fifteen days. My Department's email filtering system therefore facilitates the notification to the intended recipient of all emails quarantined for reasons of profanity, including those blocked inadvertently and allows for their release.

In relation to the level of human oversight of incoming emails that are quarantined for reasons of profanity, both the intended recipient as already outlined and also the IT system administrators have oversight of the email filtering system. The email filtering function provides the Department with the ability to edit and amend the profanity filters as well as perform its own content filtering.

There is currently no filtering in place in respect of the Department's online forms.

Departmental Strategies

464. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the Government's initiatives in his Department in 2017 that promoted State services or welfare payments, public awareness of regulatory changes and public consultations that involved advertising and promotion on television, radio, newspapers and online, in tabular form; and the level of expenditure for each such initiative. [2260/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Details in relation to advertising for information campaigns in 2017 in my Department will be collated in early 2018. I will arrange to have the information forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it has been compiled.

Work Permits Applications Data

465. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of atypical work permits issued to previously undocumented non-EU fishing workers annually since the scheme was established. [54494/17]

466. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of pending applications for atypical work permits for previously undocumented non-EU fishing workers. [54495/17]

467. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of applications under the atypical non-EU migrant fishing worker scheme to change the employer to which they were originally documented under the scheme; and the number of these applications to change employer granted since the scheme began. [54496/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 465 to 467, inclusive, together.

I have been advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the Atypical Working Scheme for Seafarers commenced in February 2016. This provided a lawful pathway for persons, previously with no immigration or employment permission, to work lawfully in the Irish fishing fleet on boats of 15 metres and over in length. This was not a regularisation of undocumented workers but rather the putting in place, for the first time, of a regulatory regime for the employment of non-EEA workers in this sector of the fishing industry.

It was first open to all persons who were employed as fishermen without the appropriate immigration permission to apply under the scheme. This facility was open to them between February 2016 and July 2016. A total of 152 non-EEA nationals were given a permission under the scheme under these conditions and I assume these are the persons referred to by the Deputy as “previously undocumented”. Of the original 152 persons admitted to the scheme, some 108 renewed their permission in 2017.

Following that period, applications under the scheme could only be made from outside the State, or as a renewal of an existing permission.

Since the commencement of the scheme in 2016 a total of 5 persons have sought to renew their permission with a different employer.

Data Protection

468. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position in relation to the application of data protection legislation in respect of data including personal information held or processed abroad by or on behalf of financial institutions regulated by the Central Bank; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54969/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that I am not in a position to provide advice in relation to specific data protection matters in my capacity as Minister for Justice and Equality. Responsibility for oversight and enforcement of data protection law is a matter for the Data Protection Commissioner who is independent in the performance of her functions and exercise of her powers under the Data Protection Acts. Determination of the applicable law in any particular case will therefore be a matter for the Commissioner.

The general position in relation to the application of data protection law in the State is set out in section 1(3B) of the Data Protection Act 1988 (as amended by the Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003). It provides that the Act's provisions apply to data controllers in respect of their processing of personal data only if -

(i) the data controller is established in the State and the data are processed in the context of that establishment, or

(ii) the data controller is established neither in the State nor in any other state that is a contracting party to the Agreement on the European Economic Area but makes use of equipment in the State for processing of the data otherwise than for the purpose of transit through the territory of the State.

For these purposes, each of the following shall be treated as established in the State:

(i) an individual who is normally resident in the State,

(ii) a body incorporated under the law of the State,

(iii) a partnership or other unincorporated association formed under the law of the State, and

(iv) a person who does not fall within subparagraphs (i), (ii) or (iii) of this paragraph, but maintains in the State —

(I) an office, branch or agency through which he or she carries on any activity, or

(II) a regular practice,

and the reference to establishment in any other state that is a contracting party to the EEA Agreement shall be construed accordingly.

As the Deputy will be aware, the General Data Protection Regulation will apply with effect from 25 May next across the EU and will replace the national law provisions of the Member States.

Brexit Issues

469. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the threats or blocks to the status of British citizens living and working here in view of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55049/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I can advise the Deputy that the EU-UK Joint Progress Report on the UK's Withdrawal from the EU of 8 December records the issues upon which the EU and the UK negotiators have reached agreement in principle. These include recognition that the UK and Ireland may continue to make arrangements between themselves relating to the movement of persons between their territories (the Common Travel Area), while fully respecting the rights of natural persons conferred by Union law. As part of the Common Travel Area arrangements, no special permission is required by UK citizens who wish to enter, reside, or work in Ireland. This will remain the position following UK exit from the EU.

Garda Accommodation

470. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the funding for office space for the protective services unit for Bandon, County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55103/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda resources are a matter for the Garda Commissioner in light of his identified operational demands and the availability of resources and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

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 the responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that they have requested the OPW to acquire additional accommodation in Bandon to facilitate the implementation of Modernisation and Renewal Programme projects and they will engage with the OPW to identify a suitable property solution to meet requirements.

Traveller Data

471. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Travellers evicted under PART IIA of the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 1994 as amended by section 24 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002 in 2016 and 2017. [55104/17]

472. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Travellers that have been evicted by An Garda Síochána from their accommodation due to fire safety concerns in 2016 and 2017. [55107/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 471 and 472 together.

I have requested a report from the Garda authorities in relation to this matter and when this report is received I will contact the Deputy directly.

Visa Applications

473. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of a visa application by a person (details supplied). [1306/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service of my Department, that the individual referred to by the Deputy is not from a country for which a visa is required for entry into Ireland, and therefore there is no visa application on hand.

I am further advised that the individual has a residence permission to be in the State until to 14 June 2018.

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.

Assisted Decision Making

474. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 will commence. [1760/18]

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

New administrative processes and support measures, including the setting up of the Decision Support Service within the Mental Health Commission (a body under the Department of Health), must be put in place before the substantive provisions of the Act can be commenced. A high-level Steering Group comprised of senior officials from the Department of Justice and Equality, the Department of Health, the Mental Health Commission and the Courts Service is overseeing the establishment and commissioning of the Decision Support Service (DSS) and this work is ongoing.

The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 (Commencement of Certain Provisions) Order 2016 (S.I. No. 515 of 2016), brought some provisions of Part 1 (Preliminary and General) and Part 9 (Director of the Decision Support Service) of the Act into operation on 17 October 2016. These provisions were brought into operation in order to progress the setting up of the DSS and to enable the process of recruitment of the Director of the DSS to begin. The recruitment and appointment of the Director of the DSS, and the appointment of DSS staff, is a matter for the Mental Health Commission with the approval of the Minister for Health. Ms Áine Flynn was appointed Director of the Decision Support Service on 2 October 2017.

The key preparations are being put in place under the oversight of the Steering Group to allow for further commencement orders for the provisions of the 2015 Act to be made when the DSS is ready to roll out the new decision-making support options. It is not possible at the moment to provide an exact time line for the full implementation of the 2015 Act, not least because the newly appointed Director will need to fully scope out the time line for the implementation of the Act.

The 2018 Budget provides for an allocation of €3 million in the Justice and Equality Vote for the establishment of the Decision Support Service.

The commencement of Part 8 of the Act, which provides for a legislative framework for advance healthcare directives, is a matter for the Minister for Health.

Coroners Service

475. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the procedure to arrange for a post-mortem on a body located here to be carried out abroad, for example in Northern Ireland or the UK. [2110/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My Department is responsible for the coroner service. There is no such procedure as described in the Deputy's question set out in the relevant statute which is the Coroner Act 1962.

If a person dies in Ireland, in a manner reportable to the coroner, it is the coroner who determines if a post-mortem examination (and potentially an inquest) is required. Such post-mortem examinations are carried out at the direction of the coroner by a pathologist based in a hospital in most cases, with a smaller number being conducted by the State Pathologist. This is the standard and statutory process under the Coroner Act.

My Department officials have informed me that they are not aware that any coroner post-mortem examination has ever been conducted outside the State.

If the death is not one reportable to a coroner, neither the coroner or my Department has any role. For a “non-coroner” death, a hospital or the next of kin might, for medical research purposes, request that a post-mortem be carried out by the hospital. This is a voluntary process.

If neither of these two scenarios hold, then the next of kin would be at liberty to transfer or repatriate the body out of the State. Such happens quite regularly where the deceased is to be buried abroad.

Emergency Services Personnel

476. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of assaults that have been recorded against prison officers and gardaí in each of the past five years by geographical location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54331/17]

477. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of work days that have been lost as a result of assaults on fire fighters, prison officers and gardaí; the cost to the exchequer of such enforced absences from work; the number of staff that have not returned to duties as a result in each of the past five years, by profession; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54333/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 476 and 477 together.

I can assure the Deputy that I utterly condemn all attacks on our emergency services personnel. Such acts represent a blatant disregard for the safety of the brave men and women who work in our emergency services, who risk their lives every day in the service of the people of our State.

The Deputy will appreciate that the fire services do not come within my remit, however, to be of assistance I sought the information requested from the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government who have advised that the information is not compiled by them as Fire Fighters are Local Authority Staff. However, it does remain open to the Deputy to contact the Local Authority directly who may be able to assist him further in this regard.

In relation to Prison Officers, the following table provides a breakdown of the number of assaults that have been recorded against prison officers in the each of the past five years by geographical location and I hope the Deputy finds this information useful.

In June 2015, following a number of serious assaults on prison staff, the States Claims Agency commenced a review of assaults on prison staff by prisoners in accordance with Section 8 of the National Treasury Management Agency (Amendment) Act, 2000.

In November 2016 the SCA presented the report to the then Tánaiste. The report noted many positive findings including that, given the number of committals in 2015, the ratio of as-

saults to the number of prisoners in the system was very low. The role of a prison officer is a difficult and challenging one. Prison staff must deal with a wide range of complex issues and there are occasions when they are subjected to unacceptable acts of violence.

The report contains a large number of recommendations. These recommendations were accepted and will be implemented - an undertaking that has been included as a “Key Action” in the Irish Prison Service’s Strategic Plan 2016-2018. The Irish Prison Service is committed to creating a safer environment for all those who work or live within our prison walls. In addition, the Service is committed to ensuring that any staff member who is subject to or witnesses an assault is given the necessary supports in the aftermath of the incident.

Given the substantive nature of the recommendations, an implementation plan will be developed and actioned over the course of the next two years.

More generally, Section 19 of the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 1994 specifically provides for assaults or threats to peace officers, including prison officers acting in the execution of their duty. Any person who assaults or threatens to assault a peace officer in the execution of their duty is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine or a term of imprisonment not exceeding 12 months, or both, or, on conviction on indictment, to a fine or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 7 years, or both. In addition, the Act allows for judges to impose such sentences consecutively on persons found guilty of such offences.

I can assure the Deputy that every assault on our front-line staff is treated as serious and appropriate action, including the reporting of such assaults to an Garda Síochána for the purposes of investigation and criminal prosecution, occurs where appropriate.

I have sought a similar breakdown from the Garda authorities in respect of the number of assaults against Members of An Garda Síochána and I will contact the Deputy directly when the information is to hand.

Prisoner on Staff assaults

Prison/ Place of Detention	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017*
Arbour Hill	0	0	1	0	0	0
Castlerea	7	5	9	11	1	3
Cloverhill	9	12	20	8	21	2
Cork	7	8	13	7	3	6
Dóchas Centre	3	7	8	5	26	5
Limerick	10	5	3	2	4	9
Loughan House	0	0	0	0	0	0
Midlands	10	7	13	17	7	3
Mountjoy (Male)	19	34	30	22	12	2
St.Patrick’s Inst.	36	49	20	0	0	0
Portlaoise	0	3	2	6	5	4

Prison/ Place of Detention	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017*
Shelton Abbey	0	0	0	0	0	0
Training Unit	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wheatfield	6	10	26	10	12	4
PSEC	0	7	6	3	5	2
OSG	0	0	0	0	2	1
Total	107	147	151	91	98	41

* Provisional 2017 figures from 01 January – 30 June.

Public Sector Staff Safety

478. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of court convictions in each of the past five years for assaults on front-line staff including those in health care employments, An Garda Síochána, fire services and prison services; the number of those convicted who received prison sentences; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54335/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions, which include the provision of information on the courts system.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that it is not possible to provide most of the information sought by the Deputy as, for reporting purposes, it is not possible to differentiate between occupations or employment types of individuals assaulted.

The Courts Service has advised that the primary statutory provisions in relation to assault are contained in Section 2 (minor assault), Section 3 (assault causing harm), Section 4 (assault causing serious harm) and Section 18 (assault with intent to cause serious bodily harm) of the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997 and that most prosecutions for assault on individuals regardless of occupation, fall within the aforementioned sections.

The Courts Service has also advised that the following offences are specifically recorded in relation to members of An Garda Síochána:

- Assault with intent to resist lawful apprehension;
- Assault on a Peace Officer.

The following table provides details of convictions in respect of these two offences. However, most assaults against members of An Garda Síochána are prosecuted under Sections 2, 3, 4 and 18 of the aforementioned Act and consequently it is not possible to identify those assaulted persons who were members of An Garda Síochána.

Report on the number of convictions in the District Court from 1 January 2013 to 30 November 2017 for assault on a Peace Officer and assault with intent to resist lawful apprehen-

sion. Please note that data for December 2017 is not yet available.

-	Conviction Orders in 2013	Defendants in 2013	Conviction Orders in 2014	Defendants in 2014	Conviction Orders in 2015	Defendants in 2015	Conviction Orders in 2016	Defendants in 2016	Conviction Orders Jan - Nov 2017	Defendants Jan - Nov 2017
Fine	2	2			2	2	2	1	1	1
Community Service Order	3	3					1	1	1	1
Imprisonment/De-tention	7	6	3	2	4	4	3	3	4	2
Imprisonment/De-tention Part Suspended			1	1						
Impris-onment/ Detention Suspended	6	6	6	5	5	3	4	3	1	1
Peace Bond			2	2					1	1
Total	18	17	12	10	11	9	10	8	8	6

Note: If a Defendant received more than one Order, they will appear more than once on the report under Orders.

Public Sector Staff Safety

479. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the legislation he plans to introduce to counter the number of assaults on frontline staff, including those in health care employments, An Garda Síochána, fire services and prison services; when such measures are likely to be in force; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54336/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): There is specific legislation in place to deal with assaults on emergency workers in front-line positions.

The Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 1994, as amended by the Criminal Justice Act 2006, provides explicit statutory protection for what are termed “peace officers”, which include members of the Garda Síochána, prison officers, members of the fire brigade, ambulance personnel and members of the Defence Forces. The Act also covers those working in medical services in hospitals, including doctors, nurses, psychiatrists and others involved in the provision of treatment and care. Section 19 of the 1994 Act provides that any person who assaults or threatens to assault any of these front-line workers is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of up to €5,000 or a term of imprisonment of up to 12 months or both, or on conviction on indictment to a fine or imprisonment for a term of up to 7 years or both. The maximum sentence was increased from 5 years to 7 years under the 2006 Act.

It is also an offence under the 1994 Act, as amended, to resist, wilfully obstruct or impede a peace officer, or medical staff in a hospital, in the course of carrying out their work. The penalty on summary conviction for such an offence is a fine of up to €2,500 or imprisonment for a term of up to 6 months or both.

In addition, in the case of assault causing serious harm, an offender can be prosecuted under

the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997 which deals comprehensively with a wide range of assault provisions, the more serious of which carry heavy penalties. That Act provides for penalties of up to 5 years in prison for an offence of assault causing harm and for a penalty of life imprisonment for an offence of causing serious harm. This general law relating to assault has application to all citizens, including front-line emergency workers.

In conclusion, the law already recognises the need to protect members of the emergency services carrying out their duties and provides strong penalties where offences against front-line workers are committed. There are currently no proposals for further legislation in this regard but the situation is kept under review.

Departmental Staff Data

480. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of departmental staff employed in Drogheda per departmental premises and within statutory bodies within his remit; and the grade of each. [54353/17]

538. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his Department is due to increase the number of staff based in Drogheda in addition to those currently employed; the grades that will be assigned to these positions; and the dates on which they will be recruited or allocated. [54957/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 480 and 538 together.

In response to the question raised by the Deputy on the number of staff of the Department of Justice and Equality and those within its statutory bodies employed in Drogheda I would refer the Deputy to the reply provided on 14th December 2017 in respect of Dail Question no. 196. This position has not changed.

In respect of increases to staff numbers based in Drogheda, 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 since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, just under 1,600 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, 25 of which have been assigned to Drogheda Garda Station. A further 800 Garda recruits are expected to attest from the Garda College this year which will see Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, increase to around the 13,500 mark by year end - an increase of 500 since the end of 2017.

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

is thoroughly familiar with their responsibilities under the training programme.

In relation to Civilian personnel in An Garda Síochána, I am advised that it is the Commissioner's intention to allocate one additional Garda civilian staff (EO) to Drogheda with an expected commencement date of February 5th of this year.

In respect of other offices of the Department based in Drogheda there are no plans to increase existing staffing numbers.

Road Safety Data

481. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of drivers that have been involved in serious or fatal road crashes who had been disqualified for driving at the time of the incident in each of the years 2014 to 2017. [54354/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My Department has sought the information requested by the Deputy from An Garda Síochána and I will contact the Deputy directly on receipt of a Garda report.

The Deputy may be interested to note that the Road Safety Authority recently published (2 January 2018) a provisional review of fatal collision statistics for 2017 following an analysis of the fatality reports provided by An Garda Síochána. This review is available on www.rsa.ie. The analysis conducted does not comprehend the variable "disqualification", however includes variables such as "month of year", "day of week", "where fatalities occurred", "age profile" and "road user type".

Legal Services Regulation

482. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has received report 1 on multidisciplinary practices and report 2 on certain matters relating to barristers from the Legal Services Regulatory Authority; if so, when he expects to bring these before Dáil Éireann; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54364/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As previously conveyed in my Written Reply to Question No. 243 on 14 December 2017, I am happy to confirm that the two reports to which Deputy Fitzmaurice has referred have been laid before each House of the Oireachtas as received. They are also publicly accessible on the web-site of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority, www.LSRA.ie.

Tribunals of Inquiry Data

483. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if all documents, departmental emails, private emails, phone call logs, text messages and all other communications that relate to the terms of reference of the Charleton tribunal from his former predecessor, their two advisers, their private secretary, the retired Secretary General and the current and retired staff in the policing division have been sent to the Charleton tribunal in view of the request of An Taoiseach for a trawl to be conducted in his Department and his subsequent comments in Dáil Éireann on 6 December 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54367/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Since its establishment,

the Department of Justice and Equality has cooperated and continues to cooperate with the Disclosures Tribunal. This has been an ongoing collaborative process which has involved the full compliance by my Department with several orders of the Tribunal as well as extensive voluntary disclosure. In some cases it has been necessary for legal reasons for the Department to draw the Tribunal's attention to particular documentation in order that the Tribunal make a formal order for its discovery or production. The Tribunal has positively acknowledged the cooperation of the Department, and that cooperation will be maintained for as long as the work of the Tribunal continues. As Mr Justice Charleton himself stated last week, discovery is an ongoing process.

My Department does not maintain a log of telephone calls, SMS messages etc. However, following further correspondence with the Tribunal over recent weeks, a search of all relevant Departmental files and databases, and all Departmental emails, has been undertaken. A number of independent documentary counsel have been engaged in examining the outcomes of that search with a view to identifying any documents that may be of relevance to the Tribunal and forwarding them to it.

As the Deputy will be aware, Mr Michael Collins SC is carrying out an independent review of the practices and procedures employed by my Department in response to requests for documents from the Disclosures Tribunal. His report will be produced and considered in the near future and it may also advise on what further measures, if any, might be taken by the Department.

Garda Resources

484. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí and the rank of each in each of the Dublin Garda divisions on 1 December 2017; the number for each of the past three years, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54370/17]

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 Dublin Metropolitan (DMR) Divisions on 30 November 2017, the latest date for which figures are available, was 3,409 with 175 Garda Reserves and 254 Garda civilian staff attached to the 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 Support Units, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

As the Deputy will be aware, 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 achieve this the Government has put in place a plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. We are making real, tangible progress on achieving this goal.

I am further informed by the Commissioner that since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, just under 1,600 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, 719 of whom have been assigned to

the DMR Divisions. I am pleased to say that Garda numbers, taking account of retirements, increased to 13,552 at the end of 2017 - an increase of over 600 since the end of 2016.

I am also pleased that funding is in place to maintain this high level of investment in the Garda workforce to ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. This year a further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College. Also 800 Garda trainees are scheduled to attest during the year which will see Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, reach 14,000 by the end of 2018.

In additional, a further 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 DMR Divisions.

The information requested by the Deputy in relation to the Garda strength of the DMR Divisions, in each of the years from 2014 to the 30 November 2017, that latest date for which figures are currently available is as set out in the following tables, as supplied by the Commissioner.

D.M.R. EAST 31 DECEMBER 2014

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
BLACK-ROCK	BLACKROCK	73	11	2	1			87
	DUNDRUM	80	8	1				89
	BLACKROCK Total	153	19	3	1			176
DUN LAOGHAIRE	CABINTEELY	36	5	1				42
	DUN LAOGHAIRE	81	17	3	2	1		104
	SHANKILL	57	9					66
	DUN LAOGHAIRE Total	174	31	4	2	1		212
D.M.R. EAST Total		327	50	7	3	1		388

D.M.R. NORTH 31 DECEMBER 2014

DIS-TRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
BAL-BRIG-GAN	BALBRIG-GAN	48	10	3	1			62
	GARRIS-TOWN	2						2
	LUSK	9	1					10

Questions - Written Answers

DIS-TRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
	SKERRIES	8	1					9
	BALBRIGGAN Total	67	12	3	1			83
BALLY-MUN	BALLY-MUN	88	19	4	2	1		114
	DUBLIN AIRPORT	22	2					24
	SANTRY	80	10					90
BAL-LYMUN Total		190	31	4	2	1		228
CO-OLOCK	COOLOCK	90	14	4	1			109
	MALAHIDE	28	2					30
	SWORDS	59	10	1				70
CO-OLOCK Total		177	26	5	1			209
RAHENY	CLONTARF	60	7	1				68
	HOWTH	28	3					31
	RAHENY	50	9	2	1			62
RAHENY Total		138	19	3	1			161
D.M.R. NORTH Total		572	88	15	5	1		681

D.M.R. NORTH CENTRAL 31 DECEMBER 2014

DIS-TRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
BRIDE-WELL	BRIDE-WELL	126	38	6	1			171
FITZGIBBON STREET	MOUNTJOY	165	19	4	1			189
STORE STREET	IMMIGRATION D/DOCKS	3						3
	STORE STREET	204	33	4	2	1		244
	STORE STREET Total	207	33	4	2	1		247

DIS-TRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
D.M.R. NORTH CENTRAL Total		498	90	14	4	1		607

D.M.R. SOUTH 31 DECEMBER 2014

DIS-TRICT	STA-TION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
CRUM-LIN	CRUM-LIN	69	17	5	2	1		94
	SUN-DRIVE ROAD	54	8					62
CRUM-LIN Total		123	25	5	2	1		156
TAL-LAGHT	RATH-FARN-HAM	63	8	1				72
	TAL-LAGHT	145	20	4	1			170
TAL-LAGHT Total		208	28	5	1			242
TEREN-URE	RATH-MINES	52	8					60
	TEREN-URE	74	14	3				91
TEREN-URE Total		126	22	3				151
D.M.R. SOUTH Total		457	75	13	3	1		549

D.M.R. SOUTH CENTRAL 31 DECEMBER 2014

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
DONNY-BROOK	DONNY-BROOK	100	11	3	1			115
	IRISH-TOWN	42	6	1				49
	DONNY-BROOK Total	142	17	4	1			164

Questions - Written Answers

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
KEVIN STREET	KEVIN STREET	102	15	4				121
	KIL-MAIN-HAM	58	14					72
	KEVIN STREET Total	160	29	4				193
PEARSE STREET	PEARSE STREET	242	34	6	2	1		285
D.M.R. SOUTH CENTRAL Total		544	80	14	3	1		642

D.M.R. WEST 31 DECEMBER 2014

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
BLANCHARD-STOWN	BLANCHARD-STOWN	130	20	4	2			156
	CABRA	64	8	1				73
	FINGLAS	93	13	2				108
	BLANCHARD-STOWN Total	287	41	7	2			337
CLONDALKIN	BALLYFERMOT	73	11	1				85
	CLONDALKIN	75	9	4	1			89
	RATHCOOLE	22	1					23
	CLONDALKIN Total	170	21	5	1			197
LUCAN	LUCAN	59	10	4	1			74
	RONAN-STOWN	77	13	1				91
LUCAN Total		136	23	5	1			165
D.M.R. WEST Total		593	85	17	4			699

D.M.R. EAST 31 DECEMBER 2015

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
BLACK-ROCK	BLACK-ROCK	76	11	1	1			89
	DUNDRUM	76	8	1				85
BLACK-ROCK Total		152	19	2	1			174

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
DUN LAOGHAIRE	CABIN-TEELY	32	4	1				37
	DUN LAOGHAIRE	84	17	2	2			105
	SHANKILL	51	10					61
DUN LAOGHAIRE Total		167	31	3	2			203
D.M.R. EAST Total		319	50	5	3			377

D.M.R. NORTH 31 DECEMBER 2015

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
BALBRIGGAN	BALBRIGGAN	50	10	3	1			64
	GARRISTOWN	2						2
	LUSK	9	1					10
	SKERRIES	8	1					9
BALBRIGGAN Total		69	12	3	1			85
BALLYMUN	BALLYMUN	97	19	4	3	1		124
	DUBLIN AIRPORT	19	2					21
	SANTRY	72	10					82
BALLYMUN Total		188	31	4	3	1		227
COOLOCK	COOLOCK	87	13	2	1			103
	MALAHIDE	27	2					29
	SWORDS	54	10	1				65
COOLOCK Total		168	25	3	1			197
RAHENY	CLONTARF	59	6					65
	HOWTH	24	3					27
	RAHENY	56	9	1	1			67
RAHENY Total		139	18	1	1			159
D.M.R. NORTH Total		564	86	11	6	1		668

D.M.R. NORTH CENTRAL 31 DECEMBER 2015

Questions - Written Answers

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
BRIDE-WELL	BRIDE-WELL	119	35	4	1			159
FITZGIBBON STREET	MOUNT-JOY	165	17	4	1			187
STORE STREET	IMMIGRATION D/DOCKS	3						3
	STORE STREET	201	33	4	2	1		241
STORE STREET Total		204	33	4	2	1		244
D.M.R. NORTH CENTRAL Total		488	85	12	4	1		590

D.M.R. SOUTH 31 DECEMBER 2015

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
CRUMLIN	CRUMLIN	69	17	4	2	1		93
	SUNDRIVE ROAD	57	7					64
CRUMLIN Total		126	24	4	2	1		157
TALLAGHT	RATH-FARNHAM	60	8	1				69
	TALLAGHT	150	21	4	1			176
TALLAGHT Total		210	29	5	1			245
TERENURE	RATH-MINES	47	6					53
	TERENURE	70	12	3	1			86
TERENURE Total		117	18	3	1			139
D.M.R. SOUTH Total		453	71	12	4	1		541

Table ctg.

D.M.R. SOUTH CENTRAL 31 DECEMBER 2015

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
DONNY-BROOK	DONNY-BROOK	94	11	2	1			108
	IRISH-TOWN	40	6	1				47

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
DONNY-BROOK Total		134	17	3	1			155
KEVIN STREET	KEVIN STREET	99	14	3	1			117
	KILMAIN-HAM	62	13					75
KEVIN STREET Total		161	27	3	1			192
PEARSE STREET	PEARSE STREET	237	35	5	2	1		280
D.M.R. SOUTH CENTRAL Total		532	79	11	4	1		627

D.M.R. WEST 31 DECEMBER 2015

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
BLANCHARD-STOWN	BLANCHARD-STOWN	127	20	4	2	1		154
	CABRA	60	6	1				67
	FINGLAS	92	12	2				106
BLANCHARD-STOWN Total		279	38	7	2	1		327
CLONDALKIN	BALLYFERMOT	74	11	1				86
	CLONDALKIN	76	8	2	1			87
	RATHCOOLE	20	1					21
CLONDALKIN Total		170	20	3	1			194
LUCAN	LUCAN	60	9	3	1			73
	RONAN-STOWN	80	13	1				94
LUCAN Total		140	22	4	1			167
D.M.R. WEST Total		589	80	14	4	1		688

D.M.R. EAST 31 DECEMBER 2016

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
BLACK-ROCK	BLACKROCK	80	10	2	1			93
	DUNDRUM	68	7	1				76

Questions - Written Answers

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
BLACK-ROCK Total		148	17	3	1			169
DUN LAOGHAIRE	CABINTEELY	29	4					33
	DUN LAOGHAIRE	88	17	4	2	1		112
	SHANKILL	50	12					62
DUN LAOGHAIRE Total		167	33	4	2	1		207
D.M.R. EAST Total		315	50	7	3	1		376

D.M.R. NORTH 31 DECEMBER 2016

DIS-TRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
BAL-BRIGGAN	BALBRIGGAN	54	12	2	1			69
	GARRISTOWN	2						2
	LUSK	9	1					10
	SKERRIES	8	1					9
BAL-BRIGGAN Total		73	14	2	1			90
BALLY-MUN	BALLY-MUN	93	17	4	2	1		117
	DUBLIN AIRPORT	18	2					20
	SANTRY	72	9					81
BAL-LYMUN Total		183	28	4	2	1		218
CO-OLOCK	COOLOCK	88	12	4	1			105
	MALAHIDE	27	4					31
	SWARDS	61	11					72
CO-OLOCK Total		176	27	4	1			208

DIS-TRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
RAHENY	CLON-TARF	60	6	1				67
	HOWTH	24	3					27
	RAHENY	53	10	2	1			66
RAHENY Total		137	19	3	1			160
D.M.R. NORTH Total		569	88	13	5	1		676

D.M.R. NORTH CENTRAL 31 DECEMBER 2016

DIS-TRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
BRIDE-WELL	BRIDE-WELL	116	35	6	1			158
FITZGIB-BON STREET	MOUNT-JOY	169	17	4	1			191
STORE STREET	IMMI-GRATION D/DOCKS	3						3
	STORE STREET	212	40	5	2	1		260
STORE STREET Total		215	40	5	2	1		263
D.M.R. NORTH CEN-TRAL Total		500	92	15	4	1		612

D.M.R. SOUTH 31 DECEMBER 2016

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
CRUMLIN	CRUMLIN	71	22	6	2	1		102
	SUNDRIVE ROAD	54	8					62
CRUMLIN Total		125	30	6	2	1		164
TALLAGHT	RATHFARNHAM	54	10					64
	TALLAGHT	153	20	5	1			179
TALLAGHT Total		207	30	5	1			243

Questions - Written Answers

TERENURE	RATHMINES	52	11					63
	TERENURE	62	13	3	1			79
TERENURE Total		114	24	3	1			142
D.M.R. SOUTH Total		446	84	14	4	1		549

Table ctg.

D.M.R. SOUTH CENTRAL 31 DECEMBER 2016

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
DONNYBROOK	DONNYBROOK	90	12	4	1			107
	IRISHTOWN	43	6	1				50
DONNYBROOK Total		133	18	5	1			157
KEVIN STREET	KEVIN STREET	96	15	5	1			117
	KILMAINHAM	62	11					73
KEVIN STREET Total		158	26	5	1			190
PEARSE STREET	PEARSE STREET	235	37	8	2	1		283
D.M.R. SOUTH CENTRAL To- tal		526	81	18	4	1		630

D.M.R. WEST 31 DECEMBER 2016

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
BLANCHARD-STOWN	BLANCHARD-STOWN	117	19	4	2	1		143
	CABRA	52	7	2				61
	FINGLAS	95	10	1				106
BLANCHARD-STOWN Total		264	36	7	2	1		310
CLONDALKIN	BALLYFERMOT	72	12	1				85
	CLONDALKIN	78	12	3	1			94
	RATHCOOLE	18	1					19
CLONDALKIN Total		169	25	4	1			198
LUCAN	LUCAN	60	9	4	1			74
	RONAN-STOWN	77	13	1				91

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
LUCAN Total		137	22	5	1			165
D.M.R. WEST Total		569	83	16	4	1		673

D.M.R. EAST 30 NOVEMBER 2017

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
BLACKROCK	BLACKROCK	77	12	2	1			92
	DUNDRUM	73	7	1				81
BLACKROCK Total		150	19	3	1			173
DUN LAOGHAIRE	CABINTEELY	26	4					30
	DUN LAOGHAIRE	88	17	4	2			111
	SHANKILL	48	9					57
DUN LAOGHAIRE Total		162	30	4	2			198
D.M.R. EAST TOTAL		312	49	7	3			371

D.M.R. NORTH 30 NOVEMBER 2017

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
	D.M.R. NORTH							
BALBRIG- GAN	BALBRIG- GAN	60	8	2	1			71
	GARRIS- TOWN	1						1
	LUSK	8	1					9
	SKERRIES	7	1					8
BALBRIG- GAN Total		76	10	2	1			89
BALLY- MUN	BALLY- MUN	90	14	4	2	1		111
	DUBLIN AIRPORT	18	4					22
	SANTRY	69	7					76
BAL- LYMUN Total		177	25	4	2	1		209
COOLOCK	CO- OLOCK	91	8	4	1			104

Questions - Written Answers

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
	MALA-HIDE	27	4					31
	SWORDS	52	11					63
COOLOCK Total		170	23	4	1			198
RAHENY	CLON-TARF	59	7					66
	HOWTH	23	3					26
	RAHENY	56	9	2	1			68
RAHENY Total		138	19	2	1			160
D.M.R. NORTH TOTAL		561	77	12	5	1		656

D.M.R. NORTH CENTRAL 30 NOVEMBER 2018

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
BRIDE-WELL	BRIDE-WELL	123	30	5	1			159
FITZGIB-BON STREET	MOUNT-JOY	172	12	3	1			188
STORE STREET	IMMI-GRATION D/ DOCKS	3						3
	STORE STREET	209	33	4	1	1		248
STORE STREET Total		212	33	4	1	1		251
D.M.R. NORTH CENTRAL Total		507	75	12	3	1		598

D.M.R. SOUTH 30 NOVEMBER 2017

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
CRUMLIN	CRUMLIN	76	17	5	2	1		101
	SUNDRIVE ROAD	50	5					55
CRUMLIN Total		126	22	5	2	1		156
TALLAGHT	RATHFARN-HAM	53	7					60

16 January 2018

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
	TALLAGHT	153	18	4				175
TALLAGHT Total		206	25	4				235
TERENURE	RATHMINES	50	6					56
	TERENURE	64	5	3	1			73
TERENURE Total		114	11	3	1			129
D.M.R. SOUTH TOTAL		446	58	12	3	1		520

D.M.R. SOUTH CENTRAL 30 NOVEMBER 2017

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
DONNY- BROOK	DONNYBROOK	88	11	4	1			104
	IRISHTOWN	46	4					50
DONNY- BROOK Total		134	15	4	1			154
KEVIN STREET	KEVIN STREET	84	11	3	1			99
	KILMAINHAM	59	8					67
KEVIN STREET Total		143	19	3	1			166
PEARSE STREET	PEARSE STREET	244	31	7	2	1		285
D.M.R. SOUTH CENTRAL Total		521	65	14	4	1		605

D.M.R. WEST 30 NOVEMBER 2017

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
BLANCHARD- STOWN	BLANCHARD- STOWN	129	19	3	2	1		154
	CABRA	52	6	2				60
	FINGLAS	81	8	1				90
BLANCHARD- STOWN Total		262	33	6	2	1		304

DISTRICT	STATION	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
CLONDALKIN	BALLYFER-MOT	74	9	1				84
	CLONDALKIN	84	10	3	1			98
	RATHCOOLE	14						14
CLONDALKIN Total		172	19	4	1			196
LUCAN	LUCAN	58	8	3	1			70
	RONAN-STOWN	74	14	1				89
LUCAN Total		132	22	4	1			159
D.M.R. WEST TOTAL		566	74	14	4	1		659

Misuse of Drugs

485. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the street availability of prescription drugs since new legislation came into force; the experience and data which are available in relation to same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54371/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Misuse of Drugs (Amendment) Act 2016 introduced controls by way of Regulations on a number of new psycho-active substances, certain pharmaceutical drugs and some other substances which are required to be controlled on foot of EC Decision 2005/387/JHA.

One of the most significant effects of new Regulations made under the Act which came into force on 4 May 2017, relates to Benzodiazepines such as Diazepam (Valium), Alprazolam (Xanax) etc. Under the Regulations, restrictions in place in relation to the possession of controlled drugs now apply to these medicines. This is also the case for “Z Drugs” such as Zopiclone (Zimovane), Zolpidem (Stilnoct) and Zaleplon (Sonata) meaning that it is now an offence under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1977 to 2016 to be in possession of these substances, even in amounts for personal use, without a valid prescription in accordance with the Act.

I have requested a report from the Garda authorities in relation to the details sought by the Deputy about the operation of the new Regulations since they came into force in May 2017. I will revert to the Deputy with those details when the report is to hand.

Garda Investigations

486. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on serious criminal allegations made in a newspaper report (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54373/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Issues relating to the regulation of rickshaws under road traffic legislation are for my colleague the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Mr. Shane Ross, T.D. to consider.

With regard to the newspaper report, the issues mentioned in relation to the involvement of rickshaw drivers in the supply of illegal drugs is a matter of considerable concern to me. This is particularly so having regard to the potential risks to the safety and security of people who travel in rickshaws as passengers, but also members of the public generally.

It seems clear from the article however, that the illegal activity involved is being closely monitored by An Garda Síochána and that successful policing operations in the areas concerned are ongoing. While this is evidenced by the reported numbers of arrests and convictions in 2017, I have nonetheless requested a report from the Garda authorities in relation to the latest position on the situation reported in the newspaper article and any further actions considered necessary to address it. In this regard, I would point out that the assignment of Garda personnel and overall policing arrangements and operational strategies are a matter for the Garda authorities to determine, having regard to factors such as crime trends and the policing needs of each Garda Division. I should also mention that local Gardaí are supported and supplemented when necessary by Regional and National Units such as the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau, the Criminal Investigation Bureau, as well as the Criminal Assets Bureau. I will revert to the Deputy when the Garda report is to hand.

I am in agreement with the reported comments of the Gardaí involved in tackling this issue where they refer to the risks involved. Drug dealing, wherever it occurs and whatever form it takes, brings risks to everybody, be they buyers, sellers or members of An Garda Síochána. It cannot be tolerated and must be tackled relentlessly. In this context, I would point to the new national drugs and alcohol strategy, “Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery” and the important role for communities signalled in action 4.1.41 which is concerned with enhancing the relationship between An Garda Síochána and local communities in relation to the impact of the drugs trade. It is essential that there be proactive engagement between An Garda Síochána and local communities and businesses and that positive relationships are developed if this form of criminality is to be effectively tackled.

Garda Vetting

487. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the delay in the Garda vetting for a person (details supplied) will be investigated; if this application will be expedited in view of the fact that the person in question is unable to work and this is causing hardship for them and their family; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54377/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am informed by the Garda authorities that records at the Garda National Vetting Bureau indicate that a vetting application has not been received in respect of the person who is the subject of the Deputy’s Question.

In the circumstances I would advise the person concerned to contact the relevant registered organisation to ascertain the status of their vetting application.

Services for People with Disabilities

488. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if consideration has been given to introducing provisions for banks to deal with deaf persons on the telephone including nominated contacts or alternative forms of contact (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54378/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, the Irish Sign Language Act 2017 was enacted on 24 December 2017.

Section 9 of the Act provides that the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection may provide funds to facilitate users of Irish Sign Language with regard to support in relation to access to social, educational and cultural events and services (including medical) and other activities by such users as specified in guidelines made by that Minister.

In addition to the Sign Language Act, the Deputy will also be aware of the European Accessibility Act, the general approach of which has been agreed, which will harmonise accessibility to goods and services for persons with disabilities.

It is expected that the provisions of both these Acts will allow people who use sign language to access private sector services such as the ones outlined by the Deputy.

Departmental Contracts

489. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a company (details supplied) that receives public contracts from his Department does not recognise trade unions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54384/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My Department provides grant funding, through the Irish Youth Justice Service, to the organisation concerned, in relation to the operation of a number of Garda Youth Diversion Projects. However, my Department is not the employer of the youth justice workers on these projects and therefore it does not have any Human Resources or Industrial Relations function in relation to these workers.

Citizenship Applications

490. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of citizenship applications granted and fees paid for the applications in each of the years 2007 to 2017. [54391/17]

492. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the unit cost including administration of approving an Irish citizenship application. [54393/17]

493. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of approved naturalised Irish citizens now here. [54394/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 490, 492 and 493 together.

I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the retrieval and compilation of the information requested by the Deputy for each of the past ten years would necessitate a disproportionate use of time and resources which could not be justified in circumstances where the priority is to deal with the cases on hand. Information can, however, be provided for the years 2011 to end 2017 inclusive and is shown in the following table.

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Applications Granted (to nearest '000)	13,000	23,000	29,000	18,000	11,000	10,000	7,000
Fees Received (€'s m)	€10.8	€20	€22.9	€17.1	€11.5	€10	€8.8

It is not possible to provide a unit cost for the processing of citizenship applications. Every application for naturalisation is considered on its own individual merits and in accordance with the provisions of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended. Applications can vary significantly in the processing required to bring an application to a conclusion. While most straightforward cases are generally processed within six months, the nature of the naturalisation process is such that, for a broad range of reasons, some cases will take longer than others to process. In some instances, completing the necessary checks can take a considerable period of time.

The fees to be paid by an applicant for a certificate of naturalisation are governed by the provisions of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 569 of 2011). The prescribed application fee, stipulated at €175, is payable on application for a certificate of naturalisation and the prescribed certification fee is payable on the issue of a certificate of naturalisation. The standard certification fee is set at €950 (unchanged since 2008), while a reduced fee of €200 applies in the case of an application made on behalf of a minor or in certain cases where the application is made by a widow, widower or surviving civil partner of an Irish citizen. In the case of recognised refugees and stateless persons the certification fee is nil.

The standard fees payable by an applicant are designed to reflect the effort and cost involved in processing applications for a certificate of naturalisation. Managing and dealing with incomplete applications consumes scarce processing resources and the application fee is designed to recoup some of the costs associated with the application process. The application fee is also intended to help cover costs associated with the processing of unsuccessful applications that often consume more processing time and resources than successful applications.

The Deputy will be aware that formal citizenship ceremonies have been introduced in 2011 at no extra cost to applicants. These have been universally well received by participants as the ceremonies provide a sense of dignity and occasion that serves to underscore the importance to both the State and the applicant of the granting of Irish citizenship.

The Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department does not maintain any register or statistics of naturalised Irish citizens who are resident in the State.

Citizenship Applications

491. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if consideration has been given to reducing fees for citizenship applications and approvals. [54392/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The fees to be paid by an applicant for a certificate of naturalisation are governed by the provisions of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 569 of 2011). The prescribed application fee, stipulated at €175, is payable on application for a certificate of naturalisation and a certification fee is payable on the issue of a certificate of naturalisation. The standard certification fee is set at €950 (unchanged since 2008), while a reduced fee of €200 applies in the case of an application made on behalf of a minor or in certain cases where the application is made by a widow, widower or surviving civil partner of an Irish citizen. In the case of recognised refugees and stateless persons the certification fee is nil.

The standard fees payable by an applicant are designed to reflect the effort and cost involved in processing applications for a certificate of naturalisation.

The Deputy will be aware that formal citizenship ceremonies have been introduced in 2011 at no extra cost to applicants. These have been universally well received by participants as the ceremonies provide a sense of dignity and occasion that serves to underscore the importance to both the State and the applicant of the granting of Irish citizenship.

All of the fees payable under the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, are kept under ongoing review by my Department; however, there are no plans to amend the fees.

Questions Nos. 492 and 493 answered with Question No. 490.

Mobile Telephony Use

494. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if phone calls of this Deputy or other telecommunications have ever been intercepted by An Garda Síochána. [54395/17]

529. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if this Deputy's phones or communications records or data in any format have been requested from licensed providers or service providers to this Deputy by An Garda Síochána over the past five years. [54704/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 494 and 529 together.

The Deputy will be aware that the interception of post and telecommunications is governed by the provisions of the Interception of Postal Packets and Telecommunications Messages (Regulation) Act 1993.

The 1993 Act permits the Minister for Justice and Equality to authorise the Commissioner of An Garda Síochána, the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces or the Chairperson of the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission to intercept communications but only for the purposes of investigating serious crime or safeguarding the security of the State, as provided for in the Act, and only subject to a number of strict conditions that are also set out in the Act.

The arrangements governing the retention of and access to telecommunications data for law enforcement purposes is provided for in the Communications (Retention of Data) Act 2011.

Under the 2011 Act, access to retained telecommunications data is available only to An Garda Síochána, the Revenue Commissioners, the Permanent Defence Forces, the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission and the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission only for the purposes of investigating serious crime or safeguarding the security of the State as provided for in the Act, and only subject to the strict conditions set out in the Act.

As the House will be aware, the Minister for Justice and Equality has no role in the process of seeking access to retained telecommunications data.

The operation of both these Acts is overseen independently by a serving Judge of the High Court who is designated by the Government for this purpose. The Designated Judge reports to the Taoiseach. In carrying out her functions the Designated Judge has, by law, full access to all persons and records she considers relevant and all relevant persons have, by law, a duty to co-operate with her.

In addition, a serving judge of the Circuit Court acts as the Complaints Referee. He is empowered to receive and investigate complaints from persons who believe that their communications have been intercepted or their communications data accessed. In carrying out his functions, the Designated Judge has, by law, full access to all persons and records he considers relevant to his investigations and all relevant persons have, by law, a duty to co-operate with him.

The Deputy will be aware that section 12 of the 1993 Act restricts disclosure in respect of interception authorisations and it places a requirement on the Minister for Justice and Equality to ensure that such arrangements are in place to limit to the minimum necessary for the purpose of the prevention or detection of serious offences or in the interests of the security of the State the disclosure of the fact that an authorisation has been given, and the contents of any communication which has been intercepted pursuant to an authorisation. Therefore it is not the practice and it would be contrary to the public interest to disclose detail of any authorisations to intercept.

The Deputy will appreciate that in this regard I am maintaining the long-standing practice of my predecessors. Nonetheless, I can assure him and the House, just as I did in response to his previous questions on this matter on 11 July 2017, that I have never exercised the legal powers available to me to interfere in any way with the work of Members of the Oireachtas.

The Deputy will recall that when he raised concerns in the media last December that the powers in law for interception and access to retained data may have been used in respect of him or other Members of the Oireachtas, and that senior members of An Garda Síochána were abusing these powers, I immediately arranged for his concerns to be brought to the attention of the Designated Judge and I understand that, in accordance with her powers in law, she will investigate his concerns independently.

The Deputy will recall also that I wrote directly to him on 14 December 2017 setting out the position in respect of the concerns he had raised publicly that day, including inviting him to make a complaint to the Complaints Referee.

Deputies will be aware that on 3 October 2017 I published the draft scheme for a Communications (Retention of Data) Bill to replace the 2011 Act in order to take account of important decisions of the Court of Justice of the European Union in this area of law. Work on drafting that new Bill is ongoing. In addition, my Department is also advancing work on detailed proposals to update the current law with regard to the lawful interception of communications.

Legal Services Regulation

495. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the review committee of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority will be established and begin its work in view of the fact that the authority was established over a year ago; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54396/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Subject to any further clarification of the Question by the Deputy that may arise, I am assuming it is referring to the periodic review of the operation of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 that is provided for within that Act under section 6. Under that section the Legal Services Regulatory Authority shall, not later than eighteen months after its establishment day, commence a review of the operation of the 2015 Act. It must report its findings, conclusions and any recommendations arising from that review to each House of the Oireachtas within twelve months. Given that the establishment day of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority was 1 October 2016, the rel-

evant deadline for the commencement of the first review of the operation of the 2015 Act will be the end of March 2018. Thereafter, such reviews will be conducted at three-yearly intervals. It is my understanding that the Regulatory Authority, which is independent in the performance of its functions, already has this matter under active consideration and will be addressing it at the appropriate time under the relevant terms of the 2015 Act.

I also understand that the Authority is putting the practical arrangements in place for the provision, on foot of appropriate public consultations, of the required statutory report in relation to the education and training (including ongoing training) arrangements in the State for legal practitioners, including the manner in which such education and training is provided. This report, which has to be provided to me as Minister within two years of the Authority's establishment day, will cover an array of relevant matters set out within section 34 of the 2015 Act and will be laid before the Houses.

More generally, I would also point out that under section 16 of the 2015 Act the Legal Services Regulatory Authority may, at its own discretion, establish committees to assist and advise it in relation to the performance of all or any of its functions.

Naturalisation Applications

496. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the procedure to be followed to obtain Irish citizenship and a passport in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54413/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is governed by the provisions of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended. All applications for a certificate of naturalisation are processed and assessed individually in accordance with the provisions of the Act. A determination on whether an applicant satisfies the statutory criteria attendant to naturalisation can only be made after an application is received. The issuing of a passport is a matter for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and is contingent on the person being an Irish citizen.

Section 15 of the Act provides that the Minister may, in his absolute discretion, grant an application for a certificate of naturalisation if satisfied that certain statutory conditions are fulfilled. The conditions are that the applicant must:

- be of full age, or a minor born in the State,
 - be of good character,
 - have had a period of one year's continuous residency in the State immediately before the date of application and, during the eight years immediately preceding that period, have had a further total residence in the State amounting to four years,
 - intend in good faith to continue to reside in the State after naturalisation,
 - have, before a judge of the District Court in open court, in a citizenship ceremony or in such manner as the Minister, for special reasons, allows-
- (i) made a declaration, in the prescribed manner, of fidelity to the nation and loyalty to the State, and
- (ii) undertaken to faithfully observe the laws of the State and to respect its democratic values.

Section 15A provides that, notwithstanding the above, where the application is based on being the spouse or civil partner of an Irish citizen the requirements are, *inter alia*, that the couple are married or civil partners to each other for a period of at least 3 years and are living together and, immediately before the date of application, have a period of one year's continuous residence in the island of Ireland and, during the preceding four years, have a further period amounting to 2 years (i.e. 3 years in total). Section 15A(2) provides that the Minister may, in his absolute discretion, waive some of the conditions in relation to an application from a spouse or civil partner of an Irish citizen if he is satisfied that the applicant would suffer serious consequences in respect of his or her bodily integrity or liberty if not granted Irish citizenship.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application for citizenship if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory conditions as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended.

Detailed information on Irish citizenship and naturalisation, along with the relevant application forms and guidance notes, is available on the INIS website at ww.inis.gov.ie.

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.

Naturalisation Applications

497. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the procedure to be followed to obtain Irish citizenship and a passport in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54414/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is governed by the provisions of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended. All applications for a certificate of naturalisation are processed and assessed individually in accordance with the provisions of the Act. A determination on whether an applicant satisfies the statutory criteria attendant to naturalisation can only be made after an application is received. The issuing of a passport is a matter for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and is contingent on the person being an Irish citizen.

Section 15 of the Act provides that the Minister may, in his absolute discretion, grant an application for a certificate of naturalisation if satisfied that certain statutory conditions are fulfilled. The conditions are that the applicant must:

- be of full age, or a minor born in the State,
- be of good character,
- have had a period of one year's continuous residency in the State immediately before the date of application and, during the eight years immediately preceding that period, have had a further total residence in the State amounting to four years,
- intend in good faith to continue to reside in the State after naturalisation,
- have, before a judge of the District Court in open court, in a citizenship ceremony or in

such manner as the Minister, for special reasons, allows-

(i) made a declaration, in the prescribed manner, of fidelity to the nation and loyalty to the State, and

(ii) undertaken to faithfully observe the laws of the State and to respect its democratic values.

Section 15A provides that, notwithstanding the above, where the application is based on being the spouse or civil partner of an Irish citizen the requirements are, inter alia, that the couple are married or civil partners to each other for a period of at least 3 years and are living together and, immediately before the date of application, have a period of one year's continuous residence in the island of Ireland and, during the preceding four years, have a further period amounting to 2 years (i.e. 3 years in total). Section 15A(2) provides that the Minister may, in his absolute discretion waive some of the conditions in relation to an application from a spouse or civil partner of an Irish citizen if he is satisfied that the applicant would suffer serious consequences in respect of his or her bodily integrity or liberty if not granted Irish citizenship.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application for citizenship if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory conditions as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended.

Detailed information on Irish citizenship and naturalisation, along with the relevant application forms and guidance notes, is available on the INIS website at ww.inis.gov.ie.

Public Relations Contracts Expenditure

498. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the expenditure by his Department on external public relations services in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54421/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My Department has not incurred any expenditure on external public relations services during 2017. It is my Department's policy to use in-house resources as much as possible for the provision of such services.

Garda Station Refurbishment

499. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the Garda stations located in north County Kildare that will receive upgrading or refurbishment of their facilities; when this will occur; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54442/17]

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 co-operation 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.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Garda Building and Refurbishment Programme 2016-2021, which is an ambitious 5 year Programme based on agreed Garda priorities continues to benefit over thirty locations around the country, including the provision of a Divisional property store at Naas Garda station. In this regard, I am informed by the Garda authorities that the OPW

has advised works are at an early development stage and will be progressed over the timeframe of the programme.

I understand from the Garda authorities that in addition to the above Programme, An Garda Síochána seeks to address maintenance issues, including any refurbishment works, as they arise liaising closely with the OPW in this regard. The progression of any scheme of works is subject to the funding available and the competing accommodation priorities within An Garda Síochána.

In that context, I have been informed that the following works are anticipated in Kildare:

- significant refurbishment works at Clane Garda station are nearing completion. The works involved refurbishment to the public office, enhancements to welfare facilities, as well as general maintenance,

- the cells at Newbridge Garda station are to be upgraded in 2018 under the National Cell Refurbishment Programme,

- works to repair/refurbish welfare facilities at Kildare Garda station are due to commence this month,

- works are anticipated for the Garda stations at Maynooth, Kilcock, Naas, and Leixlip in 2018.

Court Poor Box

500. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount paid to the District Court poor box in each of the 23 districts; the bodies to which it was dispersed in each of the years 2013 to 2016, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54469/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions, which include the provision of information on the courts system.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had inquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that records of poor box receipts and payments are maintained for each local Court Office rather than for each District Court district and so reports on Poor Box Receipts for 2013 to 2016 by Court Office and Poor Box Payments Out for 2013 to 2016 have been forwarded to the Deputy. The Courts Service has advised that details of information relating to individuals have been redacted for data protection purposes.

As the Deputy may be aware, the court poor box is a non-statutory system used by the District Courts to impose a financial charge on a defendant to be used for a charitable purpose, usually instead of imposing a criminal conviction. The option of paying into the court poor box arises usually where the offence is minor in nature and would not attract a custodial sentence.

There are many reasons and instances why the court poor box is used by judges. The accused may never previously have been before the courts, the accused may have pleaded guilty, a conviction might be inappropriate, or might adversely affect employment, career or working abroad prospects, and/or the offence may be of a minor or trivial nature.

When combined with the Probation of Offenders Act it provides an option where some fi-

nancial penalty is considered merited but a conviction and fine are not. It can sometimes be a more meaningful punishment than the maximum fine where the value of a maximum fine may have been eroded by inflation.

Payments made to the court poor box are accounted for by the court office concerned and the accounting procedures are subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General. Generally, charities are the recipients of poor box contributions but the decision is solely at the discretion of the Judge who is independent in the matter of sentencing, as in other matters concerning the exercise of judicial functions, subject only to the Constitution and the law.

The Government has approved the drafting of a Criminal Justice (Community Sanctions) Bill to replace the Probation of Offenders Act 1907 with modern provisions dealing with community sanctions and the role of the Probation Service in the criminal justice system. The Bill is currently being drafted by the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel. It is intended that the legislation will abolish the court poor box and replace it with a statutory Reparation Fund to provide for a fair, equitable and transparent system of reparation that will apply only to minor offences dealt with by the District Court.

Garda Data

501. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda vacancies at superintendent rank; the locations of each; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54471/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware the Policing Authority assumed responsibility for appointments to the senior ranks of Superintendent, Chief Superintendent and Assistant Garda Commissioner on 1 January 2017 and that I, as Minister, have no role in the matter.

Since assuming responsibility for this function, the Authority has run competitions for promotion to the ranks of Assistant Commissioner, Chief Superintendent and Superintendent. I am informed that the Authority has appointed 19 persons to the rank of Superintendent including a former member of the PSNI (as permitted by section 52 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 reflecting the 2002 Intergovernmental Agreement on Police Cooperation between Ireland and the UK).

Under Regulation 5 of Garda Síochána Act 2005 (Appointments to the Ranks of Assistant Garda Commissioner, Chief Superintendent and Superintendent) Regulations 2016, it falls to the Garda Commissioner to keep the Authority fully informed with regard to vacancies likely to arise within the agreed employment control framework in each of the specified ranks which includes the rank of Superintendent.

I have been advised by the Authority that there is currently one Superintendent vacancy consequential to the appointment of a Superintendent to Chief Superintendent in December 2017. One further vacancy is also expected to arise by the end January 2017. For operational reasons, the location of vacancies cannot be published.

Liquor Licence Data

502. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of liquor licence special exemption orders granted by each District Court in each of the years 2010 to

2017 and to date in 2018; in tabular form. [54508/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions, which include the provision of information on the courts system.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had inquiries made and the Courts Service has provided information sought by the Deputy for 2010 to 2016 but has advised that the data are not yet available for 2017 or to date in 2018.

A report on the number of liquor licence special exemption orders granted by each District Court in 2010 to 2016 is set out in the following table. Please note that any venue with a 0 and blank under a year heading has been closed or transferred to a different court office.

COURT OFFICE	COURT AREA	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
ATHLONE	ATHLONE	591	599	625	559	462	440	354
ATHLONE Total		591	599	625	559	462	440	354
BALLINA	BALLINA	329	193	93	106	128	114	233
	BEAL AN MHUIRT-HEAD	193	173	146	125	119	127	88
	SWINFORD	46	47	107	50			
	EASKY	52						
BALLINA Total		620	413	346	281	247	241	321
BALLINASLOE	BALL- INASLOE	318	314					
BALLINASLOE Total		318	314					
BRAY	ARKLOW	437	341	233	182	178	167	432
	BRAY	1,134	813	599	517	540	492	225
	WICKLOW	338	282	244	170	49	131	39
BRAY Total		1,909	1,436	1,076	869	767	790	696
CARLOW	CARLOW	780	498	523	527	606	532	587
	ATHY	202	188	75	2			
	BALTIN-GLASS	12	0	0	0			
CARLOW Total		994	686	598	529	606	532	587
CARRICK-ON-SHANNON	CARRICK ON SHANNON	174	285	139	130	83	119	206
	BALLINA-MORE	12						
	BOYLE	25	24					
CARRICK-ON-SHANNON Total		211	309	139	130	83	119	206
CASTLEBAR	ACAILL	24	4	0	31	12	5	15
	BALLIN-ROBE	86	0					
	BALLYHAUNIS	14	5	35	20			

Questions - Written Answers

COURT OFFICE	COURT AREA	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
	CASTLEBAR	414	434	412	377	303	250	278
	CLAREMORRIS	45	72					
	KILTIMAGH	59	78					
	WESTPORT	810	640	455	290	348	440	482
CASTLEBAR Total		1,452	1,233	902	718	663	695	775
CAVAN	ARVA	0						
	BAILIEBORO	37						
	BALLYCONNELL	50	73	63	23			
	CAVAN	476	375	230	330	481	428	361
	COOTEHILL	20						
	VIRGINIA	190	136	81	83			40
CAVAN Total		773	584	374	436	481	428	401
CLONAKILTY	BANDON	219	163	196	228	432	287	309
	BANTRY	63	68	37	22	37	41	51
	CLONAKILTY	384	505	304	399	290	403	378
	DUNMANWAY	56						
	MACROOM	8	11	17	21	69	46	53
	SCHULL	8						
	SKIBBEREEN	45	32	148	42	110	55	89
CLONAKILTY Total		783	779	702	712	938	832	880
CLONMEL	CASHEL	216	148	106	69	24	53	52
	CLONMEL	289	361	344	196	207	146	157
	TIPPERARY	133	135	120	89	78	68	23
CLONMEL Total		638	644	570	354	309	267	232
CORK	CORK CITY	4,505	4,721	3,509	4,320	3,550	3,036	3,524
	COACHFORD	0						
	COBH	100						
	KINSALE	315	257	190	272			
	MIDDLETON					220	238	190
CORK Total		4,920	4,978	3,699	4,592	3,770	3,274	3,714
DONEGAL	AN CLOCHAN LIATH	72	39	41	33	9	7	16
	BALLYSHANNON	241	242	237	186	171	185	159
	DONEGAL	186	118	149	86	106	88	66
	NA GLEANNTA	99	48	48	24	27	26	3
DONEGAL Total		598	447	475	329	313	306	244
DROGHEDA	DROGHEDA	691	667	747				

COURT OFFICE	COURT AREA	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
DROGHEDA Total		691	667	747				
DUNDALK	ARDEE	0	4	0	0	58	0	0
	DROGHEDA				685	504	510	365
	DUNDALK	620	569	401	317	368	432	410
DUNDALK Total		620	573	401	1,002	930	942	775
ENNIS	ENNIS	928	719	587	660	635	585	779
	ENNISTY-MON	173	178					
	KILLALOE	26	21	28	16	35	47	40
	KILRUSH	32	30	2	29	12	9	29
	SHANNON	41	20					
ENNIS Total		1,200	968	617	705	682	641	848
GALWAY	AN SPIDÉAL	8	20	59	18			
	ATHENRY	17	11					
	CLIFDEN	33	18	28	17	148	176	38
	DOIRE AN FHEICH	17	23	15	31	23	48	32
	GALWAY	2,706	2,998	3,236	2,807	3,206	3,665	3,391
	GORT	18	8	27	38	37	16	20
	TUAM	220	238	126	110	130	142	157
	Cill Rónáin	1	1	0	4	0	1	1
GALWAY Total		3,020	3,317	3,491	3,025	3,544	4,048	3,639
KILKENNY	KILKENNY	1,279	992	1,123	500	896	661	744
KILKENNY Total		1,279	992	1,123	500	896	661	744
KILLARNEY	CAHER-CIVEEN	111	104					
	CASTLE-TOWNBERE	56	0					
	KENMARE	61	108					
	KILLARNEY	655	201					
	KILLOR-GLIN	280	125					
KILLARNEY Total		1,163	538					
LETTERKENNY	AN FAL CARRACH	9	73	34	22	13	31	18
	BUNCRANA	209	186	97	95	36	56	88
	CARN-DONAGH	146	77	82	75	106	121	167
	LETTER-KENNY	742	695	526	456	375	288	528
LETTERKENNY Total		1,106	1,031	739	648	530	496	801
LIMERICK	LIMERICK	2,341	1,649	1,005	1,499	1,182	965	984
	NEWCASTLE WEST	35	204	186	70	122	104	53

Questions - Written Answers

COURT OFFICE	COURT AREA	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
	ABBEYFE-ALE	59	124	68	63	14		
	KILMALL-OCK	280	239	20				
	BRUFF	0						
	RATHKEALE	71						
LIMERICK Total		2,786	2,216	1,279	1,632	1,318	1,069	1,037
LONGFORD	LONGFORD	108	101	104	103	47	78	57
LONGFORD Total		108	101	104	103	47	78	57
LOUGHREA	BALL-INASLOE			195	65	157	131	112
	BORRISO-KANE	29	16					
	LOUGHREA	152	47	125	78	95	123	101
LOUGHREA Total		181	63	320	143	252	254	213
MALLOW	FERMOY	128	283	192	306	351	221	156
	KANTURK	56						
	LISMORE	32	13	33	1	8	4	14
	MALLOW	236	252	244	307	371	302	284
	MITCHELSTOWN	94						
MALLOW Total		546	548	469	614	730	527	454
MONAGHAN	CARRICK-MACROSS	92	129	125	118	116	136	146
	CASTLE-BLANEY	55						
	CLONES	4	10	8	2			
	MONAGHAN	217	104	121	101	113	103	117
MONAGHAN Total		368	243	254	221	229	239	263
MULLINGAR	MULLINGAR	745	797	749	667	669	577	438
MULLINGAR Total		745	797	749	667	669	577	438
NAAS	ATHY				29	20	67	17
	KILCOCK	367	474	448	388	452	425	439
	KILDARE	76						
	NAAS	700	831	805	713	812	804	644
NAAS Total		1,143	1,305	1,253	1,130	1,284	1,296	1,100
NENAGH	BIRR	26	25	0	51			
	NENAGH	139	190	189	242	237	196	124
	ROSCREA	19	16					
	TEMPLE-MORE	25	22					
	THURLES	122	132	169	227	225	178	57
NENAGH Total		331	385	358	520	462	374	181

Table continuing

PORTLAOISE	PORTLAOISE	387	302	334	387	191	222	204
	CASTLECOMER	0	0					
	PORTARLINGTON	0	2					
PORTLAOISE Total		387	304	334	387	191	222	204
ROSCOMMON	BALLAGHADERREEN	86	57	65	77	102	69	71
	CASTLEREA	130	55	33	56	75	47	19
	ROSCOMMON	198	105	221	183	173	61	60
	STROKESTOWN	11	16	0	8	18	0	6
ROSCOMMON Total		425	233	319	324	368	177	156
SLIGO	BALLYMOTE	14	0					
	MANORHAMILTON	3	0	0	11	0	0	1
	SLIGO	920	426	878	699	545	768	864
	TUBBERCURRY	33	4	2	40	0	15	14
SLIGO Total		970	430	880	750	545	783	879
TRALEE	AN DAINGEAN	156	52	70	111	95	25	64
	CAHERCIVEEN		117	166	165	174	158	223
	CASTLEISLAND	57	92					
	CASTLETOWNBERE		0					
	KENMARE		41	102	136	113	66	95
	KILLARNEY		504	732	651	469	367	361
	KILLORGLIN		37	139	144	122	133	87
	LISTOWEL	483	284	227	138	156	157	50
	TRALEE	1,306	988	1,121	780	1,062	1,358	1,080
TRALEE Total		2,002	2,115	2,557	2,125	2,191	2,264	1,960
TRIM	MEATH							
	DUNSHAUGHLIN	347	428					
	KELLS	173	193	150	126			
	NAVAN	480	267	621	629	653	596	115
	TRIM	342	307	269	167	95	96	508
TRIM Total		1,342	1,195	1,040	922	748	692	623
TULLAMORE	EDENDERRY	77	72	57	59			
	TULLAMORE	406	344	293	211	423	195	379
TULLAMORE Total		483	416	350	270	423	195	379
WATERFORD	CARRICK ON SUIR	56	76	33	48	74	81	41
	WATERFORD CITY	1,338	1,168	942	747	760	711	685
WATERFORD Total		1,394	1,244	975	795	834	792	726
WEXFORD	GOREY	219	366	262	336	242	297	220
	WEXFORD	276	385	576	449	469	440	610
	ENNISCORTHY	503	142					
	NEW ROSS	125	55					

Questions - Written Answers

WEXFORD Total		1,123	948	838	785	711	737	830
YOUGHAL	DUNGARVAN	326	258	342	258	184	165	236
	MIDLETON	254	375	443	366	104	0	
	YOUGHAL	117	104	100	70	73	70	68
YOUGHAL Total		697	737	885	694	361	235	304
DMD CITY		25,258	19,265	18,121	17,930	15,121	14,248	14,516
DUN- LAOGHAIRE		77	110	91	72	41	69	115
SWORDS		656	674	563	396	372	353	326
DMA TOTAL		25,991	20,049	18,775	18,398	15,534	14,670	14,957
GRAND TO- TAL		64,878	53,837	48,363	45,869	42,118	39,893	39,978

Liquor Licence Data

503. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prosecutions commenced for liquor licence offences by District Court in each of the years 2010 to 2017; and the number of these cases that led to convictions, in tabular form. [54510/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions, which include the provision of information on the courts system.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that it is not possible to provide the information sought in the specific format requested by the Deputy. The Courts Service has compiled a report in the attached table providing details of all prosecutions for liquor licensing offences dealt with by each District Court for each year from 2010 to 2016 and for the period from 1 January to 30 November 2017. The data for December 2017 is not yet available.

The table provides the number of offences in respect of which a conviction was recorded and the number of offences which did not result in a conviction.

NAME	2010		2011		2012		2013	
	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction
ABBAYFEALE	4	24	2	13			5	25
ACAILL					1	7		
AN CLOCHAN LIATH	3	47	4	24		1		11
AN DAINGEAN		15	3	26	1	9	1	32
AN FAL CAR- RACH		16	7	68	6	78	1	11
ARDEE	4	39	4	37	2	9		1
ARKLOW	1	1	4	1				
ATHENRY			1					
ATHLONE	2	30	5	84	1	17		2

NAME	2010		2011		2012		2013	
	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction
ATHY		4	10	2		2		
BALLAGHAD- ERREEN	1	21	8	36		1		4
BALLINA	2	18	5	31				7
BALLINASLOE	1	1	1	11	1	12	1	32
BALLINROBE	1	30						
BALLYCON- NELL AND SWANLINBAR	7	48			1	52		10
BALLYHAUNIS				6	2	5		
BALLYMOTE		16		14				
BALLYSHAN- NON	5	29	3	39	1	5		
BALTINGLASS	1	5		2			1	5
BANDON	10	45	4	5	13	31	3	6
BANTRY	1	8	6	21	7	22	3	9
BEAL AN MHUIRTHEAD	1	3		10				
BIRR	3	3	5	25		3	2	13
BOYLE	1	1						
BRAY	1	5			3	26	3	10
BUNCRANA	1	6	4	42	5	23	11	43
CAHIRCIVEEN	2	33	1	2	1	24		13
CARLOW	2	24	2	24	1	19		69
CARNDONAGH	9	24	4	19	2	12	1	5
CARRICK ON SHANNON		7	1	33		27	1	15
CARRICK ON SUIR	4	28	2	18			1	5
CARRICK- MACROSS		13	4	36	14	84	15	47
CASHEL	5	45	9	33	2	15	2	20
CASTLEBAR		2	4	61	1	20	2	8
CASTLE- BLANEY	3	31						
CASTLECOMER		1	1					
CASTLEISLAND	4	31	4	60				
CASTLEREA	4	8		2	1	5		
CAVAN	6	86	3	45	2	56	3	68
CILL RONAIN	2	8		5	1	11		
CLAREMORRIS		11	1	33				
CLIFDEN	4	26	6	52			1	4

Questions - Written Answers

NAME	2010		2011		2012		2013	
	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction
CLONAKILTY	1	11		23	1	8		1
CLONES	1	1			2	7	1	6
CLONMEL		5	3	24	2	36	3	98
COBH	7	18						
CORK CITY	33	258	18	148	24	152	12	94
DOIRE AN FHEICH	3	19	1	10	1	1		1
DONEGAL	8	57	6	40	4	52	6	20
DROGHEDA	21	119	5	27	2	16	3	25
DUBLIN MET- ROPOLITAN DISTRICT	20	159	10	104	25	125	16	128
DUNDALK	29	31	6	4	5	8	4	19
DUNGARVAN	5	21	3	21	7	44		13
DUNMANWAY	5	17						
DUNSHAUGH- LIN	1	7						
EASKY		6						
EDENDERRY		12	5	27	1	8	1	
ENNIS	3	33	4	25	6	54	3	47
ENNISCORTHY	16	73	3	19				
ENNISTYMON			3	21				
FERMOY	2	6	10	20	3	7	5	9
GALWAY	7	20	10	9	9	48	40	82
GOREY			11	32	8	32		26
GORT	14	21	10	26	10	44	8	26
KANTURK	5	39						
KELLS	2	16	2	23	5	40	2	33
KENMARE	4	32	4	46		53	1	51
KILCOCK				1				3
KILKENNY	9	45	6	108	10	139	7	62
KILLALOE	1	30	4	23	3	21		12
KILLARNEY		26	7	122	5	99	2	27
KILLORGLIN	3	18	5	47	1	49		13
KILMALLOCK	6	43	8	33	4	25		
KILRUSH		12	14	30		2	3	11
KILTIMAGH	3	13		6				
KINSALE	1	4	1		3	10		
LETTERKENNY	18	220	5	111	19	134	3	56
LIMERICK	28	166	16	97	12	114	12	81
LISMORE						6	6	22
LISTOWEL	16	120	5	143	8	60	18	93

NAME	2010		2011		2012		2013	
	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction
LONGFORD	6	51		36	2	52	2	25
LOUGHREA	5	38	3	11	8	29	2	1
MACROOM	8	43	4	18	7	43	7	13
MALLOW	10	89	6	48	12	99	7	62
MANORHAMIL- TON		1						3
MEATH								
MIDLETON	2	11	5	24	4	14	2	13
MITCH- ELSTOWN	3	1						
MONAGHAN	5	31	1	1	1	34		15
MULLINGAR		16	3	20	2	11	7	24
NA GLEANNTA	2	14	1	24		1		
NAAS	7	34	4	36	2	18	1	3
NAVAN			1	76		30	1	30
NENAGH	1	11	3	8		3	3	19
NEW ROSS	2	23	4	37				
NEWCASTLE WEST	8	38		30	7	48	3	5
PORTARLING- TON	2		4	20				
PORTLAOISE	8	43	16	62	6	51	4	43
RATHKEALE	4	26						
ROSCOMMON	5	60	11	27	2	14	4	12
ROSCREA	1	6		9				
SHANNON	6	3		3				
SKIBBEREEN	1	5	1	1	6	15	8	19
SLIGO		34	5	26		2	1	
STROKESTOWN	7	16		6			1	6
SWINFORD		17		7				
TEMPLEMORE		14		6				
THURLES		6	3	38	2	11	9	55
TIPPERARY	1	7	1	5	4	27		
TRALEE	16	158		77	6	98	5	100
TRIM	2	8						6
TUAM	12	73	14	79	20	78	29	33
TUBBERCURRY	2	17	2	10		6		12
TULLAMORE	4	18	17	95	5	64	4	34
VIRGINIA	6	74	8	79	8	57	3	15
WATERFORD CITY	6	19	7	32		24		17
WESTPORT	2	11	1	5				

Questions - Written Answers

	2010		2011		2012		2013	
NAME	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction
WEXFORD	7	31	2	20	2	15	1	5
WICKLOW								
YOUGHAL	1		3	14		1	4	13
Grand Total	519	3,518	433	3,280	355	2,815	321	2,117

Table continuing

	2014		2015		2016		January - Novem- ber 2017	
NAME	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Convic- tion
ABBEYFEALE								
ACAILL		1						
AN CLOCHAN LIATH		3	1	10	1	24		31
AN DAINGEAN		6						7
AN FAL CAR- RACH	2	22		12		6	3	22
ARDEE						5	3	9
ARKLOW								1
ATHENRY								
ATHLONE	5	34	1	14	1	11	9	33
ATHY						3	1	11
BALLAGHADER- REEN								
BALLINA								
BALLINASLOE	3	12	5	27	1	11	2	9
BALLINROBE								
BALLYCONNELL AND SWANLIN- BAR								
BALLYHAUNIS		1						
BALLYMOTE								
BALLYSHAN- NON	4	17	3	11	1	13	2	27
BALTINGLASS								
BANDON				1	4	19	1	15
BANTRY	2	6	6	23	7	47	2	12
BEAL AN MHUIRTHEAD								
BIRR								
BOYLE								
BRAY		5	3	23		6		
BUNCRANA	2	45	2	7	2	10	2	18

NAME	2014		2015		2016		January - November 2017	
	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Convic- tion
CAHIRCIVEEN							1	27
CARLOW		38	5	35	2	29	1	5
CARNDONAGH		7		1	2	40	2	41
CARRICK ON SHANNON	1	5		12	4	48	1	21
CARRICK ON SUIR	2	10		12		29		11
CARRICK-MACROSS	4	64	3	49	5	23	3	10
CASHEL	1	16			1	1	1	10
CASTLEBAR	1	5	2	12		4		7
CASTLEBLANEY								
CASTLECOMER								
CASTLEISLAND								
CASTLEREA		8	2		1			9
CAVAN	3	86	4	47	6	17		7
CILL RONAIN								
CLAREMORRIS								
CLIFDEN					7	53	3	64
CLONAKILTY			3	18	3	17	6	31
CLONES								
CLONMEL	6	53	6	15		8		
COBH								
CORK CITY	13	63	12	85	6	34	9	80
DOIRE AN FHEICH					2	8	2	6
DONEGAL		1	1	7	1	8	5	22
DROGHEDA		5			1	6	1	3
DUBLIN METRO-POLITAN DISTRICT	8	102	6	70	7	64	3	23
DUNDALK	4	13	6	24	7	29	2	16
DUNGARVAN	2	27	2	22		12	1	7
DUNMANWAY								
DUNSHAUGHLIN								
EASKY								
EDENDERRY								
ENNIS	2	5		3	1	10		37
ENNISCORTHY								
ENNISTYMON								
FERMOY	11	31	4	13	2	3	3	7
GALWAY	7	36	5	15	11	70	1	8

Questions - Written Answers

NAME	2014		2015		2016		January - November 2017	
	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Convic- tion
GOREY	9	22	2	3			2	23
GORT	1	20	1	5	2	8	1	4
KANTURK								
KELLS								
KENMARE	1	23	4	53	1	10		19
KILCOCK								2
KILKENNY	6	43	19	123	21	117	5	37
KILLALOE		12	3	15	1	7	5	15
KILLARNEY	1	22	1	93	1	13		26
KILLORGLIN		29	1	44		24	1	17
KILMALLOCK								
KILRUSH	1	5			2	5	2	16
KILTIMAGH								
KINSALE								
LETTERKENNY	11	51	7	111	2	31	11	35
LIMERICK	2	49	5	49	7	30	11	35
LISMORE	2	18	4	28		24		
LISTOWEL	7	47	2	45	1	28	2	41
LONGFORD		10	8	14		7	1	9
LOUGHREA	7	24	3	28	4	2		13
MACROOM	3	15	3	16	1	5	4	26
MALLOW	4	29	7	38	11	62	5	18
MANORHAMIL- TON		10						
MEATH					8	38	7	51
MIDLETON	1	5	1	8		2	1	9
MITCHELSTOWN								
MONAGHAN	2	38	1	2	6	23	4	26
MULLINGAR	5	33	3	21	7	23		18
NA GLEANNTA				7				
NAAS		6	1	7		1		
NAVAN		11						
NENAGH							1	1
NEW ROSS								
NEWCASTLE WEST	8	45	6	42	4	57	21	41
PORTARLING- TON								
PORTLAOISE	2	15	2	10	3	22	12	29
RATHKEALE								
ROSCOMMON	1	21		4	1	4	1	23

NAME	2014		2015		2016		January - November 2017	
	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Con- viction	Con- viction	Non Convic- tion
ROSCREA								
SHANNON								
SKIBBEREEN	16	65	9	32	1	12	1	5
SLIGO		9				2	1	7
STROKESTOWN		1						3
SWINFORD								
TEMPLEMORE								
THURLES	5	45	2	10	3	19	2	29
TIPPERARY	2	35	3	14	1	11		
TRALEE	3	92	6	71	4	75	1	13
TRIM		35		25		5		
TUAM	3	21	2	7	4	16		19
TUBBERCURRY								4
TULLAMORE	6	32	3	12	5	40	7	31
VIRGINIA			1	5	2	41	4	35
WATERFORD CITY				30		34	1	27
WESTPORT							1	5
WEXFORD	5	2	6	1	8	26	2	5
WICKLOW		1						
YOUGHAL	2	5	2	15	1		3	1
Grand Total	199	1,673	200	1,556	198	1,492	190	1,365

Notes:

- Report displays Conviction and Non Convictions for each year.
- If an offence received more than one Order it will appear twice on the Report.

Bail Law

504. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the communication that takes place between the Prison Service, the Courts Service and the Judiciary in respect of availability of custodial places; if his attention has been drawn to the matter notwithstanding the fact that there was a law passed making it more difficult for repeat offenders to get bail that it is still the norm in the District Court to grant bail; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54518/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions, which include the provision of information on the courts system.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had inquiries made and the

Courts Service has informed me that it does not engage with the Irish Prison Service in relation to the availability of custodial places. The Irish Prison Service must accept all committals from the courts and does not have the option of refusing committals. The determination of bail applications is a matter for the Judiciary.

As the Deputy is aware, the Criminal Justice Act 2017, which was enacted on 28 June 2017, expands the factors which a court may take into account in refusing bail to include the extent to which the number and frequency of previous convictions by the accused for serious offences indicate persistent serious offending by him or her, and the likelihood of any danger to a person or the community that could be caused by the release on bail of the accused.

However, a decision to grant bail in a particular case is a matter for the court which is, subject only to the Constitution and the law, independent in the exercise of its judicial functions and the conduct of any court case is a matter entirely for the presiding judge.

Road Traffic Offences Data

505. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 119 of 16 May 2017 (details supplied), the number of persons convicted and arrested for drink driving by age, gender, county and Garda district in each of the years 2007 to 2017. [54535/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As you will recall from my post reply correspondence of 20 July 2017, the Courts Service is not in a position to provide a breakdown by age, by gender, by county or by Garda district of the number of persons convicted for drink driving. However, they did provide the number of persons convicted for drink driving by District Court area from 2007 to 30 April 2017. To be of assistance, the Courts Service have provided updated statistics to 31 December 2017 at Table 1.

I am still awaiting the information you have requested on the number of persons arrested for drink driving from An Garda Síochána and my Department has been in contact with the Garda authorities again in relation to this matter. I will forward on this information once it is to hand.

In my letter of 20 July 2017, I also directed your attention to the Central Statistics Office (CSO) website (www.cso.ie). Please see the StatBank on the Database page, which is the CSO's main data dissemination service and under 'People and Society' you will find 'Crime and Justice', which holds the recorded crime statistics.

Table 1: Report on numbers of persons convicted for drink Driving by Court Area from 01 Jan 2007 to 31 Dec 2017.

Court Area	Jan - Dec 2007	Jan - Dec 2008	Jan - Dec 2009	Jan - Dec 2010	Jan - Dec 2011	Jan - Dec 2012	Jan - Dec 2013	Jan - Dec 2014	Jan - Dec 2015	Jan - Dec 2016	Jan - Dec 2017
ABBEYFEALE	14	10	12	9	6	1	1				
ACAILL	2	4	2	1	5		5				2
AN CLOCHAN LIATH	35	32	15	21	9	10	11	6	1	4	5
AN DAIN-GEAN	18	16	16	9	7	15	10	7	5	6	2
AN FAL CAR-RACH	17	21	28	10	9	3	8	6	1	3	3
AN SPIDEAL	18	4	8	10	10	4	2				

Court Area	Jan - Dec 2007	Jan - Dec 2008	Jan - Dec 2009	Jan - Dec 2010	Jan - Dec 2011	Jan - Dec 2012	Jan - Dec 2013	Jan - Dec 2014	Jan - Dec 2015	Jan - Dec 2016	Jan - Dec 2017
ARDEE	15	24	18	19	20	9	7	6	7	6	6
ARKLOW	45	71	39	44	35	21	22	18	16	7	33
ARVA	18	18									
ATHENRY	13	10	12	15	13						
ATHLONE	74	155	115	62	83	44	40	25	20	23	46
ATHY	38	25	29	26	27	14	17	15	5	5	14
BAILIEBOR- OUGH	63	60	41	2							2
BALLAGHAD- ERREEN	14	17	17	11	8	4	4	2		3	
BALLINA	56	83	62	42	22	21	10	16	17	25	34
BALLINA- MORE	16	5	9	3							
BALL- INASLOE	47	54	33	41	29	33	17	23	19	11	17
BALLINROBE	6	32	5	9							
BALLYBAY	27										
BALLYCAS- TLE	3	5									
BALLYCON- NELL & SWANLIN- BAR	65	44	22	21	12	12	4				
BALLYCROY	1	1									
BALLYHAU- NIS	10	28	15	6	10	3					
BALLYMOTE	13	9	15	10	10	16					
BALLYSHAN- NON	50	36	27	27	29		10	9	7	8	16
BALTIN- GLASS	24	23	18	18	27	9	2				
BANAGHER	6	4									
BANDON	51	47	35	27	37	17	30	29	23	23	28
BANTRY	16	28	15	18	24	19	15	14	20	16	13
BEAL AN MHUIRT- HEAD	4	23	15	19	11	5	10	8	2	6	6
BIRR	29	23	33	28	23	8	11				
BORRISO- KANE	4	6	4	6	6						
BOYLE	12	12	2	3	1						
BRAY	88	144	127	87	85	39	42	35	27	26	36
BRUFF	11	6	2								
BUNCRANA	106	60	32	21	14	8	10	12	10	7	7
CAHIR	24	35									
CA- HIRCIVEEN	11	14	6	15	12	11	4	2	3	4	8
CAPPOQUIN	8	7									

Questions - Written Answers

Court Area	Jan - Dec 2007	Jan - Dec 2008	Jan - Dec 2009	Jan - Dec 2010	Jan - Dec 2011	Jan - Dec 2012	Jan - Dec 2013	Jan - Dec 2014	Jan - Dec 2015	Jan - Dec 2016	Jan - Dec 2017
CARLING-FORD	3										
CARLOW	174	113	103	91	83	40	69	48	32	40	37
CARNA	2	1									
CARN-DONAGH	60	26	21	13	15	12	9	10	3	2	8
CARRICK ON SHANNON	57	47	37	31	20	12	21	21	10	10	20
CARRICK ON SUIR	35	32	14	12	14	7	11	9	3	6	7
CARRICK-MACROSS	109	81	57	48	71	54	45	38	26	32	43
CASHEL	19	21	67	49	44	24	19	38	15	26	38
CASTLEBAR	36	151	33	29	42	35	36	36	33	32	33
CASTLE-BLANEY	91	73	69	42							
CASTLECOMER	11	5	13	11	6						
CASTLEISLAND	9	15	9	9	12						
CASTLEPOL-LARD	9	18									
CASTLEREA	17	27	22	13	15	9	3	3	3	2	1
CASTLE-TOWN BERE	3	4	3	3	5						
CAVAN	135	115	94	77	84	43	60	43	31	42	90
CHARLES-TOWN	9	5									
CILL RONAIN	2							1		1	
CLAREMORRIS	14	31	18	13	15						
CLIFDEN	23	22	18	24	21	9	9	8	10	8	8
CLONAKILTY	36	37	14	25	33	20	21	10	7	26	19
CLONES	26	20	19	11	9	9	11				
CLONMEL	102	91	77	77	70	48	30	43	23	30	27
COACHFORD	10	6	6								
COBH	19	16	18	12							
COOTEHILL	27	18	17								
CORK CITY	786	613	548	437	447	354	315	198	158	183	224
COROFIN	2	3									
DOIRE AN FHEICH	8	17	21	20	20	8	9	16	7	7	8
DONEGAL	61	50	45	37	21	13	14	19	14	12	21
DROGHEDA	162	207	216	142	111	69	45	60	28	27	31
DUBLIN METROPOLITAN DISTRICT	2,457	2,313	2,011	1,766	1,548	1,008	806	600	474	496	511
DUNDALK	183	240	243	195	127	64	63	45	40	48	71

Court Area	Jan - Dec 2007	Jan - Dec 2008	Jan - Dec 2009	Jan - Dec 2010	Jan - Dec 2011	Jan - Dec 2012	Jan - Dec 2013	Jan - Dec 2014	Jan - Dec 2015	Jan - Dec 2016	Jan - Dec 2017
DUNGARVAN	98	48	46	35	42	23	18	10	16	12	18
DUNLAVIN	4										
DUNLEER	24										
DUNMAN- WAY	10	6	11	8							
DUNMORE	9	4									
DUN- SHAUGHLIN	110	93	52	43							
EASKY	5	4	11	8							
EDENDERRY	27	29	23	5	12	11	10				
ENNIS	150	153	109	94	76	73	72	76	53	63	67
ENNISCOR- THY	61	67	72	79	22	53					
ENNISTY- MON	15	16	17	24	21						
EYRECOURT	3										
FERMOY	12	31	13	34	55		30	46	29	32	35
FOXFORD	3	8									
GALWAY	303	259	231	233	186	131	100	119	115	89	106
GLENAMA- DDY	2	2									
GOREY	145	72	77	75	105	85	69	56	34	33	41
GORT	33	49	38	22	36	17	11	8	7	9	26
GRANARD	7	10									
GRANGE	5	6									
HEADFORD	10	9									
INNISCRONE	5										
KANTURK	16	12	7	9							
KELLS	85	61	53	25	43	18	27				
KENMARE	15	8	9	9	6	4	5	4	5	4	1
KILCOCK	43	48	38	33	39	35	21	28	12	18	15
KILCORMAC	20	16									
KILDARE	34	52	47	16							
KILDYSART	2										
KILKEE	15	8									
KILKENNY	127	153	135	85	92	94	51	42	25	32	45
KILLALOE	10	13	23	22	11	15	9	8	8	5	5
KILLARNEY	97	90	70	33	77	51	35	34	25	38	30
KILLENAULE	4	6									
KILLORGLIN	13	17	19	6	4	8	7	7	3	3	1
KILLUCAN	11	7									
KILMACTHO- MAS	15										
KILMALL- OCK	41	33	37	35	38	5					

Questions - Written Answers

Court Area	Jan - Dec 2007	Jan - Dec 2008	Jan - Dec 2009	Jan - Dec 2010	Jan - Dec 2011	Jan - Dec 2012	Jan - Dec 2013	Jan - Dec 2014	Jan - Dec 2015	Jan - Dec 2016	Jan - Dec 2017
KILRUSH	21	10	21	32	18	8	7	5	6	6	5
KILTIMAGH	4	6	5	4	3						
KINSALE	40	33	20	25	20	9	14				
KINVARA	5	11									

Table continuing

LETTERKENNY	243	159	240	122	112	66	77	86	53	70	80
LIMERICK	332	353	319	260	233	136	160	100	81	111	149
LISDOONVARNA	12	5									
LISMORE	5	6	11	6	9	3	6	1		4	10
LISTOWEL	50	41	30	41	38	20	20	16	20	19	13
LONGFORD	106	85	98	107	79	25	52	63	46	39	66
LOUGHREA	53	58	51	34	37	21	20	22	10	14	20
MACROOM	47	55	33	45	27	26	26	21	13	22	14
MALLOW	35	42	19	46	52	43	53	62	59	35	62
MANORHAMILTON	9	9	11	7	1	3	7	3	3	3	
MEATH										91	120
MIDLETON	75	52	33	50	58	51	58	56	47	51	47
MILLSTREET	7	3	7								
MILTOWN MALBAY	5	9									
MITCHELSTOWN	39	9	9	11							
MONAGHAN	161	136	108	88	75	44	40	33	21	29	52
MOUNT BELLEW	2										
MULLINGAR	154	153	115	148	109	70	80	71	71	73	89
NA GLEANNTA	26	16	11	10	5	6	3	4	2	5	4
NAAS	205	235	199	159	144	127	94	93	60	58	74
NAVAN	106	105	104	79	119	59	72	83	62	18	
NENAGH	54	61	73	56	44	37	32	49	38	31	43
NEW ROSS	24	35	46	59	52						
NEWCASTLE WEST	51	28	38	36	40	33	17	22	28	26	40
NEWPORT	16	17									
OUGHTERARD	7	8									
PORTARLINGTON	26	25	19	20	18						
PORTLAOISE	166	147	116	103	75	80	64	62	57	48	63
PORTUMNA	12	14									
RATHDRUM	16										
RATHKEALE	39	35	33	18	4						
RIVERSTOWN	4	3									
ROSCOMMON	41	45	28	33	25	12	29	16	12	19	9
ROSCREA	27	18	33	15	18						
SCARRIFF	8	7									

SCHULL	10	9	4	2							
SHANNON	36	40	24	23	16						
SKIBBEREEN	27	21	14	19	14	7	6	6	8	7	3
SLIGO	126	93	82	74	85	47	42	32	22	32	38
STROKESTOWN	28	9	8	8	8	3	3	5	1	2	
SWINFORD	10	12	13	8	10	6	7				
TALLOW	7	4									
TEMPLEMORE	16	5	11	7	8						
THOMASTOWN	29										
THURLES	65	80	61	49	67	43	31	44	16	29	30
TIPPERARY	30	24	32	18	24	23	25	28	11	14	15
TRALEE	173	100	109	96	76	66	59	46	54	58	49
TRIM	62	70	58	73	47	31	22	13	16	3	
TUAM	63	32	58	43	41	23	36	26	20	13	31
TUBBERCURRY	13	8	8	18	11	2	4	8	2	5	3
TULLA	6	8									
TULLAMORE	139	115	70	80	69	55	50	49	35	54	59
TULLOW	20										
VIRGINIA	75	63	42	53	60	42	42	31	17	25	40
WATERFORD CITY	216	175	160	167	124	97	75	48	39	39	55
WESTPORT	16	44	22	24	25	8	13	9	16	14	11
WEXFORD	203	133	123	113	88	78	85	55	43	67	69
WICKLOW	70	118	67	50	28	23	19	18	14	11	12
YOUGHAL	31	24	19	14	9	18	13	10	7	13	14
Total	11,062	10,225	8,595	7,313	6,507	4,238	3,816	3,213	2,442	2,709	3,254

Garda Resources

506. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the measures being taken to ensure that gardaí in Ballymun are adequately resourced in order to carry out their work in a safe manner; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54537/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda resources are a matter for the Garda Commissioner in light of his identified operational demands and the availability of resources and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

Fleet Strength

I have been informed by the Garda authorities that as of 8 January 2018, some 114 vehicles are available to the DMR North Division which includes Ballymun Garda District. Of these vehicles 56 are assigned to the Ballymun District.

I understand that the allocation of Garda vehicles is monitored and reviewed by the Garda authorities on a continual basis. The responsibility for the efficient deployment of all official Garda vehicles in each Division is assigned to the Divisional Officer, who may allocate vehicles between stations as required by operational requirements.

Personnel Strength

I have been informed that some 123 Gardaí have been allocated to the Dublin Metropolitan

Region North since the recommencement of recruitment. Of these 38 have been assigned to stations within Ballymun Garda District. I understand that the resourcing of each Garda Region and Division is fully considered within the overall context of the needs and requirements of Garda regions throughout the country. Garda personnel assigned throughout the country, together with overall policing arrangements and operational strategies, are continually monitored and reviewed. Such monitoring ensures that optimum use is made of Garda Resources and the best possible Garda service is provided to the general public. The civilian staffing figure for Ballymun is 7.8 Whole-Time Equivalents.

Other resources

In relation to other resources I am informed that where Gardaí from a particular station require additional resources e.g. uniform, equipment including office equipment and furniture, applications are made by the Station through the Divisional office to the Garda Procurement Section which manages these applications.

All Garda operational members, including, members from Ballymun Station have access to an “on line” application system via the Garda Intranet Portal for operational uniform, and where they have a requirement for these items, applications are processed via this system.

Where there is a requirement for additional IT infrastructure these applications are processed via the Garda ICT Division, however IT equipment is continually being provided to ensure that operational needs are being met.

Residency Permits

507. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of a residency application by a person (details supplied). [54545/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that, in response to a notification pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), written representations have been submitted on behalf of the person concerned.

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

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

Garda Deployment

508. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if 800 gardaí were recruited by the end of 2017; if so, the number of these gardaí that will be allocated to County Carlow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54559/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will ap-

preciate, 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. To achieve this the Government has put in place a plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. We are making real, tangible progress on achieving this goal.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 by 2021 will require some 2,400 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next three years in addition to the more than 2,000 who have been recruited since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014 and the end of 2017. I am informed by the Commissioner that 807 Garda trainees entered the Garda College in 2017.

I am further informed that since the reopening of the Garda College just under 1,600 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, 49 of whom have been assigned to the Kilkenny/Carlow Division. I am pleased to say that Garda numbers, taking account of retirements, increased to 13,552 at the end of 2017 - an increase of over 600 in 12 months.

I am also pleased that funding is in place to maintain this high level of investment in the Garda workforce to ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. This year a further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College. In addition, 800 Garda trainees are scheduled to attest during the year, which will see Garda numbers reach more than 14,000 by the end of 2018.

In addition, a further 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 Division, including the Kilkenny/Carlow Division.

Legal Services Regulation

509. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the date on which he expects the Legal Services Regulatory Authority to be fully operational; when it will begin regulating the legal profession; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54580/17]

573. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the implementation of Part 6 of the Legal Services Regulation Authority Act 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1486/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 509 and 573 together.

As I have previously conveyed to the House, the setting-up of the Legal Services Regula-

tory Authority has been under way on a number of fronts since July 2016. At that time Parts 1 and 2 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 were commenced as necessary to get the new Authority appointed and under way. The Authority, which is independent in the performance of its functions under the 2015 Act, has convened regularly since its inaugural meeting on 26 October 2016 - minutes of its meetings are available on its website www.LSRA.ie.

During its initial year of establishment, the Legal Services Regulatory Authority has been deeply engaged in the conduct of public consultations and in the making of five reports on a series of new options for the provision of legal services under sections 118 to 120 of the Act which were also commenced. It had been obliged to complete these within strictly set deadlines running from its day of establishment on 1 October 2016. All of these reports have now been laid, as required under the 2015 Act, before the Houses of the Oireachtas while also being publicly accessible on the Authority's website.

As reflected in the 2015 Act and the relevant reports completed by the Authority, the Government continues to give policy priority to the introduction of Legal Partnerships by way of structural reform of the legal services sector. It is appreciated that this places additional working demands on the Authority which has, nonetheless, been consulting with the legal professional bodies and conducting workshops in preparation for their introduction.

Alongside its ongoing consultation and reporting commitments, the current working focus of the Authority is, I understand, very much on the managed roll-out of its remaining functions. This includes the matching development of the organisational capacities and office and staffing resources essential to effective delivery. It also includes the necessary preparatory steps for the establishment and application of the new Roll of Practising Barristers under which both Law Library and non-Law Library practicing barristers will be regulated, for the first time under legislation, by the Authority. This will also be a pre-requisite for the exercise by the Authority of its public complaints functions. A further key area under development is that of the application of the levy that is to be made on both practicing solicitors and practicing barristers under Part 7 of the 2015 Act. Funding support of €1 million has recently been provided to the Authority from the Justice Vote for 2017. This follows an advance of the same amount that was provided from my Department's 2016 Vote.

It should also be recalled that in parallel to the introduction of enhanced legal costs transparency obligations on legal practitioners under the 2015 Act, extensive legal and technical preparations are also continuing separately within the courts system to complete the transition of the Office of the Taxing-Master to that of the Legal Costs Adjudicators.

Following these steps, the key structural reforms of Part 6 of the 2015 Act relating to public complaints, professional conduct and the appointment of the Legal Practitioners' Disciplinary Tribunal dealing with both solicitors and barristers, will be commenced. It is considered that this component of the Act will underpin the entire new regulatory regime in terms of its observance and enforcement. I will, of course, continue to emphasise the importance which I attach as Minister to the objective of getting the Authority open for business on the core public complaints function as quickly as is reasonably possible while also bearing in mind the risks and complexities which must be carefully managed to bring that about.

The Regulatory Authority is actively preparing to conduct the first periodic review of the operation of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 as required under section 6 of that Act. This must be commenced not later than eighteen months after the Authority's establishment day and its outcomes reported to each House of the Oireachtas within twelve months. Moreover, the Authority is putting the practical arrangements in place for the provision, on foot of appropriate public consultations, of the required statutory report in relation to the education and training

(including ongoing training) arrangements in the State for legal practitioners, including the manner in which such education and training is provided. This report, which has to be provided to me as Minister within two years of the Authority's establishment day, will cover an array of matters set out within section 34 of the 2015 Act and be laid before the Houses.

Work has also commenced in preparation for the submission of the Authority's first three-year Strategic Plan under section 20 of the 2015 Act. The Authority will also be submitting its first full-year Annual Report having previously submitted a report for quarter three of 2016. Work is also ongoing between the Authority and my Department on a new Corporate Governance Assurance Agreement. Arrangements are also underway to fill, with the necessary approval of each House of the Oireachtas, a casual vacancy that has arisen on the Authority due to the appointment of an existing member to the judiciary.

The Authority continues its work on a number of projects to assist in identifying the staffing needs and resources required to allow it to support the ongoing roll out of its functions to a structured and achievable timetable. This includes continued direct engagement between the Authority and my Department as well as between the Authority and other key stakeholders. This work has been augmented by the recent appointment by the Authority of its first full-time Chief Executive, Dr. Brian Doherty, along with its securing of enhanced office accommodation.

Against this background of complex and competing working demands, both I and my Department will continue to work closely with the Authority to enable it to come into substantive regulatory mode at the earliest opportunity and with appropriate staffing and project management. I am also anticipating an early opportunity to engage further myself with the Authority to discuss progress in relation to these matters. At the same time, it will be appreciated that the Authority is earnestly working to progress the identification and elaboration, in conjunction with my Department, of the more specific delivery dates concerned. I expect these will be made known as soon as they have been aligned, to the satisfaction of the Authority, with its anticipated working resources as an independent regulator.

Residency Permits

510. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the correct procedure to be followed in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54593/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person referred to by the Deputy entered the State on 21 July 2009 and registered on student conditions (Stamp 2) on 10 August 2009. This period of permission to reside in the State expired on 31 December 2013.

I am further informed by INIS that the person concerned sought further permission to reside under Stamp 2 conditions in 2015. This application was refused by INIS in 2016. No further request to remain in the State has been received in respect of the person concerned.

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.

Travel Documents

511. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the procedure by which a legal guardian can establish their consent to their child that has been given refugee status here applying for travel documents which have a requirement for the legal guardian to sign the form in the presence of a garda but the legal guardian lives in Iraq. [54594/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am informed by the Travel Documents Section of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department, which issues travel documents to holders of protection status, that the normal procedure for application on behalf of minors is that the parents or legal guardians would sign the application form in the presence of a member of the Garda Síochána, while accompanied by the child. This approach would require the parents or legal guardians, if outside the State, to travel to Ireland. As a safeguard, they would also have to substantiate their bona fides in relation to the child.

In this particular case, the Deputy's question does not contain sufficient information to give a specific response. For example, the Travel Documents Section would need to know if the legal guardian in question is a parent, and whether there is more than one parent or legal guardian. If the person is not a parent, the grounds for the claimed guardianship would need to be substantiated. Under circumstances under which travel to Ireland is not possible, there may be scope to involve the assistance of the nearest Irish Embassy. In order to receive a detailed response to the particular situation in question, the Deputy or the legal guardian should make email contact with the INIS Travel Documents Section at INIStravdoc@justice.ie, or by post to Travel Documents Section, Ministerial Decisions Unit, Repatriation Division, INIS, Department of Justice and Equality, 13-14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2.

Standards in Public Office Commission

512. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if all members of An Garda Síochána are in compliance currently and historically with SIPO requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54598/17]

524. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will request the acting Garda Commissioner to confirm that all senior management in An Garda Síochána have complied fully and historically with SIPO legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54682/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 512 and 524 together.

I am advised by the Garda Commissioner that in January of each year, all personnel who occupy a "designated position of employment" in An Garda Síochána are informed of their obligations under the Ethics in Public Office Acts 1995 and 2001. A Section 18 Statement of Interests Form is attached as well as correspondence from the Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO).

Prior to 2010, SIPO guidelines recommended that where a designated official had no interests to disclose, he/she should furnish a 'nil' statement, however this was never a legal requirement.

In the eighth edition of the guidelines (August 2010) for public servants on compliance

with their obligations, SIPO withdrew this recommendation. On this basis, I am informed that personnel were subsequently notified that it is no longer necessary to provide a “nil” statement and were informed that it was the responsibility of each holder of a “designated position of employment” to ensure that he/she was in compliance with their obligations under the Ethics in Public Office Acts. In this context it is obviously not possible for An Garda Síochána (or any other public service body) to confirm with absolute certainty full historical compliance as the individuals had the option of not furnishing a statement. However, as the Deputy will be aware, following a request by the Public Accounts Committee last Summer, An Garda Síochána requested all relevant officers to confirm compliance with the Ethics in Public Office Acts. This was done through a survey conducted by the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer. I am advised that a total of 272 members were surveyed and 271 members responded. I understand that the remaining person was on extended sick leave.

I am further informed that last December, Garda management met with officials from SIPO to discuss how An Garda Síochána could enhance processes to ensure a robust approach to compliance with the Ethics in Public Office Acts.

The Commissioner has advised that correspondence will shortly issue to relevant personnel with regard to compliance with the Acts for 2017 and that, in the interest of good corporate governance, they will be requested to confirm compliance with the Acts by returning a statement of interests whether it is “Nil” or otherwise.

If the Deputy has a specific concern in relation to compliance with SIPO legislation, I would ask that he communicate the information to SIPO so that the matter can be properly investigated.

Courts Service Data

513. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons here that have used the European small claims procedure to pursue a cross-border civil or commercial claim since January 2009; the average monetary award upon judgment to date; and the average annual cost to the State of facilitating this avenue of redress. [54623/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions, which include the provision of information on the courts system.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had inquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that it commenced collating data on the number of European Small Claims processed by the Small Claims Court where the Claimant was resident in Ireland in 2015 and so data is not available prior to 2015. The Courts Service has also informed me that the collation of data in respect of 2017 has not yet been completed.

The following table provides the data in relation to the number of European Small Claims received by the Small Claims Court in 2015 and 2016 where the Claimant was resident in Ireland and the details of decrees granted.

Year	Small Claims Ireland to EU Applications Received	Small Claims Ireland to EU Decrees Granted
2015	80	24
2016	61	21

The Courts Service has advised that all European Small Claims are manually processed and that the value of decrees granted are not collated for statistical purposes. Therefore, the average monetary award upon judgment is not available. The Courts Service has also advised that the average annual cost to the State of facilitating this avenue of redress is not available.

I wish to inform the Deputy that I have asked my Department to engage further with the Courts Service on the issue of improving the information capability in relation to the European small claims procedure so as to facilitate analysis of its effectiveness on the ground.

Courts Service Data

514. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of backlog of cases before the Court of Appeal; and his views on its effectiveness since being established. [54624/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions, which include the provision of information on the courts system.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had inquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that following the establishment of the Court of Appeal on 28 October 2014, 1,355 civil appeals then pending in the Supreme Court were transferred to the Court of Appeal. Of those cases just 257 appeals were certified by the solicitors for the appellants as being ready for hearing. 660 criminal appeals, then pending before the Court of Criminal Appeal, were also transferred.

In addition to the legacy caseload, the Court of Appeal (subject to constitutional provisions for direct appeals to the Supreme Court in certain circumstances) is the appellate court for all appeals from decisions of the High Court (including the Central Criminal Court), the Special Criminal Court and the Circuit (Criminal) Court. Between 28 October 2014 and 30 September 2017 there were 2,824 new appeals lodged to the Court of Appeal - 1,897 civil appeals and 927 criminal appeals.

As at 30 September 2017 there were 1,947 appeals awaiting a hearing, of which 1,399 are civil appeals, and of which 745 are cases transferred from the Supreme Court. 548 criminal appeals are outstanding, of which 20 are appeals transferred from the Court of Criminal Appeal. Please note that data for Q4 2017 is not yet available.

The Court of Appeal comprises the President of the Court together with nine ordinary judges. Of this complement of ten judges, four judges are assigned by the President to deal with criminal appeals, while the President and the remaining five judges deal with civil appeals. The civil appeals list is managed by the President of the Court of Appeal, while the criminal appeals list is managed by another judge of the court nominated by the President.

The Court sits every day in term in a minimum of two divisions to hear civil appeals and criminal appeals subject to one week each term being allocated for preparation of reserved judgments in cases, where important issues of law arise and where the court is of the view that judgment cannot be given immediately after the appeal hearing.

The Courts Service has advised that the waiting times as at the end of November 2017 were as follows:

(a) Civil Appeals

- fast tracked short appeals (requiring less than 2 hours) - 12 months subject to the case being included in the “short cases” list and with the possibility of an earlier date, and
- other appeals (requiring more than 2 hours) - the waiting time for these appeals is 18 months.

Urgent appeals such as Hague Convention/child abduction and refugee asylum cases continue to be accommodated having regard to the degree of urgency demonstrated. Also civil appeals, which have a custody and/or criminal element, are now case-managed in the Criminal Courts of Justice by the panel of 4 judges assigned to deal with the criminal appeal list, thus ensuring the degree of priority necessary for hearing of such appeals. As a result, waiting times for these cases are as follows:

- Article 40/habeas corpus appeals and bail appeals are usually heard in one month or less
- European Arrest Warrant cases and Judicial Review cases are heard within the current legal term provided the necessary papers are in order.

(b) Criminal Appeals

Criminal Appeals have a waiting time of 6 months. This is significantly better than the 18 month waiting time in the Court of Criminal Appeal prior to the establishment of the Court of Appeal. Hearing dates can now be allocated during the subsequent legal term to the majority of cases included in the List to Fix Dates (held once a term). An occasional case, which requires a full day or in excess of a day, or a case where for various reasons a date during a specific week/month is requested by the parties and which the court simply cannot accommodate due to the availability of court time, will be allocated a date during the subsequent term.

Criminal appeals (and civil appeals for hearing in the Criminal Courts of Justice) are actively managed on a weekly basis by the Judge assigned to management of the criminal lists to ensure cases are dealt with as efficiently as possible and delays in moving cases to the List to Fix Dates due to procedural issues arising are kept to a minimum. Applications for priority may be made at the weekly management list.

The matter of resources in the Court of Appeal, taking into account its current workload including the substantial inherited backlog and bearing in mind resources across the courts, is currently being examined.

A recent initiative agreed between the Chief Justice and the President of the Court of Appeal has seen a first tranche of 60 legacy appeals (transferred from the Supreme Court) identified for transfer back to the Supreme Court with a view to an early hearing date in that court. 20 of these appeals have been transferred back to the Supreme Court and of these 9 appeals were heard in the Supreme Court in December 2017 with the remainder being actively case-managed by the Supreme Court with a view to a hearing in February 2018.

Crime Data

515. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons convicted of criminal offences in County Waterford courts that were granted bail in each of the past five years; and the number of these that were found to have reoffended while out on bail. [54625/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions, which include the provision of information on the courts system.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had inquiries made and the Courts Service has advised that it is not possible to provide the information regarding the number of persons convicted of criminal offences in County Waterford courts that were granted bail in each of the past five years in the time available. The information will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it is to hand.

The Courts Service has also advised that courts statistics are not compiled in such a way as to provide the information sought by the Deputy regarding the number of persons that were found to have re-offended while out on bail and it is therefore not possible to provide the detail sought.

Courts Service Data

516. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prosecutions that were struck out by District Court district in 2015 and 2016. [54626/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions, which include the provision of information on the courts system.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had inquiries made and the Courts Service has provided information in the following table on the number of offences disposed of and strike outs by District Court district in 2015 and 2016 which relates to all prosecutions.

The figures provided by the Courts Service indicate that a certain percentage of cases are struck out for non-service. Challenges in relation to effecting service of summons in certain circumstances relate to such matters as inaccurate address data, persons moving address, or living in multi-occupancy dwellings or other settings which make service difficult. In addition, certain persons will take steps to evade service and similar difficulties are experienced by many other police forces. It should be noted that where a summons is struck out, An Garda Síochána may apply to the appropriate court office for the reissue of the summons.

Report on number of offences disposed of and strike outs by District Court District in 2015 and 2016:

District	Number of Offences in 2015	Strike Out in 2015	Strike Out - Not Served in 2015	Number of Offences in 2016	Strike Out in 2016	Strike Out - Not Served in 2016
DISTRICT NO. 1	7,707	2,547	1,829	6,536	2,123	1,360
DISTRICT NO. 2	7,252	2,606	1,817	6,531	2,508	1,355
DISTRICT NO. 3	4,308	476	537	4,594	417	842

District	Number of Offences in 2015	Strike Out in 2015	Strike Out - Not Served in 2015	Number of Offences in 2016	Strike Out in 2016	Strike Out - Not Served in 2016
DISTRICT NO. 4	10,952	3,375	2,067	9,404	3,210	1,965
DISTRICT NO. 5	9,902	3,420	2,236	10,303	2,222	2,114
DISTRICT NO. 6	9,985	3,173	1,840	10,861	3,607	1,617
DISTRICT NO. 7	11,903	2,817	2,182	11,661	2,744	1,877
DISTRICT NO. 8	8,331	2,531	1,440	7,403	2,373	1,544
DISTRICT NO. 9	13,467	5,309	2,830	12,811	4,848	2,107
DISTRICT NO. 10	7,728	2,707	1,867	6,844	2,606	1,227
DISTRICT NO. 12	13,859	5,554	2,549	11,901	2,502	2,301
DISTRICT NO. 13	25,285	6,049	4,542	24,641	5,506	4,325
DISTRICT NO. 15	11,445	3,368	2,287	12,275	3,792	3,047
DISTRICT NO. 16	9,380	3,111	2,060	7,940	2,938	1,550
DISTRICT NO. 17	10,775	2,773	3,027	9,363	2,353	1,753
DISTRICT NO. 18	7,630	1,247	1,411	6,080	1,026	1,271
DISTRICT NO. 19	26,494	6,919	5,566	24,756	5,986	5,159
DISTRICT NO. 20	12,530	4,076	2,912	11,040	3,639	2,651
DISTRICT NO. 21	8,866	2,601	1,992	8,869	2,690	1,981
DISTRICT NO. 22	12,460	2,945	2,303	11,178	2,413	2,057
DISTRICT NO. 23	8,170	2,567	1,106	8,881	2,757	1,253
DISTRICT NO. 24	6,743	3,027	1,385	6,582	3,092	1,235
DISTRICT NO. 25	12,885	1,211	3,260	11,730	1,015	3,053
DUBLIN METROPOLITAN DISTRICT	135,347	46,796	25,596	137,792	47,970	30,518

District	Number of Offences in 2015	Strike Out in 2015	Strike Out - Not Served in 2015	Number of Offences in 2016	Strike Out in 2016	Strike Out - Not Served in 2016
Total	393,404	121,205	78,641	379,976	114,337	78,162

Note: Any change to the figures in the Annual Report of the total number of strike outs in the District Court in 2015-2016, excluding strike outs not served, relate to changes in the status of cases since the figures in the Annual Report was completed.

Court Poor Box

517. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of cases before courts in County Waterford that resulted in judges making orders against convicted persons to make donations to the court poor box in 2016; and the amount involved. [54627/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions, which include the provision of information on the courts system.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had inquiries made and the Courts Service has provided details of orders made by courts sitting in County Waterford relating to payments to the court poor box. The data have been collated in relation to sittings of the District Court in WaterfordCity, Dungarvan and Lismore and is set out in the following table.

As the Deputy may be aware, the court poor box is a non-statutory system used by the District Courts to impose a financial charge on a defendant to be used for a charitable purpose, usually instead of imposing a criminal conviction. The option of paying into the court poor box arises usually where the offence is minor in nature and would not attract a custodial sentence.

There are many reasons and instances why the court poor box is used by judges. The accused may never previously have been before the courts, the accused may have pleaded guilty, a conviction might be inappropriate, or might adversely affect employment, career or working abroad prospects, and/or the offence may be of a minor or trivial nature.

When combined with the Probation of Offenders Act it provides an option where some financial penalty is considered merited but a conviction and fine are not. It can sometimes be a more meaningful punishment than the maximum fine where the value of a maximum fine may have been eroded by inflation.

Payments made to the court poor box are accounted for by the court office concerned and the accounting procedures are subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General. Generally, charities are the recipients of poor box contributions but the decision is solely at the discretion of the Judge who is independent in the matter of sentencing, as in other matters concerning the exercise of judicial functions, subject only to the Constitution and the law.

The Government has approved the drafting of a Criminal Justice (Community Sanctions) Bill to replace the Probation of Offenders Act 1907 with modern provisions dealing with community sanctions and the role of the Probation Service in the criminal justice system. The Bill is currently being drafted by the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel. It is intended that the legislation will abolish the court poor box and replace it with a statutory Reparation Fund to provide for a fair, equitable and transparent system of reparation that will apply only to minor

offences dealt with by the District Court.

Report on Poor Box Orders for January to December 2016 for County Waterford

Court Area	Number of Poor Box Orders
Waterford City	54
Dungarvan	103
Lismore	15
Total	172

The Courts Service has advised that its financial procedures provide that payments to the court poor box are recorded on the Courts Service Courts Accounting System and that payments are receipted and accounted for on a Court Office basis rather than on an individual court location basis. Accordingly, it is not possible for the Courts Service to provide details in respect payments received arising from orders made in the courts sitting in Waterford City, Dungarvan or Lismore.

Legal Aid Service Data

518. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of accused persons that received free legal aid in each county in 2016; and the average cost per case to the State arising from free legal aid applications. [54628/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) Act 1962, which is the primary legislation covering the operation of the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme, provides that free legal aid may be granted, in certain circumstances, for the defence of persons of insufficient means in criminal proceedings.

Under the 1962 Act, the courts, through the Judiciary, are responsible for the granting of legal aid. Under the Constitution, the State is obliged to provide an accused person with the means to obtain appropriate legal representation.

I can inform the Deputy that the number of criminal legal aid certificates issued by the District Courts for 2016 was 55,617. Statistics are not compiled in such a manner as to readily identify the number of certificates issued on a county by county basis.

Fees payable to solicitors for cases in the District Courts are substantially lower than the fees payable to lawyers for cases in the Circuit and Higher Courts. With regard to information sought in relation to the average cost per case to the State, given that expenditure in 2016 was €53 million and the number of certificates granted was 55,617, the approximate average cost was €953. This figure is an average of a number of different categories of legal aid expenditure relating to the particular form of criminal legal aid which was granted.

Drugs Crime

519. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prosecutions that have been brought before the courts in County Waterford for possession of heroin for personal use and for sale and supply since 2008. [54630/17]

520. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prosecutions that have been brought before the courts in County Waterford for possession of cocaine for personal use and for sale and supply since 2008. [54631/17]

521. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prosecutions that have been brought before the courts in County Waterford for possession of ecstasy for personal use and for sale and supply since 2008. [54632/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 519 to 521, inclusive, together.

As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions, which include the provision of information on the courts system.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had inquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that it is not possible to provide the data sought in the specific format requested by the Deputy as, for recording purposes, possession of drugs are coded on the basis of offences rather than on possession of individual drug types.

The Courts Service has also informed me that all prosecutions for possession of drugs, whether for personal use or for sale or supply, commence in the District Court. The report below provides details of all drug possession offences listed for courts located in County Waterford (District Courts in Waterford City, Dungarvan and Lismore) for the years 2008 to 2016 and from January to November 2017. The data for December 2017 is not yet available.

Report on the number of offences listed for court for Possession for Sale and Unlawful Possession from 2008 to 30 November 2017 in County Waterford.

Offence	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	January- November 2017
Possession for Sale of Supply Drugs Value €13,000 or more	7	5	4	3	7	9	5	1	1	3
Possession of Drug for the Purpose of Sale or Supply	83	72	81	87	113	64	79	74	45	63
Unlawful Possession of Drug(s)	518	510	577	445	398	324	295	282	301	295
Total	608	587	662	535	518	397	379	357	347	361

Legal Aid Service

522. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a scheme exists whereby a person (details supplied) can avail of legal aid in view of the fact that their case is currently on appeal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54670/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) Act, 1962, which is the primary legislation covering the operation of the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme, provides that free legal aid may be granted, in certain circumstances, for the defence of persons of insufficient means in criminal proceedings. The assignment of lawyers or the granting of aid are matters for the Court and, as such, are handled by the Judiciary. The provision of legal aid under the Scheme only applies within this State. The provisions of the Scheme do not apply outside this jurisdiction.

There is no other scheme within my responsibility as Minister for Justice and Equality that provides for legal aid for a person accused in criminal proceedings in a foreign jurisdiction. It is noted from the details supplied that the person referenced in the Deputy's question is receiving consular assistance from the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Garda Retirements

523. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the retirements in An Garda Síochána from the rank of superintendent up to Commissioner since 1 January 2016 by name, rank, role and location. [54679/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Garda Commissioner that from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2017 there were 32 retirements from the rank of Superintendent up to and including the rank of Commissioner, the details of which are outlined in the following table. The Commissioner has advised that for data protection reasons it is not possible to release the names of the members concerned.

Number of retirements from Superintendent to Commissioner from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2017	
Rank	Location / role
Commissioner	Garda Headquarters
Assistant Commissioner	Sligo
Assistant Commissioner	National Support Services
Assistant Commissioner	Drugs Organised Crime Bureau
Assistant Commissioner	DMR Office Harcourt Square
Assistant Commissioner	Security & Intelligence
Chief Superintendent	Drogheda
Chief Superintendent	Tralee
Chief Superintendent	Bray
Chief Superintendent	Bandon
Chief Superintendent	Special Detective Unit
Chief Superintendent	Security & Intelligence
Chief Superintendent	Waterford
Chief Superintendent	Protective Service Bureau
Chief Superintendent	Sligo

Number of retirements from Superintendent to Commissioner from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2017	
Chief Superintendent	Community Relations
Chief Superintendent	Roscommon
Superintendent	Drogheda
Superintendent	Drugs Organised Crime Bureau
Superintendent	Professional Standards Office
Superintendent	Dun Laoghaire
Superintendent	Blackrock
Superintendent	Portlaoise
Superintendent	Bandon
Superintendent	Garda College
Superintendent	Store Street
Superintendent	Nenagh
Superintendent	Carlow
Superintendent	Immigration Bureau
Superintendent	Newcastle West
Superintendent	Office of Corporate Communication
Superintendent	Criminal Investigation Bureau

Question No. 524 answered with Question No. 512.

Pension Provisions

525. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding pensions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54683/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As I have previously advised the Deputy in my replies to his parliamentary questions of the 3 October 2017 and 19 October 2017, the position is that prior to 1 October 1976, where a member of An Garda Síochána resigned or was dismissed before reaching the age and service at which he could retire on pension, that member forfeited all superannuation benefits under the then Garda Síochána Superannuation Scheme.

This situation was changed following discussions at the Garda Conciliation Council. It was agreed at that time by both sides, the official side and the Garda representative associations, and endorsed by the then Minister for Finance, that the new arrangements should apply to members of An Garda Síochána serving on, or after, 1 October 1976. By extension, these new terms did not and cannot apply to members who had left An Garda Síochána prior to that date. Generally speaking, these Agreed Reports provide that a Garda who resigned or was dismissed on or after 1 October 1976 can have superannuation benefits accrued to the date of resignation or dismissal, preserved until the member reached 60 years of age.

The then Department of Finance, and now Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, which continues to have overall responsibility for public service pension matters, agreed with the proposals for a cut-off date for eligibility for preserved benefits.

Similar arrangements have also been introduced in pension schemes across the public sector with varying ‘cut-off’ dates depending on the particular organisation involved and the conclu-

sion of negotiations between management and the relevant staff interests.

I must again stress that this was an agreed date between all of the parties involved in the discussions and was not imposed. It is an inevitable consequence of the introduction of improvements in pension schemes that members of that scheme who had left it prior to the effective date cannot avail of that benefit.

My Department has consulted the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and has been advised that the position remains that it is not possible to resolve a case individually on an administrative basis and provide an individual with preserved benefits without changing the terms of the scheme retrospectively. Such amendment would, in equity, have to cover all public servants who resigned prior to the effective date applicable to their schemes. That Department has further stated that changing the various schemes to change the cut-off date is not a practicable proposition.

I am advised that if a person retired voluntarily with full pensionable service and having reached the minimum retirement age prior to 1 October 1976 their pension entitlement was not affected by the new terms, which applied from 1 October 1976.

I trust this clarifies the position for the Deputy.

Road Safety Authority Campaigns

526. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on whether the statistics provided in 2013 to 2017 by An Garda Síochána to the RSA for its road safety campaigns were accurate; his further views on whether the RSA should be refunded some of the costs that An Garda Síochána charged for the campaigns; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54688/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, the Roads Safety Authority (RSA) falls within the remit of my colleague, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Mr. Shane Ross, T.D., and I have been advised by his Department as follows:

The RSA has a statutory remit to analyse and report on data from fatal, serious and minor injury collisions that have occurred on public roads, based on reports received from An Garda Síochána. The RSA validates the data upon receipt of same, before the data is formally signed off by the RSA. The RSA has confidence in the accuracy of this data, which is then used by the RSA to inform the development of evidence-based road safety interventions, including public awareness campaigns. The RSA does not make payments to, or charge An Garda Síochána for developing road safety campaigns.

Departmental Meetings

527. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the dates and purposes of all meetings between his officials and associations (details supplied) since 1 January 2015. [54690/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware that the Minister for Justice and Equality and officials from the Department meet from time to time, in a number of fora, with all four Garda Staff Associations, including the Garda Representative Association (GRA) and Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors (AGSI). Collating the information requested by the Deputy involves a comprehensive search of documents over a

number of years encompassing a number of areas of the Department. Officials from my Department are currently fully engaged in completing this exercise and I hope to be in a position to provide the information to the Deputy in a matter of days.

Community Alert Programme

528. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will examine a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54700/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My Department has sought the information requested by the Deputy and I will respond directly to him when the information is to hand.

Question No. 529 answered with Question No. 494.

Departmental Funding

530. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the name and number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from his Department 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 amount of money that they have spent on this particular campaign during that time; the number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from his Department that have expended resources seeking the retention of the eighth amendment; the amount of funding these organisations have received from the State in the past five years; and the amount of money that they have spent on this particular campaign during that time. [54770/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My Department provides funding to almost 300 different organisations. Many of these organisations also receive funding from other sources. My Department is not aware of, nor would it have access to information to determine, the details sought in the Deputy's question.

Family Law Cases

531. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps that can be taken to improve waiting times for the hearing of family law cases before Wexford District Court; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54775/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions. Furthermore, the scheduling of court cases and the allocation of court business is a matter the President of the District Court and the presiding judge who are, under the constitution, independent in the exercise of their judicial functions.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had inquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that the President of the District Court monitors waiting times and workload across all court lists and seeks to ensure the optimum use of court time and judicial resources. Wherever possible, the President targets additional judicial resources at the areas of greatest need.

I am also informed that Wexford District Court hears family law applications on two dedicated days each month (second Monday and fourth Tuesday). There are also two dedicated days per month for the hearing of family law matters in Gorey District Court. In addition to these dedicated days, another day at the end of the month is available for hearings which are not reached on the normal family law court days. Special hearing days are also provided where deemed appropriate, especially for cases which may take some time to deal with.

Emergency Applications such as Protection Orders are prioritised and are listed for hearing at the next court sitting day regardless of whether it is a dedicated family law day or not. Such applications are usually granted where the Court so decides on the date the application is made to the Court. Typically interim barring orders, which are also an emergency application, are also made ex parte and granted on the date of application. There are, therefore, no delays in dealing with such applications in either Wexford or Gorey District Courts.

Barring Order and Safety Order applications are listed for the next dedicated family law day in both Wexford and Gorey District Courts and are allocated priority in the family law list for that dedicated day and it can reasonably be anticipated that such applications will be listed for hearing within 4 weeks of the date of application.

With regard to Guardianship or Maintenance applications the waiting time to get into Court is 6 to 8 weeks. Any applications requesting dates currently, unless they are urgent, are being assigned dates in February 2018.

The Courts Service has advised that delays in the hearing of cases can be impacted by a number of factors, many of which are outside the control of the courts and the Courts Service, for example, the unavailability of a witness or vital evidence, delays in the furnishing of reports or because the parties and/or legal practitioners are not ready to proceed on allocated dates. This gives rise to adjournments, which can have an impact on the time taken to complete the hearing of a case and on the number of cases which can be disposed of in a court sitting.

The Courts Service continues to work with the Presidents and the Judiciary to ensure waiting times are kept to a minimum and, where specific issues are identified, resources are targeted at areas of greatest need.

Bankruptcy Data

532. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of bankruptcy cases in which the official assignee has sought or is seeking a payment in respect of the positive equity in the home of the person that has become bankrupt; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54801/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I can inform the Deputy that the Insolvency Service of Ireland (ISI) has confirmed that the total number of cases where the Official Assignee has brought an application to sell his interest in a Family Home is 43. Five of these cases have been completed and 38 cases are still before the Courts. There have been no forced sales.

Under Section 61(4) of the Bankruptcy Act 1988 (as amended by the Bankruptcy Amendment Act 2015), the Official Assignee cannot dispose of any property which is the family home of a person who has become bankrupt, without the prior permission of the High Court. (The same Section also applies if the property is the shared home of the person, within the meaning of the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010).

Where the Official Assignee applies to the High Court for such permission, the Court has the power (under Section 61(5) of the Bankruptcy Act (as amended)) to order postponement of any disposal of the home, having regard to the interests of the spouse or civil partner, and of any dependants, of the bankrupt person, as well as to the interests of creditors, and will have regard to all the circumstances of the case.

International Programmes

533. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding the international protection programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54918/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): The decision to reopen the accommodation facility at Linden House, Killarney, Co. Kerry was made to meet an urgent and unforeseen demand for accommodation by people seeking international protection that could not be met by the Department's existing accommodation portfolio. Linden House was previously used as an accommodation centre and was readily available to be used again.

Persons seeking international protection come from a wide variety of countries and is not possible to predict where a particular applicant would come from. This accommodation is provided while their applications for international protection are being processed so a long term housing strategy for each individual would not be practicable as the decision on their application is not known at this stage.

Unfortunately, due to the urgent and unforeseen demand for accommodation, it was not possible to engage in a full consultation process with the local authority and the community. My Department has recently advertised a tender for Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres and also advertised in the national press and the Official Journal of the EU seeking expressions of interest from interested parties to provide accommodation to those seeking international protection. My Department has advised the County and City Management Association of these procurement processes and will engage with the relevant local authority prior to a centre opening following the completion of these procurement processes.

Garda Stations

534. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding a Garda station (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54932/17]

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.

I have, however, been informed by the Garda authorities that the OPW are in discussions concerning refurbishments to the station in question. Following the outcome of these discussions, the timeframe for any works will be considered having regard to the funding available.

Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission

535. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the budget assigned to the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission in each of the years 2015 to 2017; the budget to be assigned for 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54935/17]

536. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff assigned to the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission in each of the years 2015 to 2017; the projected number of staff for 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54936/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 535 and 536 together.

The Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC) has a hugely important role in ensuring that public confidence in the Garda Síochána is safeguarded, and has extensive powers under the 2005 Act to enable it to carry out its responsibilities.

The assigned annual budgets for GSOC since 2015 is as follows.

2015	2016	2017	2018
€9,212,000.00	€9,546,000.00	€9,577,000.00	10,050,000.00

As the end of 2015 and 2016 there was a staffing complement of 77, not including the Commissioners. At the end of 2017, the staffing complement was 84 staff working alongside the Commissioners. GSOC project that the number of staff for 2018 will be 94, again excluding Commissioners.

I can assure the Deputy that resources and funding are kept under continuing review to ensure that GSOC is enabled to continue to operate effectively and efficiently and in accordance with its statutory remit.

In May 2017 sanction was given for an additional 5 staff to create a dedicated unit in GSOC to deal with Protected Disclosures. A recruitment competition for positions in this Unit has been recently completed by PAS.

I met with GSOC last September and the issue of resources was discussed. GSOC undertook to provide briefing to the Department on what it estimates are its staffing requirements to meet all contingencies and this will be considered once it is received.

Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission Investigations

537. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of investigations being undertaken by the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission; the number of investigations being undertaken with reference to the relevant sections of the Garda Síochána Act 2005; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54937/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Garda Síochána Act 2005 established Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission - GSOC - to provide independent oversight of alleged misbehaviour by members of the Garda Síochána. The Act stipulates that the Ombudsman Commission is independent in the performance of its functions. This independence is the central feature of its oversight function and serves to maintain public confidence in its operation.

All allegations of criminal offences by Gardaí are investigated by GSOC's own investiga-

tors for which they have these full police powers. GSOC may refer other complaints to the Garda Commissioner for investigation under the Garda disciplinary code, and it may maintain oversight of progress in those investigations. GSOC has the authority to make recommendations to the Garda Commissioner concerning disciplinary proceedings, and also to send a file to the DPP where it feels that the conduct under investigation may constitute an offence.

I am advised by GSOC that as of 18 December 2017 there were 1035 active investigations being undertaken by GSOC. The following table shows where the complaints arise from and the relevant sections under which the investigation is proceeding.

Origin	Section of the Act under which investigation is proceeding	Number
Complaints	S90	32
	S94 (1)	514
	S94(5)	181
	S95	61
	S98	215
102 (1) Garda Commissioner	S95	6
	S98	7
102 (4) GSOC	S95	5
	S98	6
102 (5) Minister	S95	3
	S98	5
Total		1035

Under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 GSOC was prescribed as a body to receive protected disclosures on Garda matters. The above figures do not include investigations arising from Protected Disclosures made to GSOC.

GSOC have advised me that, at present they are unable to provide figures on the number of investigations being undertaken by them under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014. In a press release last June, GSOC stated that they had received 24 protected disclosures, however, every protected disclosure may not necessarily lead to an investigation.

They have indicated, however, that in accordance with the statutory reporting provisions in the Protected Disclosures Act, they will shortly publish these figures. They will also publish these figures in their 2017 Annual Report.

Question No. 538 answered with Question No. 480.

Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service Data

539. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the income needed for a retired couple that wish to reside here (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54965/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Over recent years, retired persons seeking to come to Ireland to live has become a particular channel for migration into the State. As the Deputy will appreciate it is the responsibility of the State to decide policies for

the management of migration and the control of our borders in the public interest. The simple fact that someone may wish to settle here as a retired person does not, of itself, create an entitlement for that person to do so.

Nevertheless, permission to retire in the State is granted to persons who can demonstrate sufficient funds to ensure that they will not become a burden on the State. The financial threshold at present is considered to be an income of €50,000 per person per annum, plus the person must have access to a lump sum of money to cover any unforeseen major expenses.

Following a public consultation process in October 2016 the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department undertook a review of this policy, with a view to bringing greater clarity and consistency to this area, and also to consider the economic factors involved. This review has been finalised and decisions on foot of it will be made in the near future.

While it would be premature at this stage to outline the details of the proposed scheme I hope the Deputy will appreciate that it is reasonable that persons seeking to retire in the State should have a close association with Ireland, that they can fully support themselves while resident here, not become an undue burden on State services, and that they should be approved for this purpose before taking up residence.

It is important to strike a reasonable balance between the aspirations of prospective non-EEA retirees and the interests of the State. Accordingly, the key financial consideration in respect of a retiree, particularly those that have not paid tax in Ireland, or otherwise contributed to the Exchequer, is that the person must have sufficient and sustainable resources to ensure that they will not now or in the future become a burden on the State.

Garda Vetting Applications

540. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of a Garda vetting application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54966/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The vetting application in the case to which the Deputy refers in her question relates to a person who is currently in an ongoing process for recruitment to An Garda Síochána. As I have advised the Deputy, in such cases An Garda Síochána as the recruiting authority can liaise directly with applicants in respect of the progress of the recruitment process.

The Deputy will be aware also that in respect of recruitment to An Garda Síochána, given the nature of the employment, checks secondary to vetting are also required to be carried out and these can take some time to be completed.

Garda Data

541. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the Garda stations around the country that cannot use the PULSE system due to lack of broadband in their area, by county, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54972/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda equipment and resources, including ICT, are a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister, have no direct role

in the matter.

The Deputy will be aware that the Programme for a Partnership Government recognises that Gardaí must have the modern technology and resources necessary to detect and investigate crimes, and to prevent loss and harm to citizens and their property on a 24/7 basis. Accordingly, the Garda Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021 sets out a series of initiatives which will enable An Garda Síochána deploy the latest cutting edge technologies in the fight against crime.

I understand from the Garda authorities that as at 29 November 2017 there were 426 stations networked and 138 stations that are not connected to the Garda Network. Members in non-networked locations can contact the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC) or an associated networked station if required.

A project was established under the Modernisation and Renewal Programme to enhance rural access to the Garda network by connecting the majority of these remaining sites to the Garda Network. Where sites cannot be connected, for example where local broadband services are not yet available, other methods of providing members with network access which may include the provision of mobile technology are being explored.

Garda Recruitment

542. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if there are circumstances for an exemption (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55002/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, recruitment to An Garda Síochána is governed by the Garda Síochána (Admissions and Appointments) Regulations 2013 and the recruitment and training of An Garda Síochána is a matter for the Garda Commissioner, and I as Minister have no direct role in the matter.

Regulation 4 (d) specifies that all applicants for admission as a Garda Trainee must have a proven proficiency in two languages; one of which must be Irish or English. Such competency may be proven by achieving the relevant grades in the Leaving Certificate or for English or Irish through such assessments as set out by the Public Appointments Service (PAS) which, on behalf of the Garda Commissioner, manages the initial recruitment stages for selection of Garda Trainees.

This requirement applies without discrimination to all candidates, and there are no plans in train to change this requirement.

Spent Convictions Legislation

543. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if those convicted under anti homosexuality laws pre-1993 would have their convictions considered spent under the Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55003/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016 provides a regime under which certain convictions can be disregarded after a number of years have elapsed since they were imposed, subject to specified limitations. The Act defines “excluded offences” to which these measures

do not apply, and this definition includes the sexual offences listed in Schedule 1 of the Act.

The Deputy will be aware that a Private Members Bill, the Sexual Offences (Apology and Exoneration) Bill, which provides for an apology and exoneration of persons convicted of sexual offences for consensual acts between gay men prior to decriminalisation of this in 1993 was introduced in the Seanad in February 2017. Options to advance this issue are being explored by officials, in consultation with the sponsors of the Bill.

Commencement of Legislation

544. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the Mediation Act 2017 will be commenced. [55012/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): On 8 December last, I signed the Commencement Order bringing all sections of the Mediation Act 2017 into effect on 1 January 2018 (S.I. 591 of 2017).

Irish Prison Service

545. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason the findings of an investigation (details supplied) initiated by a former Minister for Justice have not been provided to all parties as promised once civil litigation concluded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55024/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that In June 2010, the then Director General of the Irish Prison Service commissioned an external enquiry into the circumstances surrounding the removal from prison of the person referred to in the Parliamentary Question.

The enquiry was carried out by a retired Prison Governor and a retired Garda Superintendent. Their operational report was submitted to the then Director General in 2011. The terms of reference did not provide for the publication of the report.

The Director General subsequently reviewed the report and considered it incomplete as there were a number of legal and procedural issues identified with the operational report. A second external investigator was appointed in an attempt to bring this enquiry to a conclusion.

Subsequently the second external investigator advised the Director General that it would not be possible to conclude the enquiry without re-interviewing all of the witnesses. He further advised that this approach would not be practical or feasible. In the circumstances, therefore, it has not been possible to provide a copy of the findings of the investigation to all parties as it was decided that the matter could not be brought to a satisfactory conclusion in light of the report from the investigator.

Garda Operations

546. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps being taken to tackle rural crime in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55057/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I want to assure the Deputy that I am very much aware of the impact of crime on rural communities, including the serious damage done by organised gangs who target rural areas to engage in burglary and other property-related crime, whether in Donegal or elsewhere across the country. Such incidents cannot be tolerated in our society and this Government will continue to dedicate very significant resources to support An Garda Síochána in tackling the gangs, including mobile criminal gangs, who target rural areas.

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 Districts and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. However, I can assure the Deputy that Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that optimum use is made of these resources.

The scale of Garda activity against burglary and property-related crime – under Operation Thor - has led to concentrated Garda activity resulting to date in over 100,000 targeted checkpoints and 85,000 crime prevention patrols nationwide. To give you an idea of the impact of the Operation, I can inform you that this concentrated policing activity has produced in the region of 6,375 arrests and 7,134 charges covering a range of offences which, in addition to burglary, include handling stolen property, possession of firearms and drugs offences.

Very significant resources have been provided to An Garda Síochána, including an overtime allocation of almost €100 million announced in Budget 2018, to support large-scale policing operations including Operation Thor. It is also worth noting that Operation Thor has now entered its ‘Winter Phase’ which will run from 29 October 2017 – 1 April 2018.

Operation Thor has targeted mobile criminal gangs engaged in burglary and related crimes and it is encouraging to note that since the launch of the operation in November 2015, the burglary figures have shown a significant downward trend. The CSO official recorded crime statistics for 2016 show a decrease in burglary offences of 30% when compared to the previous twelve-month period in 2015. This reflects the success of the concerted Garda drive against crime being implemented under Operation Thor.

I understand that work is ongoing to ensure that the publication of the official CSO crime statistics can recommence in earnest. Recent operational figures would appear to indicate that certain crime categories are on the rise, but until such time as the CSO can resume its publication of the crime statistics it would be unwise to draw any firm conclusions from them at this point. However, I was pleased to note a Garda press release earlier this week which stated that, according to provisional figures, burglaries nationally fell by 23% during November and December under the Winter Phase of Operation Thor. Needless to say, An Garda Síochána will continue to monitor all new and emerging crime trends and deploy their resources accordingly.

This Government has also made it a particular priority to strengthen our legislative provisions through the enactment of the Criminal Justice (Burglary of Dwellings) Act 2015 which is targeted at repeat burglars who have previous convictions and who are charged with multiple offences of residential burglary. This new legislation is now available to support the work which is being carried out by An Garda Síochána under Operation Thor.

The Programme for Government underlines the need for close engagement between An Garda Síochána and local communities. This is an essential feature of the strong community policing ethos which has long been central to policing in this jurisdiction. The Deputy will be aware that, as part of the overall strategy to oppose criminality, the Garda authorities pursue a range of partnerships with community stakeholders, including the farming organisations. These include the well established Community Alert Programme, which receives annual funding from

my Department, as well as the work of the Metal Theft Forum, the Crimestoppers campaign highlighting the Theft of Livestock, the Theftstop initiative in relation to farm equipment, and the highly successful Garda Text Alert Scheme.

On 02 January 2018 I was pleased to announce that my Department will be providing an additional €50,000 in financial support to Community Text Alert Groups as a further measure in this Government's support to crime prevention. This is in addition to the €100,000 which I announced at the National Ploughing Championships in September 2017. The Rebate Scheme, which also ran in 2016, will allow Text Alert Groups registered with An Garda Síochána to apply for funding to contribute towards their yearly running costs. The new funding has been allocated to the 2017 scheme and the deadline has been extended to 31 January 2018. The Text Alert Rebate Scheme will be administered by Muintir na Tíre and I would like to urge groups wishing to participate in the Scheme to contact Muintir na Tíre for more information. The website is www.muintir.ie.

Other policing initiatives include Theft Stop which was launched by the Gardaí and the Irish Farmers Association. Theft Stop is designed to deter criminals from taking and selling farm equipment by ensuring it is clearly marked with a unique ID (such as an EirCode) and then registered on a nationwide database.

The Deputy will be aware that An Garda Síochána's Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021 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.

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.

Road Safety

547. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps being taken to tackle the scourge of deaths caused by drink driving; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55058/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I would like to thank the Deputy for raising this important issue. I am deeply conscious of the serious issue of road safety and mindful of the traumatic impact of road traffic collisions on those directly affected and their families, as well as the impact of dangerous driving, including drink-driving, more generally on the quality of life of residents in local communities across the country.

The Deputy will be aware that road traffic legislation is the responsibility of my colleague, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Mr Shane Ross, T.D. I am, however, informed that the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2017 will address an issue in the legislation on drink-driving which has existed since 2010, whereby the Road Traffic Act 2010, which lowered the permissible alcohol limit while driving, allowed people convicted of driving while in the lowest bracket over the limit to receive 3 penalty points instead of a disqualification, subject to certain circumstances. The current Bill proposes to replace these penalty points with a 3-month disqualification, thus communicating the critical message that ‘a little drink-driving’ is a serious matter. Evidence shows that, even at low levels, alcohol can impair people’s ability to drive and can dull their reactions. The Bill is currently at second stage in Dáil Éireann and my colleague, Minister Ross, is committed to concluding the Bill’s passage through the Houses of the Oireachtas as soon as possible.

Road safety is a shared responsibility, one which the Government takes very seriously. Ireland’s current Road Safety Strategy (2013 - 2020) aims to place Ireland consistently on the list of safest countries in the EU and beyond. To achieve this, we are continuing to work together in partnership with all relevant stakeholders. I attend meetings of the Ministerial Committee on Road Safety, along with the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, the Road Safety Authority (RSA), An Garda Síochána, the Attorney General and other agencies. This Committee met 6 times last year and oversees the implementation of the Road Safety Strategy, providing a forum for high-level discussion of road safety issues and the opportunity to address road safety trends as they arise.

Last year witnessed the lowest number of annual road traffic fatalities on record (159) and it is imperative that the positive momentum across road traffic enforcement and road safety initiatives is harnessed towards further annual reductions in fatalities for the remainder of the life of the Road Safety Strategy. An Garda Síochána benefited from considerable resource investment by this Government in 2017, which has contributed to the most welcome downward trend in road traffic fatalities. An Garda Síochána and the RSA continue to seek and avail of new opportunities to communicate with all road users and it is evident, from last year’s figures, that many road users are heeding road safety campaigns and are increasingly aware of the importance of responsible driving behaviour.

This multi-agency approach continues into enforcement. An Garda Síochána undertakes a programme of high visibility road safety and enforcement operations, carried out in partnership with other state agencies. Garda operations specifically target road use behaviour known to contribute significantly to collisions, including driving while intoxicated. By working together with the RSA and other agencies, An Garda Síochána will continue to confront dangerous road-user behaviour thorough public presence, legislative enforcement, education and partnership. I am informed that road traffic legislation is enforced as part of the day-to-day duties of members of An Garda Síochána, as well as through specific enforcement operations. The recruitment of an additional 150 Gardai to the Garda National Roads Policing Bureau this year will contribute to a stronger road traffic enforcement capability nationwide. An Garda Síochána also intend to have a stronger focus on road traffic enforcement in the training provided to new recruits at Templemore and this will have a positive impact on enforcement and, as a result, safety on our roads. The Deputy will appreciate that I have no direct role in the enforcement of road traffic legislation, which is an operational matter for the Garda Commissioner.

An Garda Síochána’s Modernisation and Renewal Programme (2016-2021) sets out key strategic objectives for Road Policing which will inform and guide An Garda Síochána’s Road Policing plans over the lifetime of the Programme. Under the Programme, the Commissioner will undertake a number of road safety traffic enforcement initiatives, including expanding the use of technology and increasing checkpoints. The Programme is being supported by signifi-

cant Government investment in An Garda Síochána. Under the Programme for Government there is a commitment to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime.

A key to achieving this goal is the commitment to continue the ongoing accelerated Garda recruitment programme with a view to increasing Garda numbers to 21,000 by 2021. 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. In addition, there are plans to strengthen the Garda Reserve with new Reserves expected to commence training early in 2018.

In the period 2013 to end of 2017 almost €44 million will have been invested in the fleet with some 2,000 vehicles coming on stream in that period vehicles to ensure that the Gardaí can be mobile, visible and responsive on the roads and in the community to prevent and tackle crime. In addition, the Government's Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021 provides for a further €46 million of investment in vehicles to ensure that the Gardaí can be mobile, visible and responsive on the roads and in the community to prevent and tackle crime. Some €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, is being invested in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021. This major investment will allow An Garda Síochána to deploy the latest cutting edge technologies in the fight against crime.

The road traffic enforcement function performed by An Garda Síochána is one of its core functions and this Government is committed to further supporting An Garda Síochána in this regard.

Departmental Appointments

548. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the names of the two academics appointed to the scoping group to consider the availability of data and make recommendations on a study to identify the prevalence of sexual abuse and violence here and emerging trends following his Department's recent tendering process. [55074/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The two successful academics selected, following tendering, to participate in the scoping group referred to by the Deputy were Ms. Elaine Byrnes (Doctoral Candidate, Dept. of Psychology, NUI Galway) and Professor Stephanie Holt (Social Studies, Trinity College Dublin).

Gender Equality

549. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the format of the recent public consultation on gender pay that drew 38 responses and suggestions; the total cost of the public consultation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55132/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): On 9 August 2017, the Minister for Justice and Equality and I launched a public consultation on tackling the gender pay gap. Interested parties were invited to make submissions in writing by 4 October 2017. In all, 38 written submissions were received.

A 'Summary of the Public Consultation: Measures to tackle the gender pay gap' was dis-

seminated at a symposium in Dublin, 'Rising to the challenge: addressing Ireland's Gender Pay Gap', which took place on 10 January, organised by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and my Department. This report is available at www.genderequality.ie.

Apart from ministerial and official time, the only cost was for advertising the consultation which was €3,029.

Closed-Circuit Television Systems Provision

550. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if housing resident associations are eligible for the community based CCTV scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55161/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware that 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. The Scheme is intended to support local communities who wish to install and maintain CCTV security systems in their areas, with the aim of increasing public safety and to deter illegal or anti-social behaviour.

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.

Eligible groups can include existing community-based not-for-profit organisations that are broadly representative of the community and community-based, not-for-profit, consortium of private and community interests under the aegis of an existing lead organisation. The key requirement is that the lead organisation for all applications must be an existing, legally registered body, which can include bodies registered for tax or charity purposes.

Some of the other key requirements of the Scheme are that the proposal must—

- be approved by the local Joint Policing Committee,
- have the prior support of the relevant Local Authority, which must also act as Data Controller – this is a long-standing statutory requirement, set out in the Garda Síochána (CCTV) Order 2006 (S.I. No. 289 of 2006), for the establishment of community CCTV systems generally, and
- have the authorisation of the Garda Commissioner in accordance with Section 38 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005.

Full details of the Scheme, including comprehensive guidelines, application forms, code of practice and other relevant documentation are available to download from my Department's website - www.justice.ie.

Direct Provision System

551. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the procedures in place if a resident in direct provision is suspected of not occupying their accommodation; if these procedures allow for due process including the presentation of evidence, the ability of the resident to contest the evidence and to put forward their own evidence; the sanctions that exist; the appeals process; the notice period given to direct provision residents if they are moved from

the accommodation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55198/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):

The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) of my Department oversees the provision of accommodation for applicants for international protection while their application is being processed. Not every applicant takes up the offer of that accommodation and many chose not to do so. In addition some residents move out of that accommodation and live with friends or families.

Part of the role of RIA and individual centre management is to ensure that those who request and are allocated accommodation within the RIA portfolio are using it on a consistent basis. This accommodation is provided to protection applicants on the understanding that they will be living there in the normal course. Clearly if a person is allocated accommodation but ceases using it, it would be wrong not to re-allocate it to an international protection applicant who genuinely requires it.

In this regard, the Deputy will wish to note that at the end of December 2017, RIA was providing accommodation for 5,096 persons with an effective vacancy rate of just under 2.5%. There is an ongoing challenge to identify suitable accommodation to applicants for international protection. The average number of new protection applications per week was 56 in 2017, with an average of 244 per month. To cope with the demand for accommodation from international protection applications, RIA reopened two former accommodation centres in late 2017.

The management of each centre are required to submit a weekly register to RIA which gives details of the persons who are on site. Management of a centre have experiential knowledge of whether a person is using their accommodation as they meet directly with residents on a daily basis (eg at meal times or the collection and delivery of post) and link with residents in the provision of services.

When it comes to RIA's attention that a resident does not appear to be using their bed space consistently and the person has not given centre management an explanation as to why this is the case, RIA staff liaise with centre management to manage the situation. In a case where RIA is satisfied that accommodation is not being used consistently, the resident will be issued a letter advising them that if they do not use their bedspace, that space will be re-allocated to another applicant in need. If the resident continues to be absent from their accommodation, a letter will be sent to them (at that centre), advising them that their bedspace has been deemed abandoned and will be reallocated to another protection applicant. This letter will be held by management until the person presents in the centre to collect their post.

It is open to residents to respond to the initial letter and provide any evidence that they are indeed availing of the accommodation. If RIA is satisfied that this is the case then the matter will be closed at that stage and the accommodation will not be reallocated. Once the final letter is issued advising the resident that the bedspace has been deemed abandoned then any complaint will not be suspensive. However, they resident can, if they choose, apply in writing to RIA asking to be re-accommodated.

The Deputy will also be aware that in early 2017, the remit of both the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman for Children was extended to residents in accommodation centres under contract to my Department.

Direct Provision System

552. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on wheth-

er the eviction of a person (details supplied) from their accommodation in Knocklasheen direct provision centre in November 2017 was the result of a fair process in view of the lack of notice, an ability to contest evidence and to appeal the decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55199/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) of my Department oversees the provision of accommodation for applicants for international protection while their application is being processed.

The Agency oversees the provision of accommodation for applicants for international protection while their application is being processed. Not every applicant takes up the offer of that accommodation and many chose not to do so. In addition some residents move out of that accommodation and live with friends or families. Part of the role of RIA and individual centre management is to ensure that those who request and are allocated accommodation within the RIA portfolio are using it on a consistent basis. This accommodation is provided to protection applicants on the understanding that they will be living there in the normal course.

Save in the most exceptional of circumstances for stated and repeated serious breaches of house rules and for the safety of other residents, no person has ever been evicted from any accommodation centre.

In the case raised by the Deputy, the RIA is satisfied that the person in question was not using the bedspace and accordingly decided to deem it to be abandoned and to allocate it to another protection applicant was correct.

The decision to deem that the bedspace was not being used was based on a number of facts. Centre management visited the residents room almost daily over a period of two weeks as they needed to discuss a service issue with him. It was clear that the bed had not been slept in and the room not used in that two week period. In addition, he was not seen onsite. RIA staff were in the centre on four occasions around this time and on none of these occasions was the person there. As per the procedures, the resident was issued with a warning letter which in turn was followed up by a letter stating that the bedspace was deemed abandoned by the resident in this case.

The Deputy will appreciate that in the context of the current pressures facing RIA, they must ensure that if accommodation is not being used consistently then it must be re-allocated to persons in greater need of that accommodation.

Departmental Properties

553. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the vacant properties and land not in use, owned, rented or leased by his Department or by bodies and agencies under the aegis of his Department by square footage for buildings and acres for land, in tabular form; the address and location of these properties; and the last date of occupancy or use of these properties. [55216/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy that the information sought is set out in the following table. For completeness, I have included details of sites that are currently undergoing transfer to other public bodies and those for which future development is planned.

Venue / Site	Approx. Size	Date last Occupied
Cork		
Kanturk Courthouse, Greenfield Road, Co. Cork	297 sq. m.	1st September 2010
Youghal Courthouse, Market Square, Youghal, Co. Cork*	259 sq. m.	1st August 2004
Old Cork Prison	***	1st April 2016
Donegal		
Dungloe site*	0.5 acres	n/a
Galway		
Tuam site*	929 sq. m.	n/a
Kildare		
Kilcock Courthouse, Courtown road, Kilcock, Co. Kildare.*	100 sq. m.	1st September 2016
Leitrim		
Ballinamore Courthouse, Main Street, Co. Leitrim	530 sq. m.	1st April 2010
Manorhamilton Courthouse, Lower Main Street, Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim*	550 sq. m.	31st December 2003
Mayo		
Westport Courthouse, Castlebar Street, Westport, Co. Mayo	354 sq. m.	16th May 2013
Offaly		
Birr Courthouse, Townsend Street, Birr, Co. Offaly	376 sq. m.	1st January 2014
Wicklow		
Bray Courthouse, Boghall Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow*	423 sq. m.	n/a
Wicklow Courthouse, Market Square, Co. Wicklow*	1,000 sq. m.	28th July 2010
Dublin		
Thornton Hall, Kilsallaghan, Co. Dublin	Circa 131 acres	May 2009
South Circular Road, Islandbridge, Dublin 8**	Circa 0.30 acres	19th October 2010

*These are buildings / sites currently not in use but are intended for future courthouse development.

**A site at South Circular Road, Islandbridge, Dublin 8 is currently a property of the Irish Prison Service. This site is in the process of being transferred to Dublin City Council.

*** Information will be forwarded directly to the Deputy by the Irish Prison Service in relation to the approximate size as this information was not readily available.

554. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of family law cases initiated in the Dublin District Court in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55238/17]

555. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of family law cases initiated in the Dublin Circuit Court in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55239/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 554 and 555 together.

As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions, which include the provision of information on the courts system.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has advised that the collation of data associated with family law proceedings in respect of 2017 has not yet been completed. However, the Courts Service has provided the following provisional data, which is not expected to change substantially.

The Courts Service has informed me that during the course of 2017 a total of 2,782 new cases were initiated in private family law proceedings in the Dublin District Court. These are cases where proceedings between litigants were initiated in the Dublin District Court for the first time during 2017. In addition, during the course of the year, the court issued a total of 14,842 new summons related to such proceedings. These summonses relate not only to the new cases initiated during the course of 2017 but also to historic cases initiated in previous years where new applications related thereto came before the Court during 2017. Private family law proceedings generally relate to domestic violence cases and applications for custody, access, guardianship and maintenance matters.

The Courts Service has also informed me that in relation to public family law (childcare proceedings) a total of 117 new cases were lodged with the Dublin District Court during 2017. These are cases where proceedings were initiated in the Dublin District Court for the first time during 2017. In addition, a total of 3,151 applications were dealt with by the Court during 2017 including applications for extension of interim care orders. These applications relate not only to the new cases initiated during the course of 2017 but also to historic cases initiated in previous years where new applications related thereto came before the Court during 2017.

The Courts Service has further informed me that during the course of 2017 a total of 2,411 new cases were initiated in the Dublin Circuit Family Law Court. These are cases where proceedings between litigants were initiated in the Dublin Circuit Family Law Court for the first time during 2017. The data provided includes 1,212 divorce civil bills, 424 judicial separation civil bills, 155 marriage exemption applications and a total of 490 new appeals received from the District Court.

Garda Deployment

556. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of community gardaí in the County Kerry division; and the location of each in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018. [55241/17]

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.

The Garda strength of the Kerry Division on 30 November 2017, the latest date for which figures are available, was 314 of whom 8 were community Gardaí. There are 20 Garda Reserves and 36 Garda civilian staff attached to the 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 Support Units, 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 for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. We are making real, tangible progress on reaching this goal.

I am informed by the Commissioner that since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, just under 1,600 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, 26 of whom have been assigned to the Kerry Division. Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, increased to 13,552 at the end of 2017 - an increase of over 600 since the end of 2016.

I am also pleased that funding is in place to maintain this high level of investment in the Garda workforce to ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. This year a further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College. Also, 800 Garda trainees are scheduled to attest during the year, which will see Garda numbers reach more than 14,000 by the end of 2018.

In addition, a further 500 civilians will also be recruited to fill critical 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 Kerry Division.

Community policing is at the heart of An Garda Síochána. It provides a means of recognising that every community – both urban and rural – has its own concerns and expectations.

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.

An Garda Síochána's Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021, published in 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.

Undoubtedly, the ongoing recruitment process will support all Garda activities and will enhance Garda visibility within our communities and the provision of effective community policing across all Garda Divisions including the Kerry Division.

The information requested by the Deputy as provided by the Commissioner is set out in the following table.

Community Gardaí in Kerry Division 2011-2017								
Kerry	2011		2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Tralee	6		7	7	6	7	7	8
Killarney	3		3	2	2	0	0	0
Total	9		10	9	8	7	7	8

*As of 30 November 2017.

Rural Crime

557. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the actions being taken to tackle rural crime; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55273/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I want to assure the Deputy that I am very much aware of the impact of crime on rural communities, including the serious damage done by organised gangs who target rural areas to engage in burglary and other property-related crime. Such incidents cannot be tolerated in our society and this Government will continue to dedicate very significant resources to support An Garda Síochána in tackling the gangs, including mobile criminal gangs, who target rural areas.

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 Districts and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. However, I can assure the Deputy that Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that optimum use is made of these resources.

The scale of Garda activity against burglary and property-related crime – under Operation Thor - has led to concentrated Garda activity resulting to date in over 100,000 targeted checkpoints and 85,000 crime prevention patrols nationwide. To give you an idea of the impact of the Operation, I can inform you that this concentrated policing activity has produced in the region of 6,375 arrests and 7,134 charges covering a range of offences which, in addition to burglary, include handling stolen property, possession of firearms and drugs offences.

Very significant resources have been provided to An Garda Síochána, including an overtime allocation of almost €100 million announced in Budget 2018, to support large-scale policing operations including Operation Thor. It is also worth noting that Operation Thor has now entered its 'Winter Phase' which will run from 29 October 2017 – 1 April 2018.

Operation Thor has targeted mobile criminal gangs engaged in burglary and related crimes and it is encouraging to note that since the launch of the operation in November 2015, the

burglary figures have shown a significant downward trend. The CSO official recorded crime statistics for 2016 show a decrease in burglary offences of 30% when compared to the previous twelve-month period in 2015. This reflects the success of the concerted Garda drive against crime being implemented under Operation Thor.

I understand that work is ongoing to ensure that the publication of the official CSO crime statistics can recommence in earnest. Recent operational figures would appear to indicate that certain crime categories are on the rise, but until such time as the CSO can resume its publication of the crime statistics it would be unwise to draw any firm conclusions from them at this point. However, I was pleased to note a Garda press release earlier this week which stated that, according to provisional figures, burglaries nationally fell by 23% during November and December under the Winter Phase of Operation Thor. Needless to say, An Garda Síochána will continue to monitor all new and emerging crime trends and deploy their resources accordingly.

This Government has also made it a particular priority to strengthen our legislative provisions through the enactment of the Criminal Justice (Burglary of Dwellings) Act 2015 which is targeted at repeat burglars who have previous convictions and who are charged with multiple offences of residential burglary. This new legislation is now available to support the work which is being carried out by An Garda Síochána under Operation Thor.

The Programme for Government underlines the need for close engagement between An Garda Síochána and local communities. This is an essential feature of the strong community policing ethos which has long been central to policing in this jurisdiction. The Deputy will be aware that, as part of the overall strategy to oppose criminality, the Garda authorities pursue a range of partnerships with community stakeholders, including the farming organisations. These include the well established Community Alert Programme, which receives annual funding from my Department, as well as the work of the Metal Theft Forum, the Crimestoppers campaign highlighting the Theft of Livestock, the Theftstop initiative in relation to farm equipment, and the highly successful Garda Text Alert Scheme.

On 02 January 2018 I was pleased to announce that my Department will be providing an additional €50,000 in financial support to Community Text Alert Groups as a further measure in this Government's support to crime prevention. This is in addition to the €100,000 which I announced at the National Ploughing Championships in September 2017. The Rebate Scheme, which also ran in 2016, will allow Text Alert Groups registered with An Garda Síochána to apply for funding to contribute towards their yearly running costs. The new funding has been allocated to the 2017 scheme and the deadline has been extended to 31 January 2018. The Text Alert Rebate Scheme will be administered by Muintir na Tíre and I would like to urge groups wishing to participate in the Scheme to contact Muintir na Tíre for more information. The website is www.muintir.ie.

Other policing initiatives include Theft Stop which was launched by the Gardaí and the Irish Farmers Association. Theft Stop is designed to deter criminals from taking and selling farm equipment by ensuring it is clearly marked with a unique ID (such as an EirCode) and then registered on a nationwide database.

The Deputy will be aware that An Garda Síochána's Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021 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.

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.

Insolvency Service of Ireland

558. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if creditors are permitted to sell on loans while a protective certificate under the Insolvency Service is in place covering those borrowings; the consequences of a breach in this area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55287/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, a Protective Certificate under the Personal Insolvency Acts is issued by the Courts, rather than by the Insolvency Service of Ireland.

Sections 62 and 96 of the Personal Insolvency Act 2012 set out the effects of the Court's issue of a Protective Certificate (under the Debt Settlement Arrangement, and Personal Insolvency Arrangement, procedures, respectively).

Those sections limit the actions that a creditor can take, with respect to the debt and the debtor, while the Protective Certificate continues in force: for example, initiating legal proceedings, prosecuting proceedings already initiated, executing a judgment or order against the debtor, taking any steps to enforce a security or contacting the debtor regarding payment of the debt.

I am advised that there is no moratorium under the Personal Insolvency Acts on the sale of loans by a lending institution during the Protective Certificate period. A loan sale does not affect the rights under the loan contract as between debtor and creditor.

Regulatory protections also continue to apply, during the Protective Certificate period and throughout the process.

Domestic Violence Policy

559. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the time-frame for ratification of the Istanbul Convention; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1045/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I and my Government colleagues are totally committed to tackling violence against women and domestic violence.

The Programme for Government commits to full implementation of the Istanbul Convention. This Convention is a significant legal instrument in tackling violence against women and domestic violence. Many of the actions required by provisions in the Istanbul Convention are

being implemented on a daily basis under current legislation and administrative practice. The actions necessary to ratify the Istanbul Convention are contained in the Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2016-2021, published in January, 2016.

The implementation of most of these actions is underway including public sector training/education by a range of State agencies, the development of a Risk Assessment Matrix by An Garda Síochána, commissioning of a national helpline service to respond to issues of domestic and sexual violence, and support for child witnesses.

The remaining outstanding actions are legislative and require delivery of two pieces of legislation:

i) The Domestic Violence Bill which was published on 3 February 2017. The Bill has passed all stages in the Seanad and Second Stage in the Dáil. Committee stage is expected to commence shortly in the Dáil. It is hoped that this Bill will be enacted early this year. The enactment of this legislation is key to advancing the ratification of the Istanbul Convention as its enactment will deliver four of the actions required under the Istanbul Convention.

ii) The one remaining legislative action is the enactment of legislation for extraterritorial jurisdiction. Work on this action is underway and it is anticipated that this legislation will be published in the first half of 2018.

When the required legislative actions are implemented, Ireland will be in a position to ratify the Convention.

Departmental Offices

560. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding the condition of the offices of his Department in Killarney, County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1067/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): There are procedures for dealing with any staff concerns in relation to office accommodation and any matters arising are kept under on-going review. The Office of Public Works (OPW) acts as the central property services provider for all office accommodation for Government Departments and carries out all building related projects on our behalf. The office in Killarney to which the Deputy refers is actually a shared building with the newly established National Shared Services Office (NSSO) under the auspices of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. There are plans by that office in conjunction with my Department and the OPW to further develop the office in Killarney in the context of the expansion of the NSSO. The issue of window replacement will be incorporated in that programme of works.

Immigration Status

561. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a forthcoming immigration appointment in January 2018 will be rescheduled in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1086/18]

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 concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order made on 12 November 2008, following the refusal of the international protection claim made by the person concerned and the detailed consideration of

their case under Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). That Order remains valid and in place.

The person concerned was required to present to the Garda National Immigration Bureau on 09 January 2018 and I have been advised that she attended this appointment. The next appointment for this person with the Garda National Immigration Bureau is on 27 February 2018.

The Deputy might wish to note that the effect of a Deportation Order is that the person named on the Order is legally obliged to leave the State and to remain out of the State. The enforcement of the Deportation Order in this case is now an operational matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

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.

Garda Deployment

562. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of personnel assigned to the Garda traffic corps. [1159/18]

601. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of full-time equivalent dedicated traffic corps members employed in each county in each year since 2008. [1944/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 562 and 601 together.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the distribution of resources, including to the Roads Policing Units 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 Roads Policing Units on the 30 November 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was 643. In addition, there is a Superintendent and Traffic Inspector attached to each of the five Regions outside of the Dublin Metropolitan Region, and one Superintendent attached to the Policing Road Traffic Bureau.

As the Deputy will be aware, 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 achieve this the Government has put in place a plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. We are making real, tangible progress on achieving this goal.

I am informed by the Commissioner that since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, just under 1,600 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and

have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. Garda numbers, taking account of retirements, increased to 13,552 at the end of 2017 - an increase of over 600 since the end of 2016.

I am also pleased that funding is in place to maintain this high level of investment in the Garda workforce to ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. This year a further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College. Also 800 Garda trainees are scheduled to attest during the year which will see Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, reach 14,000 by the end of 2018.

In addition, a further 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 roads policing in the coming years.

The Commissioner committed in the Policing Plan for 2017 to increase incrementally the number of personnel dedicated to roads policing 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 to fill vacancies within Traffic Corps units is ongoing at present. At the conclusion of this competition, additional personnel will be allocated to Traffic Corps duties.

Personnel strength of the Garda Traffic Corps 2008-2017

Division	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
D.M.R. South Central	22	27	25	25	25	23	17	16	11	7
D.M.R. North Central	22	22	20	19	19	17	18	18	17	18
D.M.R. North	22	27	22	21	18	18	17	17	13	15
D.M.R. East	13	18	19	17	15	15	15	14	9	9
D.M.R. South	16	19	16	15	13	13	12	12	12	11
D.M.R. West	20	22	22	22	21	19	19	16	13	12
D.M.R. Traffic	148	156	155	149	144	138	106	118	107	105
Waterford/Kilkenny	64	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Waterford	-	31	26	25	22	19	18	14	14	13

Questions - Written Answers

Division	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Wexford	33	29	25	21	16	16	15	14	15	13
Tipperary	46	40	31	28	26	22	23	21	21	21
Kilkenny/ Carlow	-	39	38	37	36	32	31	28	26	26
Cork City	55	51	48	49	45	40	38	36	39	38
Cork North	41	41	40	39	37	35	34	33	33	33
Cork West	35	27	28	28	25	21	22	18	22	22
Kerry	35	35	35	31	25	22	20	18	17	18
Limerick	35	33	34	30	32	31	29	26	23	25
Donegal	39	34	42	32	30	29	31	27	20	20
Cavan/ Monaghan	37	38	36	29	30	27	24	25	25	21
Sligo/ Leitrim	26	34	34	33	34	31	24	24	23	23
Louth	32	30	25	25	22	19	17	16	14	14
Clare	31	29	24	25	18	17	16	18	17	15
Mayo	32	29	27	22	17	12	11	11	11	11
Galway	38	47	51	41	40	39	41	41	39	37
Roscom- mon/Long- ford	-	23	23	25	23	22	21	19	19	17
Roscom- mon/Gal- way East	29	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Westmeath	-	27	29	26	24	21	23	20	28	27
Longford/ Westmeath	48	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Meath	42	30	31	29	22	20	19	16	17	14
Carlow/ Kildare	58	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kildare	-	36	40	41	41	39	36	34	25	24
Laois/Of- faly	44	42	35	31	26	24	25	25	22	18
Wicklow	30	30	30	25	24	23	20	21	17	16
Total	1093	1046	1011	940	870	804	742	716	669	643

Residency Permits

563. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current or proposed residency status in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1313/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that notifications have issued to the person concerned pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999

(as amended).

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

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

Sexual Offences Data

564. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the national survey on the prevalence of sexual abuse and violence in Ireland, including in the workplace, is due to be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1316/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The agreed terms of reference for the scoping group to consider the availability of data and make recommendations on a study to identify the prevalence of sexual abuse and violence in Ireland today and emerging trends are available on my Department's website. They provide that the group will report to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy within 3 months of the first meeting of the group. The Group first met on 5 January and is scheduled to report by 5 April.

The agreed terms of reference also provide that following the conclusion of the initial scoping group exercise on sexual abuse and violence, a reconstituted Scoping Group will consider the separate but related area of sexual harassment in the workplace. This work will take place as a second module. The Cabinet Committee on Social Policy will agree new Terms of Reference and revise, inter alia, representation on the Scoping Group for the second module of its work which will examine qualitative and quantitative data available to Government in respect of sexual harassment in the workplace and the adequacy of the framework in place to protect employees. More detailed terms of reference will be brought forward under the direction of the Taoiseach. That Group will also report no more than three months after its first meeting.

Property Services Regulatory Authority

565. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to the section of the Property Services (Regulation) Act 2011 that exonerates firms from outside of the State from adhering to the legislation while still operating within the State; his views on whether this loophole is unfair, unjust and anti-competitive in view of the fact it places an unnecessary level of regulation on Irish agents but not on those from other jurisdictions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1321/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Property Services Regulatory Authority (PSRA) was formally established on 3 April 2012, pursuant to the provisions of the Property Services (Regulation) Act 2011. One of the main statutory functions of the PSRA is the licensing of Property Service Providers, i.e. auctioneers, estate agents, letting agents and property management agents. The Authority is independent in exercising its statutory functions.

Part 11 and Schedule 7 of the 2011 Act relate to property services provided by certain persons from EU Member States referred to in the legislation as ‘relevant persons’. Section 82 of the 2011 Act details a ‘relevant person’ as: one who holds from an EU competent authority a licence, or other form of authorisation, authorising that person to provide a property service similar to the definition provided for in the 2011 Act; is subject to a scheme of protection in respect of client accounts that substantially corresponds to the provisions of Part 5 of the Act; proposes to provide, or is providing, a corresponding property service in the State; and is not prohibited under the Act from providing the corresponding property service. The requirement to allow ‘relevant persons’ to provide property services in the State without a licence from the Property Services Regulatory Authority is a requirement of EU law, arising from our obligations under the EU Services Directive 2006/123/EC.

The EU Commission has indicated that it has concerns about certain provisions of the Property Services (Regulation) Act 2011, which may contravene certain aspects of the Services Directive. These relate to the provision of property services by persons other than ‘relevant persons’ who are permitted to provide property services in their own jurisdictions without a requirement to hold a relevant licence or authorisation. In the light of this concern, and in consultation with the Office of the Attorney General, my Department is considering whether changes may need to be made to certain provisions of the current legislation.

Prison Visiting Committees

566. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when he will publish the 2016 visiting committee’s reports on Irish prisons. [1333/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I can confirm to the Deputy that I have published all of the Prison Visiting Committees 2016 Annual Reports and they are available to view on my Department’s website www.justice.ie.

Citizenship Ceremonies

567. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when a person (details supplied) will be called to a citizenship ceremony; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1334/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware that the citizenship ceremony scheduled for Monday 16 October 2017 was postponed on public safety grounds due to the national status red weather alert, issued due to ex-hurricane Ophelia. The ceremony was rescheduled for Monday 27 November 2017, however the person referred to by the Deputy informed the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that she was unable to attend.

The person concerned will be invited to the next available citizenship ceremony. While the dates are not yet set for future ceremonies, it is envisaged that the first ceremony of 2018 will be in April. As soon as arrangements are in place details will be posted on our website at www.inis.gov.ie.

Garda Deployment

568. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of

gardaí assigned to each Garda station in County Kildare in each of the years 2010 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1343/18]

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.

The Garda strength of the Kildare Division on 30 November 2017, the latest date for which figures are available, was 352 with 20 Garda Reserves and 31 Garda civilian staff attached to the 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 Support Units, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

As the Deputy will be aware, 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 achieve this the Government has put in place a plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. We are making real, tangible progress on achieving this goal.

I am informed by the Commissioner that since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, just under 1,600 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, of whom 80 have been assigned to the Kildare Division. Garda numbers, taking account of retirements, increased to 13,552 at the end of 2017 - an increase of over 600 since the end of 2016.

I am also pleased that funding is in place to maintain this high level of investment in the Garda workforce to ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. This year a further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College. Also 800 Garda trainees are scheduled to attest during the year which will see Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, reach 14,000 by the end of 2018.

In addition, a further 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 Division, including the Kildare Division.

I am informed by the Commissioner that the number of Gardaí assigned to the Kildare Division in each of the years 2010 to 30 November 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, is set out in the following table.

Personnel Strength of the Kildare Division by Station 2010 - 2017

DISTRICT	STATION	2010	2011	2012
KILDARE	ATHY	29	31	34

DISTRICT	STATION	2010	2011	2012
	BALLYTORE	2	2	1
	CASTLEDER-MOT	3	3	3
	KILDARE	33	26	27
	MONAS-TEREVIN	4	5	4
	NEWBRIDGE	45	47	50
	RATHANGAN	4	3	3
	TOTAL	120	117	122
LEIXLIP	CARBURY	4	4	5
	CELBRIDGE	18	17	17
	KILCOCK	8	9	10
	LEIXLIP	35	34	30
	MAYNOOTH	15	13	14
	TOTAL	80	77	76
NAAS	BALLYMORE EUSTACE	1	2	2
	CLANE	10	11	9
	KILCULLEN	2	2	2
	KILL	4	2	2
	NAAS	101	101	103
	ROBERT-STOWN	5	6	2
	TOTAL	123	124	120
	KILDARE TOTAL	323	318	318

*Up to 30 November 2017.

Family Reunification Applications

569. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of an application for family reunification by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1348/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned made an application for Family Reunification in July 2016. The case has recently been finalised and a decision letter issued to the applicant on 09 January 2018. While I cannot comment on the specifics of any individual case I am advised by INIS that the provisions for family reunification under the Refugee Act 1996 do not extend to Irish citizens.

It is open to Irish citizens and those outside of the International Protection process to apply for family reunification under the Non-EEA Policy Document on Family Reunification, which is available on the INIS website, www.inis.gov.ie.

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.

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

570. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost associated with ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1365/18]

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.

As you will be aware, Government, at a meeting last month, agreed to ratify the Convention. The next step will be for the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to bring forward a Memorandum for Government on the formal ratification process which will happen in the coming weeks. We are awaiting final confirmation from the AG on whether a Dáil resolution will be required – and if it is, this will be a welcome opportunity for debate in the House on the position of people with disabilities in our society and the importance of this convention.

The Government also approved the publication of draft legislation relating to deprivation of liberty for public consultation. The draft legislative provisions outline proposed safeguards for older people, persons with a disability and certain categories of people with mental health issues to ensure that they are not unlawfully deprived of their liberty in residential facilities.

Deprivation of liberty is a sensitive and important matter which goes to the heart of fundamental freedoms and human rights. Legislative proposals in this area will have significant implications for families, the operation of the health services and the courts. It is important that people fully understand what is being proposed. For this reason, Minister Harris and I are inviting submissions from stakeholders and the general public by way of public consultation up until March before these are finalised for drafting by the AG's Office.

This Government is making good progress with regard to making the Convention's requirements operational in Ireland in an appropriate matter. Considerable progress has already been made to overcome the remaining legislative barriers to Ireland's full implementation of the Convention as set out in the 2015 roadmap.

The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 was signed into law on 30 December 2015 and is a comprehensive reform on the law of decision-making capacity. Section 5 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993 was reformed through a 2017 Act of the same name to facilitate the full participation in family life of persons with intellectual disabilities and the full expression of their human rights.

There are two further priority implementation issues: these are the enactment of the Disability (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2016 and the commencement of the Assisted Decision Making Capacity Act 2015 which requires the Decision Support Service to be operational and ready to roll out the new decision-making support options. The 2018 Budget has provided an allocation of €3 million for the establishment of the Decision Support Service.

The future allocations of resources are matters for each annual Budget and are for the individual Departments involved.

Finally, I am continuing to take a wide range of practical measures to improve the lives of people with disabilities. The Report of the 'Make Work Pay Group' was published in April of last year and already action, as announced by Minister Harris, has been taken on its recommendations.

We have a Comprehensive Employment Strategy in place and 2017 saw positive action measures being taken to support public service recruitment of people with disabilities. I also published the Disability Inclusion Strategy in July of last year, which contains a wide range of practical commitments to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

Garda Expenditure

571. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 596 of 26 July 2017 and correspondence of 20 December 2017, the reason the figures he supplied regarding An Garda Síochána payments to a company (details supplied) amounted to €16,564,322 in 2016, in view of a Garda internal audit section report on ICT directorates payment process of August 2017 which stated the amount paid to the company for 2016 was €26,594,655; the reason for the €10 million discrepancy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1379/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate, decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda resources are a matter for the Garda Commissioner, and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

I have asked the Garda Commissioner who is the Accounting Officer for the Garda Vote, for the specific information requested and when it is to hand I will inform the Deputy accordingly.

Garda Expenditure

572. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of contracts awarded to a company (details supplied) since 2009 by An Garda Síochána; the costs associated with each contract; the details of the type of work of each contract, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1463/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda resources including the awarding of contracts are a matter for the Garda Commissioner in light of his identified operational demands and the availability of resources and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the following table presents information pertaining to the number of contracts awarded to the company concerned since 2009 by An Garda Síochána, the costs associated with each contract and certain information regarding of the type of work of each contract.

Year	Contract Description	No. of Contracts	Nature of	Amount paid
2009	T.205.I/2006 – Framework for Skilled IT Programmer & Analyst Resources	1	Contract staff covering Business Analysis, Software Development and Test roles.	€4,141,643
2010	T.205.I/2006 – Framework for Skilled IT Programmer & Analyst Resources	1	Contract staff covering Business Analysis, Software Development and Test roles.	€3,465,399
2011	T.205.I/2006 – Framework for Skilled IT Programmer & Analyst Resources	1	Contract staff covering Business Analysis, Software Development and Test roles.	€2,958,129
2012	T.205.I/2006 – Framework for Skilled IT Programmer & Analyst Resources	1	Contract staff covering Business Analysis, Software Development and Test roles.	€2,852,464
2013	T.205.I/2006 – Framework for Skilled IT Programmer & Analyst Resources	1	Contract staff covering Business Analysis, Software Development and Test roles.	€3,122,511
2013	Department of Justice & Equality Skills – Multi Supplier Framework	1	Software Tester role	€84,000
2014	Department of Justice & Equality Skills – Multi Supplier Framework	1	Software Tester role	€298,500
2014	T.205.I/2006 – Framework for Skilled IT Programmer & Analyst Resources	1	Contract staff covering Business Analysis, Software Development and Test roles.	€2,723,560

Questions - Written Answers

Year	Contract Description	No. of Contracts	Nature of	Amount paid
2015	T.205.I/2006 – Framework for Skilled IT Programmer & Analyst Resources	1	Contract staff covering Business Analysis, Software Development and Test roles.	€2,758,895
2016	T.205.I/2006 – Framework for Skilled IT Programmer & Analyst Resources	1	Contract staff covering Business Analysis, Software Development and Test roles.	€2,765,889
2016	Department of Education & Skills – Multi Supplier Framework	2	Software development and Technical Software Tester role2	€213,430
2017	T.205.I/2006 – Framework for Skilled IT Programmer & Analyst Resources	1	Contract staff covering Business Analysis, Software Development and Test roles.	€2,946,635
2017	Department of Education & Skills – Multi Supplier Framework	4	Contract Staff roles covering Reporting Development, Software Development and Test, DevOps support roles	€451,000
2017	Department of Education & Skills – Multi Supplier Framework – Joint DoJ / AGS Tender for an Enterprise Design Architects	1	Enterprise Design Architect	€77,880
			Total	€28,859,935

Question No. 573 answered with Question No. 509.

Forensic Science Ireland Laboratory

574. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of tenders received for the construction of the new State forensics laboratory by the closing date of

20 December 2017; the likely timeframe to assess the tenders; when construction is likely to commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1516/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The construction of the new Forensic Science Laboratory is being managed by the Office of Public Works (OPW) on behalf of my Department.

The position is that no tenders have yet been received for the construction of the new Forensic Science Laboratory at the Backweston Campus. Owing to the complexity of the project and recent changes in international Forensic Laboratory Standards it is necessary to add further material to the tender documentation. Forensic Science Ireland and the Project Design Team are currently examining the issues involved which relate primarily to laboratory interior finishes and mechanical and electrical adjustments. The relevant contractors have been apprised of the situation and the tender submission date has been deferred. Revised tender documents will be issued in due course and the relevant contractors will be given advance notice of when this is to occur.

In the meantime the separate enabling works for the laboratory will continue at the Backweston Site. I can assure the Deputy that the Government is fully committed to the delivery of the new Forensic Science Laboratory Project at the Backweston Campus and that the multi-annual budget required for it is included in the Government's Ten Year Capital Programme.

Garda Recruitment

575. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when it is expected there will be further graduations of probationer gardaí from Templemore in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1519/18]

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.

As the Deputy will be aware, 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 achieve this the Government has put in place a plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. We are making real, tangible progress on achieving this goal.

I am informed by the Commissioner that since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, just under 1,600 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. Garda numbers, taking account of retirements, increased to 13,552 at the end of 2017 - an increase of over 600 since the end of 2016.

I am also pleased that funding is in place to maintain this high level of investment in the Garda workforce to ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. This year a further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College. Also 800 Garda trainees are scheduled to attest during the year with 200 trainees expected to attest in March, June, September and November which will see Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, reach 14,000 by the end of 2018.

In addition, a further 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 Division.

Garda Deployment

576. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí at Rathfarnham Garda station from 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018 in tabular form; the number of additional gardaí who have been appointed; the number of community gardaí; his views on the falling numbers of gardaí at Rathfarnham Garda station; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1539/18]

577. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to ensure that Rathfarnham Garda station is allocated enough resources to allow it to police its jurisdiction, which includes Firhouse, Knocklyon, Ballycullen and Rathfarnham; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1541/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 576 and 577 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 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. Furthermore when allocations are taking place comprehensive consultation is carried out with local management during which all factors are taken into consideration. Where a deficiency in resources is identified the matter is considered fully and addressed accordingly. It is the responsibility of the Divisional Officer to allocate personnel within his/her Division.

I am informed by the Commissioner that the Garda strength of the Rathfarnham Garda Station on 30 November 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was 60 assigned, of whom 7 were community Gardaí. 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 Units, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

Further, the Commissioner has advised that all Gardaí, not simply designated Community Gardaí have a role to play in addressing community policing issues as and when the need arises and, in that sense, community policing involves far more than a single unit within An Garda Síochána.

As the Deputy will be aware, 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 achieve this the Government has put in place a plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. We are making real, tangible progress on achieving this goal.

I am informed by the Commissioner that since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, just under 1,600 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, of whom 5 have been assigned to the Rathfarnham Garda Station. Garda numbers, taking account of retirements, increased to 13,552 at the end of 2017 - an increase of over 600 since the end of 2016.

I am pleased that funding is in place to maintain this high level of investment in the Garda workforce to ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. This year a further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College. Also 800 Garda trainees are scheduled to attest during the year which will see Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, reach 14,000 by the end of 2018.

In addition, a further 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 Division, including the DMR South Division which Rathfarnham Garda Station is a part.

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

I am informed by the Commissioner that the number of personnel assigned to Rathfarnham Garda Station in each of the years 2015 to 30 November 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, is as set out in the following table.

Strength of Rathfarnham Garda Station 2015-2017

Year	Total
2015	69
2016	64
2017*	60

*Up to 30 November 2017.

Road Traffic Legislation

578. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his Department will participate in the consolidation of road traffic legislation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1554/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware that road traffic legislation is the responsibility of my colleague, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Mr Shane Ross, T.D. The Deputy will also appreciate that the nature of road traffic legislation is such that it is amended and added to on an ongoing basis, with new legislation coming into effect on an almost annual basis. As such, the consolidation of this extensive body of legislation would constitute a significant project and require considerable resources over a substantial time period; it would also require continual review, as new provisions will continue to be brought forward in view of the nature of this subject matter.

In view of the foregoing, I understand that the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport is pursuing consolidation on a thematic basis, as recommended by the Law Reform Commission.

Last year, my Department supported the enactment of the Road Traffic Act 2016, an Act to amend and extend the Road Traffic Acts 1961 to 2015, and I will continue to support legislation that makes a valuable contribution to road traffic enforcement and road safety.

Legislative Programme

579. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the projects undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation, including the cost, the duration, the number of staff required and if this process was carried out by his Department or outsourced in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [1569/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Department of Justice and Equality is responsible for the preparation each year of a significant number of Bills dealing with civil and criminal law. Many of these Bills seek to reform or update the law in specific areas, and necessarily involve an element of consolidation or amalgamation. It would not be practical to quantify the time and resources dedicated to those elements of such Bills.

However, from 2007 to 2011, the Criminal Law Codification Advisory Committee was tasked with overseeing the codification of criminal law project, with a staff of 13 to 20 over the course of the project, at a cost of €1,008,909.74.

Commissions of Investigation

580. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if there is precedence for statutory or independent inquiries within his Department that commenced even when a civil case was pending; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1604/18]

581. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if there is precedence in his Department to commence inquiries into matters on a modular basis in cases in which a civil case is ongoing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1605/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Ques-

tions Nos. 580 and 581 together.

I understand, from conversations between my Department and the Deputy's office, that the questions raised relate, in particular, to the proposed Commission of Investigation into circumstances surrounding offences committed by Bill Kenneally.

As the Deputy will be aware, a Commission of investigation is a statutory commission, established under the Commissions of Investigation Act 2004, to investigate a matter of public concern. Commissions of Investigation are set up by Government order and approved by both Houses. Terms of Reference are agreed which usually contain the likely duration and cost of the Commission.

In relation to this proposed Commission, the Government decided, in May 2017, to announce an intention to establish the Commission, once all outstanding legal matters were finalised. This decision was based on the legal advice received, which indicated that there could be severe delays if the Commission were to be established at that time. These delays, it was indicated, would be due to a number of outstanding legal matters, including ongoing investigations relating to further offences allegedly committed by Bill Kenneally, and a concern that evidence, adduced at the Commission, may impact upon future prosecutions. Mr Kenneally is also appealing against the severity of his sentence.

The Government decision of May 2017 to establish the Commission of Investigation, but defer the commencement of its work until the outstanding legal matters were resolved, was communicated to the solicitor for the individuals who had been seeking the Commission. This communication took place on the same day that the Government decision was made.

I can inform you that this Government remains focused on uncovering the truth of what happened in this case.

I have committed to working with the office of the Attorney General to identify a clear, workable, legally sound path to the establishment of a Commission. A meeting has been arranged between officials from the AGs office and my Department to identify a method to allow for the early establishment of the Commission, in such a way as not to prejudice the ongoing criminal investigations.

Ministerial Meetings

582. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has received a request to meet the victims of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1607/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am committed to establishing a Commission of Investigation into the circumstances surrounding the horrific crimes committed by Bill Kenneally. This has always been the case. When the Government decided, in May 2017, to announce the intention to establish the Commission, this was based on legal advice from the then Attorney General that indicated there would be severe delays if the Commission were to be established at that time. The decision was made based on a number of outstanding legal matters, including ongoing investigations into further offences, and a concern that evidence, adduced at a Commission, may impact upon future prosecutions.

Various proposals have been made as to how a Commission of Investigation may be able to operate in this context and they are being fully explored. I have had a preliminary discussion with the Attorney General regarding this matter and have arranged to work with officials from

the Attorney General's Office to identify a methodology to allow for the early establishment of the Commission of Investigation, in such a way as not to prejudice the ongoing criminal investigations.

I am acutely aware of the pain and suffering that has been endured by the victims. Once a clear, workable, legally sound path to the establishment of the Commission is agreed with the Attorney General's Office, I will meet with the victims, and their legal representative, at the earliest possible opportunity to brief them on the new proposals and to hear their thoughts.

Crime Data

583. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of bicycles reported stolen in the Dublin region in 2017; the number of those bicycles retrieved by An Garda Síochána; the number claimed by members of the public; the number remaining in Garda stations throughout Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1645/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have sought a report from the Garda authorities in relation to this matter and I will respond directly to the Deputy when the report is to hand.

Refugee Data

584. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of asylum seekers to be located in each county; the number of asylum seekers already located; and the projected numbers in line with the State's commitments over the coming period. [1657/18]

586. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of asylum seekers to be located in the cities and counties of Dublin, Cork, Galway, Waterford and Sligo in 2018. [1672/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 584 and 586 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, the immigration authorities have no way of predicting how many persons will arrive in the State in the future in order to seek international protection. Accordingly, projected numbers cannot be estimated. However, I can say that all applicants are offered immediate shelter, full board accommodation and a range of services such as health and education while their application for international protection is being processed.

Not every person who seeks international protection in Ireland chooses to accept this offer and many chose to live with colleagues, family or friends in communities across the country, as they are entitled to do.

In terms of the commitments made by the State, the Government established the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) in September 2015 as part of the State's humanitarian response to the migration crisis in Southern Europe. The State agreed to accept up to 4,000 asylum seekers and refugees overall into Ireland under relocation and resettlement programmes at the earliest time possible. Ireland voluntarily opted into the two EU Council Decisions on Relocation (2015/1523) and (2015/1601), which provided for the relocation of 160,000 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece.

By early 2018, Ireland will have admitted its entire cohort from Greece under the relocation

programme (1,089) and will have admitted 1,040 persons under the European Commission's July 2015 Resettlement scheme - double our original commitment of 520 under that scheme. The European Commission recognises Ireland as being one of only seven EU Member States to have fulfilled their resettlement pledges from the July 2015 Agreement.

By the end of the two-year EU Relocation Programme in September 2017, overall, a total of 37,000 asylum seekers were eligible and registered for relocation in Italy and Greece, of which 78% (approximately 29,000) had been relocated to other EU Member States including Ireland.

To address the balance of approximately 1,800 people under the IRPP, additional resettlement pledges have been made for 2018 and 2019 and a new Family Reunification Humanitarian Admission Programme (FRHAP) is being established.

The following tables set out the numbers that are currently accommodated by County in Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) centres, and in Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROC) for those arriving to Ireland under our International Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP). The overall numbers include those awaiting determination of the international protection application, those granted status as a discretionary measure to assist them to transition to mainstream housing and those issued with deportation orders who are obliged to remove themselves from the State.

As a result of an increasing number of applicants seeking international protection and other factors, existing centres are virtually at full capacity. Accordingly, expressions of interest for additional accommodation facilities are currently being sought. The outcome of this process will determine where any additional centres will be located.

Reception and Integration Centres

County	Current Occupancy
Clare	238
Cork	787
Dublin	838
Galway	341
Kerry	341
Kildare	83
Laois	194
Limerick	200
Longford	77
Louth	45
Mayo	236
Meath	603
Monaghan	159
Sligo	204
Tipperary	111
Waterford	399
Westmeath	268
Total:	5,124

EROC Centres

County	Current Occupancy
Kildare	114
Waterford	112
Roscommon	170
Meath	193
Total:	589

Crime Prevention

585. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a scheme will be adopted here (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1662/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I would like to thank the Deputy for bringing the scheme to my attention. While I did not receive the information referred to, I can assure the Deputy that if he wishes to forward the relevant information, I will arrange for officials in my Department to discuss the matter with the relevant officers in An Garda Síochána who are responsible for crime prevention. I would also welcome any further input the Deputy may wish to provide.

I am aware, however, that there are a number of initiatives operating in Ireland, in particular Theftstop, which may be of interest to you and your constituents.

“Theftstop” is designed to deter criminals from taking and selling farm equipment by ensuring it is clearly marked with a unique ID and then registered on a nationwide database. The clearly visible serial number should act as a deterrent to criminals. A further impediment for criminals is that the details and serial numbers of stolen equipment can be viewed by would-be buyers on-line at www.theftstop.ie.

I also consider it important to state that there is an onus on farmers, and others, seeking to buy farm machinery or equipment, to ensure that the items they are purchasing are not stolen. I would encourage everyone to check the register on the theftstop website. If the demand does not exist for stolen farm machinery, the levels of theft in the industry are sure to fall.

Furthermore, I would also encourage the public to mark machinery and other similar items with their own unique Eircode. This will expedite the retrieval, identification and return of any recovered stolen property to them, and act as a further deterrent against theft.

Question No. 586 answered with Question No. 584.

State Claims Agency

587. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the situation regarding the maximum compensation that can be paid in respect of a person with a disability who has died as a result of the negligence of the State; if this ceiling applies to persons who did not have lifelong enduring disability; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1722/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy may be aware, claims taken against the State are managed by the State Claims Agency as set out in the National Treasury Management Agency Act 2000.

This is the responsibility of my colleague the Minister for Finance and for Public Expenditure and Reform and I have no role in the matter.

Immigration Status

588. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when long-term residency can be offered in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1729/18]

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 concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order made on 17 January 2013.

Representations were received on behalf of the person concerned requesting that the deportation order be revoked, pursuant to the provisions of section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). Following the consideration of these representations, a decision was taken in June 2016 that the Deportation Order should be “affirmed” and this decision was communicated to the person concerned by registered post dated 30 June 2016.

The Deputy might wish to note that the effect of a Deportation Order is that the person named on the order is legally obliged to leave the State and to remain out of the State. The enforcement of the Deportation Order in this case is now an operational matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

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.

Magdalen Laundries Apology

589. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of discussions he has had with Dublin City Council senior management regarding the creation of an appropriate memorial at the Gloucester Street Magdalen laundry site on Seán McDermott Street, Dublin 1; and the assistance his Department has provided to Dublin City Council to progress the engagement with Magdalen laundry survivors as committed to by the then Taoiseach in his apology to the Magdalen women on behalf of the State in February 2013. [1734/18]

611. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the work undertaken by his Department regarding the Quirke report recommendation that a memorial to the Magdalen women be funded and provided for by the Government; and if this work includes engagement with Dublin City Council officials to develop a memorial on the former Magdalen laundry site on Sean McDermott Street, Dublin 1. [2005/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 589 and 611 together.

The site of the Gloucester Street Magdalen Institution on Seán McDermott Street, Dublin 1 is owned by Dublin City Council (DCC). In December 2017 DCC publicly announced that it will carry out a significant commercial redevelopment of the now largely derelict site as part of a broader economic regeneration of the area. In that announcement, DCC confirmed that there will be a Magdalen Memorial at the site and that it will consult with Magdalen representative groups early this year to agree how this should be done.

As part of this consultation process, officials from my Department will meet Dublin City Council officials shortly to discuss matters relevant to the memorial.

Probate Applications

590. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 69 of 2 November 2017, if that office has now ceased accepting personal applications; when it last accepted a personal application; the status of the promised review of the probate system to be completed by the end of 2017; when the recommendations of the review are expected to be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1761/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As per the Deputy's clarification I refer to Parliamentary Questions number 638 of 11 September 2017 and 214 of 14 November 2017.

As the Deputy is aware, the Probate Office is an office of the High Court and management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions under the Courts Service Act 1998.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that the Probate Personal Applicant Division of the Probate Office continues to accept personal applications for Grants of Representation in deceased persons' estates. While a number of experienced Probate staff members have been on unexpected long term sick leave and this factor has contributed to delays in the service, it has not led to a situation where personal applications for a Grant have been refused at any point.

All applications for Grants of Representation in deceased persons' estates are made on foot of a number of mandatory legal documents, which must be furnished by the applicants, and these require detailed checking by the Probate Office to ensure that the estate of the deceased person is administered correctly and in accordance with the law. All applications are assessed on the basis of the date on which they are lodged, an approach which provides fairness and equity to all applicants. However, where any personal applicant signals a particular urgency regarding their circumstances, the Probate Office endeavours to expedite the application in question.

The backlogs in the probate system are an ongoing cause for concern and a review of the probate system is being carried out at present. The report with recommendations for the modernisation of the process is now being finalised and will be presented to the Senior Management Team of the Courts Service and to the Courts Service Board early this year.

In the meantime, the Courts Service has assigned additional staff resources to the Probate Office to assist in dealing with the high volume of work of the Office and this is expected to result in an improvement in timeframes for all applications, including Personal Applicant applications.

Gender Equality

591. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if funding has been requested in the area of gender equality and migrant integration; if so, the timeframe for allocation in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1762/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): This year, my Department is paying grants of €500,000 to the National Women's Council

and €1,405,239 to the National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks. These amounts are set annually.

The following table gives details of the other funding administered by my Department in the areas mentioned in the question. These grants were awarded following calls for applications. I envisage that funding in each area will continue into the future with new calls taking place as appropriate.

	Amount approved (€)	Period	Number of projects
ESF Gender Equality, Women Returning to the Workforce	4,045,869	2017-2019	14
ESF Gender Equality, Women's Entrepreneurship	1,169,012	2017-2020	4
Dormant Accounts Fund – Pre-Activation of Supports for Female Refugees and the Female Family Members of Refugees	485,226	2017	7
EU Asylum Migration and Integration Fund	4,509,227	2017-2019	20
ESF Integration and Employment of Immigrants	3,288,498	2017-2020	5
National Funding to Promote the Integration of Immigrants	1,987,890	2017-2019	15
Communities Integration Fund	515,234	2017	131

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

592. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the date by which the Government will ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. [1765/18]

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.

As you will be aware, Government, at a meeting last month, agreed to ratify the Convention. The next step will be for the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to bring forward a Memorandum for Government on the formal ratification process which will happen in the coming weeks. As of now, we are awaiting final confirmation from the Attorney General

on whether a Dáil resolution will be required – and if it is, this will be a welcome opportunity for debate in the House on the position of people with disabilities in our society and the importance of this convention.

The Government also approved the publication of draft legislation relating to deprivation of liberty for public consultation. The draft legislative provisions outline proposed safeguards for older people, persons with a disability and certain categories of people with mental health issues to ensure that they are not unlawfully deprived of their liberty in residential facilities.

Deprivation of liberty is a sensitive and important matter which goes to the heart of fundamental freedoms and human rights. Legislative proposals in this area will have significant implications for families, the operation of the health services and the courts. It is important that people fully understand what is being proposed. For this reason, Minister Harris and I are inviting submissions from stakeholders and the general public by way of public consultation up until March before these are finalised for drafting.

This Government is making good progress with regard to making the Convention's requirements operational in Ireland in an appropriate and timely matter. Considerable progress has already been made to overcome the remaining legislative barriers to Ireland's full implementation of the Convention as set out in the 2015 roadmap.

The Assisted Decision- Making (Capacity) Act 2015 was signed into law on 30 December 2015 and is a comprehensive reform on the law of decision – making capacity. Section 5 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993 was reformed through a 2017 Act of the same name to facilitate the full participation in family life of persons with intellectual disabilities and the full expression of their human rights.

There are two further priority implementation issues: these are the enactment of the Disability (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2016 and the commencement of the Assisted Decision Making Capacity Act 2015 which requires the Decision Support Service to be operational and ready to roll out the new –decision making support options. The 2018 Budget has provided an allocation of €3 million for the establishment of the Decision Support Service.

Finally, I am continuing to take a wide range of practical measures to improve the lives of people with disabilities. The Report of the 'Make Work Pay Group' was published in April of last year and already action, as announced by Minister Harris has been taken on its recommendations.

We have a Comprehensive Employment Strategy in place and 2017 saw positive action measures being taken to support public service recruitment of people with disabilities. I also published the Disability Inclusion Strategy in July of last year containing wide range of practical commitments to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

Departmental Staff Data

593. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the proportion of employees in his Department or in organisations under its remit registered disabled. [1861/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy may be aware, Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005 provides for a statutory report on the employment of people with disabilities in the public sector. This report is compiled by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, from information provided by all public bodies staffed by

civil servants, and gives details of the number of people with a disability employed in the Civil Service. This report is submitted to the National Disability Authority (NDA).

Officials in my Department are currently preparing the 2017 return. The 2016 report indicated that 117 out of 2154 employees, or 5.4%, reported having a disability. This exceeds the current 3% target of employment of persons with disabilities set in the Disability Act 2005.

Prisoner Rehabilitation Programmes

594. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the degree to which first time offenders in all categories of crime are being provided with an opportunity for rehabilitation and education with a view to equipping them with lifestyles likely to entice them away from a life of crime; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1867/18]

595. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of repeat offenders serving prison sentences who have had access to education and rehabilitation courses in each of the past five years and to date in 2018; the number of applications to such courses; the number of refused applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1868/18]

596. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of first time offenders serving prison sentences who have had access to education and rehabilitation courses in each of the past five years and to date in 2018; the number of applications to such courses; the number of refused applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1869/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 594 to 596, inclusive, together.

I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that it provides a wide range of rehabilitative programmes to those in custody that include education, vocational training, healthcare, psychological, counselling, welfare and spiritual services. These programmes can offer purposeful activity to those in custody while serving their sentences and encouraging them to lead law abiding lives on release. These programmes are available in all prisons and all prisoners are eligible and have access to use the services, both first time and repeat offenders. The intention of this focussed approach is to assist persons committed to custody in living law-abiding and purposeful lives on their release to the community.

The Department of Education and Skills provides an allocation of 220 whole time teacher equivalents to the Prison Service through the Education and Training Boards . Education in prisons is delivered in partnership between the Education and Training Boards and the Irish Prison Service with a focus on providing education which is quality assured, prisoners centred and which facilitates lifelong learning. The partnership endeavours to meet the needs of prisoners through helping them cope with their sentence, achieve personal development and prepare for life after release. A broad and flexible curriculum is provided which ranges from basic literacy classes and peer led tutoring to Open University. There is an increasing focus on Quality and Qualification Ireland “QQI” accreditation as the modular structure best meets the needs of students in prison. On some occasions, prisoners may have to wait for a place to become available on an educational programme. A small number of refusals are issued each year for Open University where the applicants did not meet the Open University’s eligibility criteria, however in all cases they were directed to continue to engage with the Education Centre and were encouraged in the direction of other more suitable rehabilitative programmes.

Questions - Written Answers
Deportation Orders Data

597. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons, other than criminals, deported in each of the past five years and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1870/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the information requested by the Deputy is as set out in the following table.

The statutory criteria which must be considered in relation to a decision to make a deportation order under section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999 include national security and public policy, the character and conduct of the person concerned and the common good. In determining whether to make a deportation order, in addition to the factors set out in Section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999, I must also consider all relevant constitutional and international human rights arising including those enshrined in the Refugee Convention, the UN Convention Against Torture and the European Charter of Human Rights. The question of not returning a person to a place where certain fundamental rights would be breached (or non refoulment as it is referred to) is fully considered in every case when deciding whether or not to make a deportation order. This involves consideration of whether returning the person would result in the life or freedom of that person being threatened on account of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, or whether the person would be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

A deportation order requires the person concerned to remove themselves from the State and it is only where they fail to do so that the State is forced to remove them and enforce the rule of law.

It is to be noted that the enforcement of deportation orders is an operational matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB).

Total Number of Deportations effected from 2013 to date *

2013	209
2014	114
2015	251
2016	428
2017	140
2018 (up to 15/1/2018)	6

* Please note that it is not possible to differentiate between criminals and non criminals.

Immigration Data

598. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of applications for stamp 4 status received by the relevant section of his Department in each of the past five years and to date in 2018; the numbers granted and-or refused in the same period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1871/18]

599. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of applications for update of stamp 4 residency status approved and-or refused by his Department in each of the past five years and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1872/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 598 and 599 together.

I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that a Stamp 4 signifies that the bearer has a particular immigration permission, which allows them to live and work in the State without the need for a work permit. I am further informed that because cases which may lead to a Stamp 4 permission being granted will have come through a wide range of immigration pathways and processes it is not possible to provide the level of detail requested insofar as to do so would require the deployment of a disproportionate level of limited resources to the task.

I am advised, however, that at the end of 2017, approximately 65,000 people held a Stamp 4 status. In any given year permissions that expire during the year are considered for renewal as well as new applications being considered. Last year, approximately 19,000 new applications, mostly coming through the immigration and international protection streams, were processed by INIS. Every effort is made to process applications in a reasonable time frame and the allocation of resources across all processing areas of INIS is kept under regular review.

Writtens Answers Nos. 600-623

Road Traffic Offences Data

600. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons in each county caught for drink driving offences from December 2017 up to 9 January 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1941/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am deeply conscious of the serious issue of road safety and mindful of the traumatic impact of road traffic collisions on those directly affected and their families, as well as the impact of dangerous driving more generally on the quality of life of residents in local communities across the country.

My Department has sought the information requested by the Deputy from An Garda Síochána and I will contact the Deputy directly on receipt of a Garda report.

Question No. 601 answered with Question No. 562.

Immigration Status

602. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of an application pursuant to section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1956/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that, in response to a notification pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), written representations have been submitted on behalf of the person concerned. These representations, together with all other information and documentation on file, will be fully considered, under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and all other applicable legislation, in advance of a final decision being made.

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

Residency Permits

603. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current and expected residency status in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1968/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that they do not have a record of the person named by the Deputy currently registered in the State. Without further details, it is not possible to make further checks.

In my response to a previous Parliamentary Question from the Deputy, question no. 114 of the 7 December 2017, concerning a person of the same name and similar address, I advised the Deputy that as the person in question had not engaged with the immigration service at that time, that he or she should do so as soon as possible. It would appear that as of today, this situation remains.

Regarding regularisation of their status, the person concerned should, without delay, write directly to Unit 2, Residence Division, INIS and include an outline of their history in the State and that of any spouse, partner, children or any other dependents. They should also include full copies of passports, marriage certificate and birth certificates, if applicable. Upon receipt of this information, their situation will be fully assessed.

From the limited details provided, it appears that the person concerned may never have had permission to remain in the State and they should be aware that it is illegal for them, under the Immigration Act 2004, to remain in the State without the permission from the Minister for Justice and Equality. A person found guilty of such an offence is liable, under Section 13 of the Immigration Act 2004, to a fine not exceeding €3,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or to both. In addition, it is apparent that the person concerned has failed to meet the requirements of Section 9 of the Immigration Act 2004, which sets out the obligations of non-nationals in respect of registration.

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.

Citizenship Applications

604. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when residency status and citizenship will be confirmed in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1969/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that a letter issued to the person referred to by the Deputy on 21 November 2017 requesting certain information, a reply to which has been received on 11 January 2018.

Processing of the application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person concerned, who currently has permission to reside in the State until 10 August 2018, is ongoing and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

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

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

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

Residency Permits

605. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when long term residency will be facilitated in the case of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1975/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that from the limited information provided, it appears that no application for Long Term Residency was received from the persons concerned.

In order to make an application for Long Term Residency in the State the persons concerned must have been legally resident in the State for a minimum of 5 years (i.e. 60 months) on work permit/work authorisation/working visa conditions.

In addition to this, from the limited information provided, the persons concerned may never have had permission to remain in the State, and they should be aware that it is illegal for them, under the Immigration Act 2004, to remain in the State without the permission from the Minister for Justice and Equality.

A person found guilty of such an offence is liable, under Section 13 of the Immigration Act 2004, to a fine not exceeding €3,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or to both. In addition, it appears that the persons concerned have failed to meet the requirements of Section 9 of the Immigration Act 2004, which sets out the obligations of non-nationals in respect of registration.

In this respect it is advisable the persons concerned should engage directly with the immi-

gration service as soon as possible.

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

Family Reunification Applications

606. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of a visa application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1981/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the application referred to was received on 23 May 2017. I am also advised that Join Family applications received on or before 7 June 2017 are currently being processed by INIS, and this particular application should be processed within the next 6 to 8 weeks.

The Policy Document on Family Reunification first published in December 2013 states that the business target for visa applications to join Irish citizens is to deal with such applications within six months of receipt of application. However, it should be noted that this is a business target and does not constitute a legal obligation. The business target takes into account the detailed and often complex assessment that is required in applications for family reunification.

While every effort generally is made to process these applications as soon as possible, in line with the business target, processing times can vary having regard to the volume of applications, their complexity, the possible need to investigate, enquire into, or seek further information in relation to certain applications, and the resources available. Any delays in achieving the business target are typically related to the processing of more complex cases where the provision of additional documentation is requested, or where detailed assessments of family rights under the Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights are required.

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.

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

Fines Data

607. Deputy Declan Breathnach asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of fines issued in 2016 that specifically relate to persons caught smuggling or selling illicit cigarettes, fuel and alcohol; the number of those fines paid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1983/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the

Deputy that I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has provided the information requested for 2016 set out in the following table. The Courts Service has asked that I state that the data supplied is to address the specific query and is valid for that purpose only and may represent an incomplete data set if employed for any other purpose.

-	Number of Fines Imposed	Number of Fines Paid	Number of Fines Part Paid
Tobacco related offences	68	43	2
Oil related offences	113	23	2
Alcohol related offences	67	40	0

Departmental Expenditure

608. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the expenditure with a company (details supplied) by month, in tabular form in each of the years 2014 to 2017; the nature of the services provided; the job title and or position held by the persons that availed of services; the advice and or training provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1984/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy that expenditure by my Department, with the specified company, during the requested years was as follows:

	2014	2015	2016	2017	Purpose
January					
February	€1,374	€481			€1,374 was for consultancy and facilitation at a meeting with the deaf community; €481 was for training courses for Departmental Press Officers.
March					
April					
May					

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	2014	2015	2016	2017	Purpose
June				€2,691	€2,691 was the balance, for the Communications Strategy Development of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme.
July					
August	€962				€962 were for training courses, for the Assistant Secretary in charge of Corporate Affairs and the Acting CEO of the Private Security Authority.
September					
October		€275	€24,221		€275 was for training courses for Departmental Press Officers. The payment of €24,221 was for the Communications Strategy Development, of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme.
November					
December					
Total	€2,336	€756	€24,221	€2,691	

Prisoner Data

609. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons serving life sentences for crimes they committed while under 18 years of age; and if

he will make a statement on the matter. [1989/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy that the statistics requested regarding the number of persons serving a life sentence for crimes they committed while under the age of 18 are not readily available. The Irish Prison Service current has 371 persons in custody serving a life sentence. It would not be possible to provide the age a person was when they committed the crime. In some cases, years can pass between the crime being committed and the person receiving the sentence.

However, the Prison Service have informed me that there are currently four persons in custody serving a life sentence who were under the age of 18 when they were committed to prison.

Garda Resources

610. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if additional specialist staff and equipment will be provided to the Garda computer crime unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1994/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the distribution of resources among the various Garda Divisions and Districts and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. I am assured by the Commissioner that personnel assignments, together with the overall policing arrangements and operational strategies are continually monitored and reviewed.

I am informed by the Commissioner that, on foot of a review of the Computer Crime Investigation Unit under the Garda Síochána's Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021, a dedicated Garda Cyber Crime Bureau (GCCB) was established in September 2016 to ensure that An Garda Síochána has the capacity and capabilities to deal with cyber crime and cyber security threats. The allocation of additional and support staff for the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau is ongoing. In addition, in conjunction with the Garda College, a module on cyber crime investigation is included in the training programme for all trainee Gardaí, with all other Garda personnel being trained through the Continuous Professional Development network in cyber crime awareness and cyber crime investigation.

The GCCB has responsibility for the forensic examination of all seized computer media, international liaison with regard to cyber matters and the investigation of cyber crime matters. Cases examined by the GCCB include all crime-types, in particular banking and financial crime matters, as well as the examination of equipment and media to assess images in the context of offences relating to child pornography and exploitation.

The roll-out continues on a phased basis of regional triage units. The triage model provides a tiered response and capability for computer forensic services on a regional basis, utilising locally-based and trained first-responders and cyber triage specialists. The triage model also reduces demands on the central Bureau, while remaining under the supervision of the Detective Superintendent, Garda Cyber Crime Bureau. To date two regional triage units have been established in the Southern and South-Eastern Regions, at Ballincollig and New Ross Garda Stations. These triage units are the subject of review to inform and establish best practices and processes for the establishment of further such units in other Regions.

The Deputy will be aware some €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, is also being invested in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021 to enable An Garda Síochána to deploy the latest cutting edge technologies in the fight against crime.

As of the 30 November 2017, the latest date for which figures are currently available, the number of staff allocated to the GCCB is 28 including 1 Inspector, 5 Sergeants and 17 Gardaí, with 1 Higher Executive Officer, 2 Executive Officers and 2 Clerical Officers.

Question No. 611 answered with Question No. 589.

Information and Communications Technology

612. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his Department uses anti profanity software on its email systems and online contact forms; if so, the level of human oversight that is applied to the monitoring of these softwares and their effectiveness; his views on whether persons' legitimate right to petition Government may be blocked unintentionally by errors in the use of such softwares in determining that which qualifies as profanity being communicated in email and or online contact forms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2090/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My Department uses anti-profanity software on its email systems but not on online contact forms. Email messages containing profanity are quarantined by the software and the recipient is informed and allowed the opportunity to request release and then if granted to access the message. The operation of the software on the email system is reviewed by my ICT Division on a continuous basis and takes into account any observations or issues raised by colleagues throughout the Department. I believe that the systems and processes in place in the Department are such as to minimise the possibility of electronic communication petitioning the Department or myself not being accessed, having due regard to the security and operation of the Department's ICT network.

Fisheries Offences

613. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Business; Enterprise and Innovation the number of Workplace Relations Commission personnel assigned to working on the fishing fleet; and the number of inspections of relevant vessels containing or suspected of containing non EU migrant fishing crew documented or undocumented by the Commission since the atypical scheme for non EU migrant fishing crew was established. [54498/17]

614. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Business; Enterprise and Innovation the number of enforcement actions and the total monetary awards by category, for example, unpaid wages, unpaid holiday pay, damages, pay in lieu of notice, non-observance of minimum wage and other infringements by the Workplace Relations Commission in favour of migrant fishing workers documented or undocumented since the atypical scheme for non EU migrant fishing crew was established. [54501/17]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 613 and 614 together.

While the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine has lead policy responsibility for the fishing sector, the atypical work permission scheme referred to by the deputy is administered by the Department of Justice and Equality and the Irish National Immigration Service (INIS) on behalf of that Department.

The Deputy should be aware that a number of Departments and State agencies are involved in the monitoring and enforcement of the scheme. These include An Garda Síochána, Bord

Iascaigh Mhara, INIS, the Marine Survey Office of the Department of Tourism, Transport and Sport, the Naval Service, the Health and Safety Authority (HSA), the Revenue Commissioners, the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority, the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

My Department is responsible for the activities of the WRC and the HSA. The WRC's responsibilities relate to the enforcement of the Employment Permits Acts and employment rights legislation generally, including minimum wage legislation. The HSA is the enforcement agency under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 and conducts inspections under health and safety legislation at all places of work, including fishing vessels while docked in harbour. It does not carry out inspections of fishing vessels at sea even when operating within Irish territorial waters.

The Marine Survey Office under the aegis of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport has lead responsibility for fishing vessel safety, security and living and working conditions. It is responsible for enforcing legislation in this context for seafarers and fishing vessel crew.

In response to the Deputy's specific enquiries, it is the case that ten WRC inspectors have undergone the relevant safety and survival training and are available for assignment on fisheries inspections and investigations. These inspectors also undertake enforcement operations in other employment sectors and are not, therefore, fully dedicated to work in the fishing sector.

Some 181 vessels on the Irish Fishing Vessel Register come within the scope of the Atypical Worker Permission Scheme for non-EEA Workers, with 174 of these vessels being active or operational at present. To date, 165 of these vessels have been inspected by the WRC. In total, some 240 inspections of these vessels were undertaken by the WRC in the period July, 2016 to 31st December, 2017.

202 contraventions were detected by WRC Inspectors to the end of 2017. Details of these contraventions are set out in the following table:

Contravention	No Detected
Failure to keep employment records	71
Non-EEA fisher did not have permission to work	29
Failure to issue payslips	25
Failure to comply with an Inspector's requirement	19
Failure to compensate for Sunday working	18
Failure to comply with terms of Atypical Scheme	13
Failure to grant Public Holiday entitlements	13
Failure to grant annual leave entitlements	8
Failure to pay correct rates	6

Some 112 contravention notices have been issued to date by the WRC. These notices advise vessel owners of contraventions detected and of the actions required, within a specified deadline, to effect compliance, including the payment of any unpaid wages arising from contraventions. Failure to respond to the contravention notice and/or to effect compliance may result in the issue of compliance notices and/or fixed payment notices, depending on the nature of the contravention and, ultimately, the initiation of prosecution proceedings. To date, the WRC has

secured one successful prosecution while proceedings have been initiated in four other cases.

Current investigations by the WRC have been completed in respect of 95 of the 181 vessels. Five of those cases involved unpaid wages, amounting to almost €6,300. The majority of the unpaid wages related to failure to pay National Minimum Wage rates and/or Public Holiday entitlements.

Work Permits Applications

615. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the status of an application for a work permit by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1011/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): An application for a General Employment Permit for the person referred to by the Deputy (details above) was received on 22 December 2017. The Employment Permits section of my Department is currently processing standard applications received on 13 November 2017 and this application should be processed within the next five weeks.

IDA Ireland

616. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if there have been enquiries from prospective investors in relation to a replacement manufacturing industry for a site (details supplied) County Kildare; the way in which the IDA is actively promoting the site to existing and potential investors; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54428/17]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As I have previously noted, the site in question is not in IDA Ireland ownership. This means that the Agency has a lesser role in its potential sale than if it owned the property itself.

I understand, however, that the property was placed on the open market in July 2017 and that its owner has engaged agents to handle its sale. IDA Ireland is engaging closely with the owner about the facility and the Agency is aware of contact between prospective buyers and the company. The IDA will continue to draw the attention of both existing and potential clients - whether in Ireland or overseas - to the availability of the property.

Fishing Vessel Safety

617. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of Health and Safety Authority inspectors assigned to working on the fishing fleet; and the number of inspections and investigations of relevant vessels containing or suspected of containing non EU migrant fishing crew documented or undocumented by the Authority since the atypical scheme for non EU migrant fishing crew was established. [54499/17]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Under the provisions of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 (No. 10 of 2005) a fishing vessel is considered a place of work and as such employers and employees must comply with their respective responsibilities under that Act while at work. The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) is the enforcement agency under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005.

The HSA has 10 inspectors assigned to inspecting fishing vessels, and they carry out these inspections in addition to inspecting other workplaces such as farms, construction sites, health services and manufacturing.

Since the introduction of the atypical scheme for Non-EU Migrant Fishing Crew in February 2016, the HSA has carried out 73 inspections of fishing vessels. These inspections examined compliance with the Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 with particular emphasis on the requirement to carry out appropriate risk assessments for the fishing tasks being carried out and to reflect these assessments into the Safety Statement which is required for all workplaces.

To assist in this regard the HSA provides the skipper of each vessel under inspection with a copy of the fishing vessel safety statement template, this safety checklist identifies groups of frequently encountered hazards on fishing vessels but is non-exhaustive and requires the skipper to tackle those hazards that are present with appropriate action. Skippers are also presented with a copy of the HSA's Guidance "Managing Health and Safety in Fishing". The level and nature of the health and safety training of fishermen was also examined by the HSA during inspections to ensure that it was appropriate to their needs, particularly in the case of non-nationals.

As a result of these inspections the HSA served 7 improvement Notices for breaches of health and safety laws and an additional 40 Reports of Inspection were issued in relation to more minor health and safety breaches. The absence of safety statements was the main concern of HSA Inspectors, as well as the absence of work specific risk assessments for fishing activities.

As the HSA inspects all fishing vessels no matter what their size is, they are not in a position to say how many of the 73 vessels were covered by the atypical scheme for non-EU migrant fishing crew, i.e. vessels greater than 15 metres.

Fishing Vessel Safety

618. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of enforcement actions, civil or criminal, initiated by the Health and Safety Authority in respect of violations of health and safety in the workplace on fishing vessels since the atypical scheme for non EU migrant fishing crew was established. [54502/17]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Under the provisions of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 (No. 10 of 2005) a fishing vessel is considered a place of work and as such employers and employees must comply with their respective responsibilities under that Act while at work. The Health and Safety Authority, an agency under the aegis of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, is the enforcement agency under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005.

Since the introduction of the atypical scheme for Non-EU Migrant Fishing Crew in February 2016, the Health and Safety Authority has carried out 73 inspections of fishing vessels. These inspections were carried out to monitor compliance with the Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 with particular emphasis on the requirement to carry out appropriate risk assessments for the fishing tasks being carried out and to reflect these assessments into the Safety Statement which is required for all workplaces. In this regard, the Authority provided the skipper of each vessel under inspection with a copy of the fishing vessel safety statement template and a copy of the Authority's Guidance "Managing Health and Safety in Fishing". The level and nature of the health and safety training of fishermen was also examined by the Authority during inspections to ensure that it was appropriate to their needs, particularly in the case of non-nationals.

As a result of these inspections the Authority served 7 improvement Notices for breaches of health and safety laws and an additional 40 Reports of Inspection were issued in relation to more minor health and safety breaches. The absence of safety statements was the main concern of Authority Inspectors, as well as the absence of work specific risk assessments for fishing activities.

As the Authority inspects all fishing vessels no matter what their size is, they are not in a position to say how many of the 73 vessels were covered by the atypical scheme for non-EU migrant fishing crew, i.e. vessels greater than 15 metres.

Company Law

619. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if her attention has been drawn to the concerns of small businesses on the proposed removal of section 343(7) of the Companies Act 2014; and if this provision in the Companies (Statutory Audits) Bill 2017 is being reconsidered. [54565/17]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I have received some representations on behalf of small business regarding the removal of section 343(7) of the Companies Act 2014. I brought forward this amendment in the Companies (Statutory Audits) Bill 2017 as I consider it an appropriate and necessary measure to protect the interests of users of company financial statements.

Prior to the Companies Act 2014, a company could apply only to the High Court for an extension of time to file its annual return. Where such an Order was given for an extension of the time, the company did not lose its audit exemption. Separately, a company could apply to the Registrar of Companies for its late filing fees to be waived but it lost the audit exemption as it was still late filing its annual return.

The Companies Act 2014 introduced the option, under section 343(7), for a company to also apply to the District Court for the extension of time to file its annual return and, if obtained, it retained its audit exemption.

Section 343(7) was commenced on 1 June 2015 and since then concerns have arisen regarding its impact on timely filing of annual returns and financial statements by companies which is an important transparency measure and safeguard for third parties such as suppliers, employees and other creditors. The number of Orders granted by the District Court in the course of 2016 was more than double the number of waivers granted by the Registrar in 2014 under the previous scheme.

Section 9 of the Companies (Statutory Audits) Bill 2017 repeals section 343(7) of the Companies Act 2014. A new section 343A provides that a company may apply to the District Court for an Order waiving the fee required for the late filing of its annual return. This is similar to the position that obtained before the enactment of the Companies Act 2014, whereby a company could apply to the Registrar but that decision now falls within the remit of the District Court.

The loss of audit exemption where an annual return is not filed on time was introduced as a policy response for such failure in the Companies (Auditing and Accounting) Act 2003. The loss of audit exemption has proved central to creating a culture of compliance and acting as a support to good corporate governance practices. Today the compliance level is at 90%.

Companies have a considerable period of time, up to 10 months, to prepare and file their financial statements. The vast majority of companies manage to file within this timeframe. Any

further delay risks making that information less meaningful to the third parties concerned.

This is an important consideration as those third parties may also be small companies that supply or otherwise do business with that company. Given the time allowed to companies to prepare their financial statements, the fact that the financial reporting obligation has been simplified and reduced in the Companies (Accounting) Act 2017 and that this Act also made more companies eligible for the audit exemption, I consider that the proposals in the Companies (Statutory Audits) Bill 2017 are appropriate.

Brexit Issues

620. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if her attention has been drawn to research by InterTradeIreland indicating that 95% of companies here still do not have a formal plan on the way in which to deal with Brexit; and if a practical advice campaign will be launched to address this deficit. [54603/17]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The research referred to underlines the importance of the work my Department and its enterprise agencies are collectively undertaking with respect to the UK's withdrawal from the EU. This includes efforts to help businesses plan and prepare for the specific challenges that Brexit is likely to pose to their commercial activity. Much of our broader work so far to help mitigate the impact of Brexit on Irish firms is captured in my Department's recently published response paper to the UK's impending exit from the EU, entitled "Building Stronger Business - Responding to Brexit by Competing, Innovating and Trading". This paper summarises the policy measures already taken, outlines future initiatives we intend to take forward and details the steps the Department has taken already to ensure that we can work as efficiently as possible to support our companies.

Our State Agencies have been very active in helping businesses prepare for the post-Brexit commercial environment and this work is ongoing. InterTradeIreland itself, for example, has introduced an initiative to assist SMEs, including the provision of expert advice on Brexit. It has also organised an extensive series of awareness raising events in various locations, both North and South.

Enterprise Ireland, meanwhile, has launched a "Brexit SME Scorecard" - effectively a new interactive platform which can be used by Irish companies to self-assess their exposure to Brexit. The Agency has also introduced a "Be Prepared Grant" that helps SME clients meet the costs of implementing a plan to mitigate risks arising from Brexit. Furthermore, the Local Enterprise Office Network are hosting information events around the country aimed at helping companies plan for Brexit.

Gift Vouchers Data

621. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the changes proposed to protect the rights of persons when redeeming gift vouchers within a specified time limit; and if the introduction of a minimum valid period substantially greater than 12 months is being considered. [54604/17]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department published the draft Scheme of a comprehensive Consumer Rights Bill for public consultation on 25 May 2015. In addition to Parts dealing with the consolidation and updating

of the law on the supply of goods, digital content and services and on unfair contract terms, the draft Scheme contains a number of provisions for the regulation of gift vouchers, including a proposed ban on expiry dates in contracts for the supply of gift vouchers. The responses to the gift card provisions raised a substantial number of issues, including concerns expressed by businesses about the impact of a complete prohibition on expiry dates and the need for clarity and certainty in respect of the regulation of gift cards that come within the scope of the European Communities (Electronic Money) Regulations 2011. However, I wish to repeat a willingness by previous Ministers to listen to other views and possible approaches to the issue of gift vouchers, such as a requirement that they remain valid for a set period.

While I am anxious to progress the Scheme of the Consumer Rights Bill, I have to take account of current European Union legislative proposals for Directives on consumer contracts for the supply of digital content and consumer contracts for the online and other distance sale of goods. These proposals which were announced in May 2015 and published in December 2015 overlap very substantially with two of the main parts of the draft Scheme of the Consumer Rights Bill. Discussions on the digital content proposal at working party level have proceeded rapidly with a general approach reached at the Justice and Home Affairs Council in June 2017. The proposal will now be considered in a trilogue with the European Parliament during 2018. Discussion at Council level on the second proposal on online sales has only just commenced.

Nonetheless, I am considering the advisability of bringing forward a legislative proposal to the Oireachtas when a directly related and fully harmonised legislative proposal may be at an advanced stage of the European Union legislative process. The wisdom of introducing legislation in the Oireachtas in 2018, if large parts of that legislation would have to be repealed or substantially amended within a relatively short space of time, is obviously open to question. However, I will continue to review the progress of the two European Union proposals with a view to deciding the best course of action to take with regard to the Scheme of the Consumer Rights Bill.

I would also like to draw the attention of the Deputy to the very useful information for consumers on the issue of gift vouchers on the CCPC website www.ccpc.ie.

Job Vacancies

622. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if her Department has monitored the percentage of job advertisements published online and in print media over the past two years which have been specific to positions based in Dublin; and the percentage that applied to other counties or regions. [54605/17]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department does not monitor online job advertisements to determine the percentage that are specific to individual counties or regions.

IDA Ireland Portfolio

623. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of IDA or Enterprise Ireland advance factory or similar facilities currently available for occupancy in each county; and the number of such premises, per county, that are currently at either planning or construction stage. [54606/17]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):

Since 2015, the IDA has been working towards targets set out in their strategy “Winning - Foreign Direct Investment 2015-2019”, including increasing foreign direct investment in every region of Ireland by 30%-40%. To help achieve this goal, the Government has committed to providing the IDA €150 million over five years for a regional property programme. This programme aims to ensure property solutions are in place for overseas companies considering investing or expanding, thereby encouraging more FDI in regional Ireland.

To date, under the programme, the Agency has delivered advance buildings in Waterford, Athlone, Sligo, Castlebar and Tralee. It has also successfully secured tenants for the first buildings completed in Waterford, Athlone and Sligo. Two new buildings in Castlebar and Tralee are now complete and being marketed extensively. Construction is also underway on another facility in Galway.

IDA Ireland is continuing to roll out its building programme across the country with new buildings planned in Carlow, Dundalk, Limerick, Athlone and Waterford over the next two years.

Enterprise Ireland Funding

624. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of applications received for the recently announced regional enterprise development fund, by county; and the location and name of applicants. [54717/17]

625. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the criteria used for the regional enterprise development fund; and the steps available to persons who were unsuccessful in this round of funding. [54718/17]

626. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if officials from her Department will meet with the unsuccessful applicants to advise them on applications for future rounds of funding in the REDF or similar schemes. [54719/17]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 624 to 626, inclusive, together.

On 11 December last, I announced the results of the first round of the new competitive Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF).

The REDF is a €60 million competitive fund launched by Enterprise Ireland in 2017, with funding being made available over the period 2017-2020 under two competitive calls.

The Fund, which is an open national competitive call to support regional projects, is provided by my Department, through Enterprise Ireland and is a key action to support the Regional Action Plan for Jobs and the Action Plan for Rural Development.

Twenty-one successful applicants representing all regions of the country secured up to €30.5m in funding for their projects in the first competitive call.

75 applications were received by Enterprise Ireland in response to the first call, county locations of which are set out in Table 1.

Applicants are entitled to a certain level of privacy; therefore, Enterprise Ireland is not in a position to release the names of unsuccessful applicants.

A list of successful projects by region/county is detailed in Table 2.

Table 1: Number of Applications Per County

County	No of Applications
Carlow	3
Cavan	2
Clare	1
Cork	8
Donegal	2
Dublin	14
Galway	7
Kerry	7
Kildare	2
Kilkenny	2
Laois	1
Leitrim	2
Limerick	7
Louth	2
Mayo	1
Meath	1
Monaghan	2
Roscommon	1
Tipperary	4
Waterford	2
Westmeath	2
Wexford	1
Wicklow	1
Grand Total	75

Table 2: Successful Projects by Region/County

Projects Recommended for approval	Location
Northern & Western Region	
Monaghan County Enterprise Fund	Monaghan
Leitrim County Enterprise Fund	Leitrim/Cavan/Longford
Donegal Digital Innovation CLG	Donegal
BIA Innovator Campus CLG	Galway
Southern Region	
Irish Bioeconomy Foundation CLG	Tipperary
Emerald Aerocluster CLG	Limerick/Shannon/National
Insurtech Network Centre DAC	Carlow
ThreeD (Design Develop Disseminate) DAC	Waterford
AgriTech Centre of Excellence CLG	Kerry
RDI Hub CLG	Kerry/National
Cork Urban Enterprises CLG	Cork
IT@Cork CLG	Cork
KerrySciTech CLG	Kerry/Cork

Projects Recommended for approval	Location
Sneem Innovation & Technology Services CLG	Kerry
MOL TEIC CLG	Kerry
Eastern & Midlands Region	
County Kildare Community Network Company CLG	Kildare
Dublin Enterprise & Technology Centre CLG	Dublin
Ghala DAC	Dublin/National
Social & Local Enterprise Alliance DAC	Dublin
BPO Cluster Ireland CLG	Dublin/National
Irish Manufacturing Research CLG	Westmeath/National
Total number of projects	21

All applications were evaluated against the following criteria:

-	Evaluation Criteria	Weighting
1	Impacts and value for money	30%
2	Collaboration and Participation	20%
3	Viability and sustainability	20%
4	Building Regional Strengths	20%
5	Significance for innovation and Capability Building	10%
	Total	100%

Officials from Enterprise Ireland will meet with unsuccessful applicants and provide feedback on the application, aligned to the publicly referenced evaluation criteria. As this fund was administered as a competitive process, decisions are final. Enterprise Ireland will work with the applicant to advise them on a revised application if they decide to apply again under the second competitive call, and advise them on future rounds of funding and/or other schemes.

The second call under the REDF scheme is expected to issue in Q1 2018 and will fund projects from the remaining balance of the €60m budget available.

Departmental Funding

627. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the name and number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from her Department 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 amount of money they have spent on this particular campaign during that time; the number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from her Department that have expended resources seeking the retention of the eighth amendment; the amount of funding these organisations have received from the State in the past five years; and the amount of money they have spent on this particular campaign during that time. [54759/17]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department provides funding annually to the following Agencies and bodies under my aegis:

IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, 31 Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), Intertrade Ireland, National Standards Authority of Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland, Health and Safety Authority, Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, Personal Injuries Assessment Board, and Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority.

While my Department does not know the names of the organisations involved in seeking the repeal of the Eighth Amendment, I can confirm my Department has not provided any funding for such a purpose.

Enterprise Ireland Funding

628. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if her attention has been drawn to the decision not to fund the north Dublin makerspace at DCU as part of the recent REDF (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54914/17]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): On 11 December last I announced the results of the first round of the new competitive Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF).

The REDF is a €60 million competitive fund launched by Enterprise Ireland in 2017, with funding being made available over the period 2017-2020 under two competitive calls.

The Fund, which is an open national competitive call to support regional projects, is provided by my Department, through Enterprise Ireland, and is a key action to support the Regional Action Plan for Jobs and the Action Plan for Rural Development.

Twenty-one successful applicants representing all regions of the country secured up to €30.5m in funding for their projects in the first competitive call.

The REDF is administered by Enterprise Ireland as an open competitive call. The evaluation process was detailed in the publicly available scheme document. All applications underwent the same evaluation process.

Applications were evaluated against the following criteria:

-	Evaluation Criteria	Weighting
1	Impacts and value for money	30%
2	Collaboration and Participation	20%
3	Viability and sustainability	20%
4	Building Regional Strengths	20%
5	Significance for Innovation and Capability Building	10%
	Total	100%

Enterprise Ireland will provide feedback to Makerspace at DCU on its application, and will work with the group to advise it on a revised application if it decides to submit one under the second competitive call.

Enterprise Ireland will also publicly announce future call dates: the second call under the REDF scheme is expected to issue in Q1 2018 and will fund projects from the remaining balance of the €60m budget available.

Sale of State Assets

629. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the status of the sale of studios (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55000/17]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Ardmore Studios is a commercial entity, owned 68.33% by private interests and 31.67% by the State. The State's shareholding is managed by Enterprise Ireland.

Enterprise Ireland inherited the stake from NADCORP, the former State investment agency, in 1986. As a passive investor, Enterprise Ireland has no enterprise development role in Ardmore or any involvement in its day-to-day operations.

While Enterprise Ireland offers supports to exporting companies involved in film and the creative sector, policy responsibility for the development of the film industry rests with my colleague, Ms Josepha Madigan, TD, Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

The sale of the Ardmore Studios is a commercial decision by the owners of the studios. Ardmore Studios is being placed on the market for sale as a going concern.

Enterprise Ireland has not placed any preconditions on the pending sale of Ardmore Studios due to the existence of planning restrictions on the site which safeguard its use as a film-making studio into the future. Wicklow County Council has in the past confirmed to my Department that it agrees to maintain the film-only zoning as a matter of policy.

As the former Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, I am aware of this case and have also been briefed by my officials since my appointment as Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation. Enterprise Ireland remains engaged with the company and their representatives. Any proposal requiring a decision will be reviewed by Enterprise Ireland in consultation with me, as Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation. In turn, I will consult the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

IDA Ireland Data

630. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of jobs delivered by the Industrial Development Agency in south County Kildare and north County Kildare since 2010; and the number of site visits that have taken place in both areas since 2010. [55120/17]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): IDA Ireland remains focused on attracting job-rich foreign direct investment (FDI) to all regions of Ireland. Regional development is a key priority of the Agency, with a target set of increasing investment in every region of Ireland - including County Kildare - by 30%-40% by 2019.

Kildare is marketed by the IDA as part of the Mid-East region, together with Counties Meath and Wicklow. There are 28 IDA supported client companies, which collectively employ almost 10,000 people, currently in Kildare. The IDA is working hard to increase these numbers further. A dedicated Regional Business Development Manager for the Mid-East has been appointed, for example, to assist the Agency in winning more investment for the area. The Agency's staff, both at home and abroad, also continue to draw the attention of potential investors to the particular strengths of Kildare and the wider Mid-East region.

Questions - Written Answers

The following table sets out, in respect of Kildare, details of employment in IDA client companies there and site visits for the period between 2010-2017. Information is not available for particular parts of Kildare as the IDA collates data on a County-wide basis only.

Kildare	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
No of IDA Companies	31	29	29	28	25	25	27	28
Total Jobs	10,746	10,484	10,465	10,327	10,285	10,628	10,229	9,282
Gross Gain	1,451	366	556	342	474	849	335	275
Gross Losses	-352	-628	-575	-480	-516	-506	-734	-1,222
Net Change	1,099	-262	-19	-138	-42	343	-399	-947
Site Visits	2	3	1	1	1	7	8	5*

* 5 site visits in Kildare to Q3 2017, details on the total number of site visits for 2017 will become available in February 2018.

Departmental Properties

631. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the vacant properties and land not in use, owned, rented or leased by her Department or by bodies and agencies under the aegis of her Department by square footage for buildings and acres for land, in tabular form; the address and location of these properties; and the last date of occupancy or use of these properties. [55205/17]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Accommodation for my Department is provided by the Office of Public Works (OPW) in buildings which are either State owned or leased by OPW on our behalf. Therefore, my Department does not directly own, rent or lease any properties or land. None of the properties assigned to my Department are unoccupied.

Any such land or properties owned or leased by Agencies of my Department is a matter for the individual bodies concerned for which I have no direct function. However, I have asked all Agencies to advise me of any such details, and I will communicate that information to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Local Enterprise Offices Establishment

632. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her plans to open a local enterprise office in Drogheda to service the significant catchment area of south County Louth and east County Meath (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1251/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The role of the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) is to promote entrepreneurship at a local level. The

LEOs provide information, guidance and ‘soft’ supports to anyone seeking to start or grow a business. Subject to certain eligibility, they offer direct grant aid to microenterprises (10 employees or fewer) in the manufacturing and internationally traded services sector which, over time, have the potential to develop into strong export entities.

As previously stated, my Department has no plans to deviate from the current Local Enterprise Office (LEO) model that was put in place following a Government decision in April 2012. This decision, underpinned by primary legislation, provided for the dissolution of the 35 County Enterprise Boards. Subsequently, 31 LEOs were established in each Local Authority Area, with LEO Louth situated in the County Council Offices in Dundalk.

IDA Ireland Staff

633. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the position regarding a vacant post for an IDA regional manager for the Border area; the length of time the post has been vacant to date; the salary details for the position; if she will prioritise filling the vacancy in view of the significant Brexit-related business risks for the Border region and the major role a regional manager would play in securing increased foreign direct investment for the Border counties; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1337/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I am informed by IDA Ireland that the Agency currently has no vacancies for Regional Manager positions.

IDA Ireland’s Regional Manager for the Border region is Mr. John Nugent, who is based in the Agency’s Sligo office and has been in place for a number of years.

Work Permits Applications

634. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the position regarding an application for a sport and cultural employment permit (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1450/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): An application for a Sport and Cultural Employment Permit for the person referred to by the Deputy (details above) was received on 22 December 2017. The Employment Permits section of my Department is currently processing standard applications received on 13 November 2017 and I am informed that this application should be processed within the next 5 weeks.

IDA Ireland Data

635. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the properties owned by the IDA in County Laois; and the location of each. [1452/18]

637. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of IDA visits to County Laois in 2017. [1482/18]

638. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of jobs created by the IDA in County Laois in 2017. [1484/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 635, 637 and 638 together.

IDA Ireland remains focused on attracting job-rich foreign direct investment (FDI) to all regions of Ireland, including County Laois. The Agency continues to work towards its goal, set out in its current strategy, of increasing investment in every region by 30%-40% by 2019.

Laois is marketed by IDA as part of the Midlands Region, which also comprises counties Westmeath, Offaly and Longford. There are 34 multinational companies based in the Midlands - two of which are in Laois - employing a total 4,327 people. In 2017, a total of 119 people were employed in IDA client companies in Laois, representing a slight increase on the 2016 total of 115.

Site visits represent one tool through which the IDA has sought to encourage more investment in Laois. There were two such visits to the County in the first nine months of 2017. Details on the total number of site visits in 2017 will be available in February 2018.

The availability of property solutions for prospective investors remains important in helping to attract FDI to a particular region or County. In respect of Laois, the IDA has developed an 18-hectare Business and Technology Park in Portlaoise, at a cost of €3.2 Million. This Business Park is suitable for a range of clients and is being actively marketed by the Agency to potential investors.

Enterprise Ireland

636. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of jobs created by Enterprise Ireland in County Laois in 2017. [1475/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department, through its agency Enterprise Ireland, is committed to supporting Irish businesses to grow, innovate and perform strongly in global markets.

Earlier this month Enterprise Ireland presented its End of Year Statement. This showed strong performance by the agency, particularly in the area of job growth. Especially notable was the fact that all counties experienced net growth. Laois in particular saw a net employment increase of 8%, which is higher than the national average of 5%. 168 jobs were created by Enterprise Ireland in Laois throughout the course of 2017, giving a net gain figure of 109 when job losses are considered. This takes the number of Enterprise Ireland supported jobs in the county to 1,473.

Enterprise Ireland recognises the importance of strengthening employment throughout the country. Its Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) has had one call to date, and is focused on supporting major new collaborative and innovative initiatives that have the potential to make a significant impact on enterprise development in the regions, sustain and increase employment at a national, regional and county level.

In December I announced the 21 successful companies under the REDF that were granted a combined €30.5 million. One of the projects granted funding is based in Laois. Call two of this fund will be announced in March, and I am confident that we will see a similar level of engagement throughout the country.

2017 was a good year for regional job growth in Ireland, with 65% of jobs created by Enterprise Ireland being located outside Dublin. It is important, however, not to become complacent

and it is with this in mind that Enterprise Ireland will continue to implement its wider strategy contained in its Build Scale, Expand Reach 2017-2020 report, which includes aims such as:

- Assisting clients to create 60,000 new jobs by 2020 while sustaining the existing record level of jobs;
- Growing the annual exports of client companies by €5bn to €26bn per annum;
- Increasing the level of spend made by client companies in the Irish economy by €4bn to €27bn per annum by 2020; and
- Inspiring more Irish owned companies to have global ambition.

Questions Nos. 637 and 638 answered with Question No. 635.

Enterprise Ireland Funding

639. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount of moneys Enterprise Ireland has provided by way of either funding, as a contribution to Irish venture capital sector investments, seed and venture capital schemes, private equity funds and development capital fund schemes, or investment, as direct equity investments, early stage direct equity investments and so on, to start-up micro-breweries and-or distillery businesses here for 2015, 2016 and 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1496/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Enterprise Ireland supports companies, including micro-breweries and distilleries, in urban and rural areas to start, innovate and remain competitive in international markets. According to Bord Bia's 2017 Economic Impact Statement on Irish Craft Beer, the Irish craft beer sector is performing well across all fronts, from the number of production facilities to production output, market share and exports. The number of craft breweries in Ireland has grown by more than 500% in the last five years, with seventy two now in operation, up from just fifteen in 2012. Nationally, employment in these facilities exceeded 500 for the first time ever, increasing employment in local and rural communities.

In the period 2015 to 2017, Enterprise Ireland supported 16 micro-breweries and distilleries with the following grant and equity investment:

Year	Grant Payments	Equity Investment
2015	€241,750	€435,000
2016	€335,599	€330,000
2017	€116,048	€240,000

In addition, the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) approved funding of €2.12m to 93 craft brewery or distillery projects between 2015 and 2017 through their priming, business expansion and feasibility grants, the LEO Innovation Investment Fund and the Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE) competition.

Legislative Programme

640. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the projects undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation, including the cost, the duration, the number of staff required and if this process was carried out by her Department

or outsourced in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [1558/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Details of the projects undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate legislation in the period in question are set out in the following table.

Project	Cost	Date/Duration	Number of Staff Involved	Outsourced Yes/No
Unofficial consolidation of the Patents Act, 1992.	Staff time spent on producing the consolidations has not been costed.	Unofficial consolidations were produced in 2012, 2014, 2015 and 2017 as a consequence of amendments to the Act	2	No
Unofficial consolidation of the Trade Marks Act 1996.	Staff time spent on producing the consolidations has not been costed.	Unofficial consolidations were produced in 2007, 2014 and 2016 as a consequence of amendments to the 1996 Act	2	No
Unofficial consolidation of the Trade Marks Rules 1996.	Staff time spent on producing the consolidations has not been costed.	Unofficial consolidations were produced in 2007, 2010, 2012, 2015 and 2016 as a consequence of amendments to 1996 Rules	2	No
Unofficial consolidation of the Patents Rules 1996.	Staff time spent on producing the consolidations has not been costed.	Unofficial consolidations were produced in 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2016 and 2017 as a consequence of amendments to 1996 Rules	2	No

Project	Cost	Date/Duration	Number of Staff Involved	Outsourced Yes/No
Unofficial consolidation of the Copyright and Related Rights Act, 2000	Staff time spent on producing the consolidations has not been costed.	Unofficial consolidations were produced in 2007, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2016 as a consequence of amendments to the 2000 Act.	2	No
Consolidation and reform of company law culminating in the Companies Act 2014.	It is not possible to estimate the staff cost accurately as varying numbers of staff worked on the project over its duration, and the project was not their sole function.	2000-2014	It is not possible to give a definite figure. The Companies Act 2014 is the largest Act in the history of the State and was a long-term project. The Bill was advanced by a team within the Company Law Unit of the Department with input, as appropriate, from other company law staff as well as the Department's company law bodies. Formal drafting of the Bill was undertaken by the Office of Parliamentary Counsel.	No
Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2014	Staff time spent dealing with this piece of legislation (in addition to performing other duties).	2008-2014	Approximately 4 on this project (in addition to performing other duties).	No

Construction Industry

641. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innova-

tion her views on a report (details supplied) which states that up to 80,000 additional construction workers are required up to 2020; the measures her Department is taking in that regard; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1643/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, I am aware of the challenges that we face in meeting the demand for construction workers. My Department works in conjunction with the Department of Education and Skills in developing the policies and interventions to address the skills needs of the economy but primary policy responsibility for this area rests with the Department of Education and Skills. For its part, my Department has consistently shown its commitment to meeting the requirements of the sector through our regular focus on construction needs in the Action Plan for Jobs.

The Department of Education and Skills have developed a number of apprenticeship and traineeship programmes spanning a wide range of both skills and sectors. They are developed in response to identified needs in the economy. In relation to the construction industry, two new apprenticeships have been approved for development this year in the areas of quantity surveying and scaffolding. The addition of these new apprenticeships will add to the suite of construction apprenticeships already in existence in the areas of brick and stonelaying; carpentry and joinery; painting and decorating; plastering; plumbing; stonecutting and stonemasonry; and wood manufacturing and finishing.

Springboard also provides courses to allow those both in the labour market and on the live register to upskill in areas where there are employment opportunities in the economy. All Springboard courses lead to qualifications in enterprise sectors which are growing and need skilled personnel. As a result of the current and future demand for construction jobs in the economy, Springboard offers courses including a MSc in Quantity Surveying and Postgraduate certificates in BIM technologies. A call for further proposals for Springboard 2018 is scheduled to be issued by the HEA in January 2018.

State Bodies Data

642. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of staff requests by each State agency under the remit of her Department in each of the years 2014 to 2017, in tabular form; the number of staff subsequently hired in each year in this period in each State agency under the remit of her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1648/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): In 2015 my Department received delegated sanction, which remains in place, from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The sanction delegates to my Department the management of its, and its Agencies, pay and staff allocation (up to Principal Officer standard) within an overall pay budget.

The number of staff in each of the Agencies under my Department's remit from 2014 to 2017 is listed in the document that follows. The document also includes the number of staff requested, and the number of staff hired, within the period 2014 to the end of 2017.

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission

Year	No. of Staff at 1 January	No. staff requested	No. subsequently hired
2014	84.5 FTE	3	0
2015	83.5 FTE	26	9
2016	83.6 FTE	14	32
2017	82.9 FTE	6	29

Enterprise Ireland

Year	No. of Staff at 1 January	No. staff requested	No. subsequently hired *
2014	648.5	21	28
2015	631	19	21
2016	563	39	43
2017	564	18	74

* The figures include all staff hired in Ireland & overseas excluding those hired in the Enterprise Ireland two-year Graduate Programme. The numbers provided are gross figures and do not take account of leavers in the same period. All staff hired are within EI approved headcount for Ireland based and overseas based staff.

Health and Safety Authority

Year	No. of Staff at 1 January	No. staff requested	No. subsequently hired
2014	162.4	4	1
2015	167.1	4	3
2016	166.2	12	6
2017	158.6	10	16

Science Foundation Ireland

Year	No. of Staff at 1 January	No. staff requested	No. subsequently hired
2014	49	1	2
2015	49	3	3
2016	49	21	5
2017	47	23	16

IDA Ireland

Year	No. of Staff at 1 January	No. staff requested	No. subsequently hired *
2014	282	19 + 35* 'Winning Abroad' *fixed term contracts for 3 years	19 + 35
2015	262	38	38
2016	265	595 (graduates on rolling 3-year fixed term contracts)	48 5 approved and hired during 2017

Questions - Written Answers

Year	No. of Staff at 1 January	No. staff requested	No. subsequently hired *
2017	268	255 (graduates on rolling 3 year fixed term contracts)	25

*hired staff may also relate to replacing staff as opposed to increasing the staff complement.

Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority

Year	No. of Staff at 1 January	No. staff requested	No. subsequently hired
2014	13	11	0
2015	13	1	5
2016	17	17	4
2017	20	0	7

National Standards Authority of Ireland

Year	No. of Staff at 1 January	No. staff requested	No. subsequently hired
2014	132	1	1
2015	133	8	2
2016	130	3	7
2017	129	9	15

Personal Injuries Assessment Board

Year	No. of Staff at 1 January	No. staff requested	No. subsequently hired
2014	67	13	0
2015	67	13	2
2016	66	14	16
2017	80	17 *	17

* Includes sanction for 2 staff who are on secondment from PIAB to the Personal Injuries Commission.

IDA Ireland Data

643. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount of capital investment or grant assistance towards capital works by IDA Ireland by location in the Dublin region in each of the years 2014 to 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1649/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The following table provides a breakdown of grant aid provided by IDA Ireland to client companies in Dublin between 2014 and 2016. Details of grants paid in 2017 will be available in the coming weeks.

It is important to note that grants paid in a particular year are not necessarily linked to either the investments won or the jobs created in that 12-month period. Grants are generally drawn down over the lifetime of a project which is normally over a period of three to five years.

County	2014	2015	2016
Dublin	€19,952,938	€19,826,741	€20,136,706

Jobs Protection

644. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the steps she has taken to avoid a threat to a company's (details supplied) operations in Waterford and Dundalk in view of the recent media reports. [1702/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I am aware that the company in question has announced plans to restructure its global operations. I understand, however, that this process is still ongoing. The potential impact, if any, on the company's Irish operations is therefore still unclear.

I want to emphasise that as soon as details emerged about this planned restructuring, I asked IDA Ireland to engage with the company to help secure the best possible outcome for their workers in Ireland. The Agency has been in regular contact with the firm's management since and it will continue to work with the company to safeguard its continued presence in the State.

Job Creation

645. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of submissions that have been made to the regional jobs strategy; and when this strategy is expected to be published. [1766/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Government is pursuing and preparing a number of complementary strategies which help promote job retention and creation across the regions. For example, since its launch in January 2015, the Regional Action Plan for Jobs (RAPJ) process - coordinated by my Department - is focused on ensuring that all regions of the country can fulfil their enterprise and job creation potential and contribute optimally to national economic performance. The Regional APJs are a central pillar of the Government's ambition to create 200,000 jobs by 2020, with 135,000 of these located outside of Dublin. Regional employment has grown strongly and four out of five jobs created last year were outside Dublin. Over the same period, employment grew faster in the regions (2.8%) than in Dublin (1.5%).

In this context, my Department played a key role in developing the strategies in the first instance. A key strength of the RAPJs process is its 'ground - up' approach. Each Action Plan was developed following extensive consultation, including well attended regional stakeholder fora, where members of the public, private, and voluntary sectors, in addition to relevant Government departments and bodies were able to actively engage. Involvement of regional partners from both the private and public sector has fostered strong buy-in, a sense of ownership and a strong momentum.

Looking forward, the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government has prepared a draft National Planning Framework (NPF), the long-term, twenty-year strategy for the spatial development of Ireland. The draft was published for consultation in September last.

There is a strong interdependence between the planning and development of an attractive environment and enterprise development. The concept of 'Place-Making' is a core tenet of

Enterprise 2025 - our national enterprise policy statement to 2025. My Department, at official level, is a member of the Inter-Departmental NPF Steering Committee and the NPF's Econometric and Demographics Working Group. The NPF has also been the subject of discussions at the Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure, Environment and Climate Action, of which I am a member.

My Department will contribute to the proposed new Regional and Spatial Economic Strategies (RSEs) being led by the three Regional Assemblies, based on Enterprise 2025 - and officials will be key members of the proposed Senior Advisory Bodies being put in place. My Department contributes in relation to the role of enterprise, the need to cater to the differing development potential and requirements across regions to optimise potential for growth, the importance of economic infrastructure to support economic development, and the combinations of infrastructure and factors that shape the potential of each region.

Departmental Staff Data

646. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the proportion of employees in her Department or in organisations under its remit who are registered disabled. [1850/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The latest disability information relates to the end of 2016. Information relating to 2017 is currently being gathered and will be submitted to the relevant Monitoring Committee by the 31st March 2017 as required by the Disability Act 2005. The 2016 information for my Department (which was then called the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation) and its Agencies is listed in the following table.

Name of Public Body	Total Number Of Employees	Number of employees with disabilities under the definition in the Disability Act 2005	Percentage of employees with a disability
Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation	854	44	5.15%
Enterprise Ireland	587	20	3.41%
The Health & Safety Authority	167	6	3.59%
IDA Ireland	307	18	5.86%
NSAI	133	5	3.76%
Personal Injuries Assessment Board	80	1	1.25%
Science Foundation Ireland	48	2	4.17%
Competition and Consumer Protection Commission	88	4	4.55%
IntertradeIreland	38	1	2.63%

Job Creation

647. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if her attention has been drawn to the fact that County Sligo has for the past three years been the county with the largest percentage of empty retail and commercial units in the country and that this percentage has grown in 2018 despite the improving economic circumstances nationwide; if her attention has been further drawn to the fact that according to the Western Development Commission, County Sligo has had the lowest rate of job creation in the country since 2012; her views on whether her Department's Action Plan for Jobs in its current format is delivering for persons in County Sligo and its environs; if there will be an investigation by her Department as to the reason County Sligo has not been better supported to recover from the downturn; her further views on whether a change of approach is needed for the north-west region in this regard; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1914/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): In relation to the first point, the Deputy may be referring to data presented in the GeoView publication, the latest edition of which was published in the second half of 2017, and which notes Sligo's position relative to other counties in relation to commercial vacancy rates. The same publication also notes that all but two counties experienced a year on year rise in commercial vacancy rates to Q2 2017. Addressing town centre renewal is an important factor in sustaining the attractiveness of urban centres as places not only to live in, but to work in, do business in and invest in. My Department is supporting retail and town centre renewal through the Retail Consultation Forum. The 'Framework for Town Centre Renewal' was developed in 2017 by a Working Group of this Forum, setting out a practical step by step action plan for stakeholders to work collaboratively to enhance their local town or village, and encouraging towns and villages to establish a digital platform in response to the changing retail environment. It has also served as a support document for towns and villages applying for funding under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

I am aware of the Western Development Commission's publication on the Western Region's Labour Market which findings were based on the 2011 and 2016 censuses.

I expect to shortly publish Action Plan for Jobs 2018, following an intensive consultation process. This is the eighth such Plan at the national level since its commencement in 2012, which has over that time maintained a strong emphasis on stimulating regional growth.

It is important to acknowledge that while jobs are growing right across the country some regions are growing faster than others. That is why to complement actions at the national level, the Government launched the Regional Action Plan for Jobs in 2015. The Regional Action Plan for Jobs initiative is a central pillar of the Government's national ambition to create 200,000 new jobs by 2020, 135,000 of which are outside of Dublin. A key objective of each of the plans is to have a further 10 to 15 percent at work in each region by 2020, with the unemployment rate of each region not exceeding one percentage point above the national average.

Each Regional Action Plan includes a series of practical actions to support enterprise growth and job creation in the region, within clear timelines for delivery. The Plans seek to build on the particular strengths and opportunities of each region and have been developed by my Department in close consultation with regional stakeholders from the public and private sectors. The Plans champion the concept of regional collaboration to achieve competitive advantage in each of the regions.

Of course, the Regional Action Plans on their own will not solve everything; they are complemented by other programmes that the Government is working on at national level, including

the Action Plan for Rural Development, the Action Plan for Housing, the National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies as well as skills strategies and infra-structural projects.

Co. Sligo is part of the North East/North West Regional Action Plan for Jobs. This Plan is the key policy response for supporting employment growth in the Border region, with public and private stakeholders actively engaged. Sectors targeted as part of the plan include traditionally strong sectors for the region like agri-food, manufacturing/engineering and tourism. The core objective of the Plan is to see a further 28,000 at work in the region by 2020 and to reduce the unemployment rate to within 1 percentage point of the State average.

There has been a substantial improvement in the North East/North West region since the commencement of the National Action Plan for Jobs in 2012, with an additional 22,200 in employment in Q2 2017 compared to Q1 2012. There are now 6,000 more people in work in the region since the launch of the Regional Action Plan initiative in early 2015. Moreover, latest CSO figures show that the unemployment rate in the region has fallen from 10.2% in Q1 2015 to 6.6% in Q2 2017, compared to the then national rate of 6.4%.

The latest CSO figures show that there were 3,362 people on the Live Register in County Sligo in December 2017. This figure represents a decrease of 12.7%, or 492 individuals, over the previous 12 months. This reduction is to be welcomed and demonstrates that while there are still challenges to surmount in bringing down this figure further, the overall trend for County Sligo is one of steady improvement.

Progress Reports on the implementation of the Regional Action Plans across all regions show that good progress has been made in implementing the actions. Published reports are available on www.regionalapj.ie. The Plans have also helped to facilitate a strong foundation of collaboration among the enterprise champions, local authorities, enterprise agencies and other key stakeholders involved in the regions. My Department continues to work closely with the Regional Action Plan Implementation Committees in relation to the direction of the initiative to 2020.

This Government is conscious that ambitious regional targets must be properly resourced under the Regional Action Plans. To this end, additional funds to support regional employment are being made available through the enterprise agencies on a rolling basis out to 2020.

In June 2016 an initial allocation of €5m for 48 local and regional initiatives under two of these calls was announced: the LEO Competitive Fund and the Community Enterprise Initiative. All regions benefitted under this initiative.

On 11 December last, I announced the results of the first call under Enterprise Ireland's €60 million Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF). This Fund is supporting the ambition, goals and implementation of the Regional Action Plans for Jobs through enabling the development and implementation of collaborative and innovative projects that can sustain and add to employment at a national, regional and county level. Twenty-one successful applicants representing all regions of the country have secured up to €30.5m for their projects in the first call. Over €5m has been approved for the Northern and Western region, subject to grant conditions. The second call under this Scheme will fund projects from the remaining balance of the €60m budget available and will be announced in Q1 this year. In order to ensure a balanced regional spread, Enterprise Ireland has targeted a minimum of €2m to be allocated for the best ranked project/s from each region across the entirety of the €60 million fund.

An additional €150m is also being made available to the IDA to support its Regional Property Programme and drive job creation in the multi-national sector. The agency has received

over €90 million of this to date. This programme includes the construction of nine new advance facilities around the country which will help draw more multinational companies to regional areas. So far, IDA has successfully secured tenants for the first buildings completed under its Regional property investment programme, one of which is in Sligo.

The enterprise agencies are working very hard towards the Government's ambitious job creation targets at national and regional level.

Under IDA Ireland's strategy "Winning - Foreign Direct Investment 2015, the Agency is targeting the creation of 80,000 new jobs and 900 new investments over this period. The Agency is also aiming to increase the level of investment by between 30% and 40% in each region. Since the launch of the Strategy, half of all jobs created by IDA client Companies have been based outside of Dublin. County Sligo currently has 23 IDA client companies supporting almost 2,200 jobs.

Enterprise Ireland recognises the need for the development of sustainable, quality jobs throughout the country – especially in areas that have had historically low job creation. Progress is being made in this regard. I was pleased to see that when Enterprise Ireland announced its End of Year Statement for 2017 earlier this month, all counties had experienced growth. Sligo performed particularly well in 2017, with Enterprise Ireland supported client companies registering an employment increase of 11%. This made Sligo the second best performing county in the country, coming second only to Leitrim at 12%. Sligo's performance in 2017 is also higher than the North-West regional average of 7%.

Enterprise Ireland is committed to developing employment growth – a fact reflected in the fact that 65% of jobs created by the agency in 2017 were outside Dublin. Enterprise Ireland will continue to work with its client companies to further support and develop employment throughout Ireland during 2018.

I would also like to draw your attention to the work of the Sligo Local Enterprise Office, which offers a wide range of business supports to entrepreneurs, early stage promoters, start-ups and small businesses in the Sligo area. In the three years from 2014 to 2016, a total of 487 jobs were created by companies supported by LEO Sligo. Feasibility, priming and business expansion grants totalling €1.1m were approved for 77 projects during this period, while 80 grants were issued to micro-enterprises in the County under the Trading Online Voucher Scheme.

It is the cumulative effect of all of these activities - and the collaboration which they will bring about in their delivery - which will make a real and lasting impact on the jobs potential of Sligo and the wider North-West.

IDA Ireland Site Visits

648. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of IDA site visits to counties Sligo and Leitrim since 2012 and to date in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1922/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The following table provides details on IDA Ireland site visits to Sligo and Leitrim for the period 2012 to September 2017. Full year figures for 2017 will be available next month.

The IDA continues to do its utmost to encourage clients to locate in regional areas, including counties Sligo and Leitrim. We have to remember, however, that the ultimate decision as to where to invest is always taken by the company itself. It is also important to note that site

visit activity does not necessarily reflect investment potential, as at least 70% of all new foreign direct investment comes from existing client companies of the Agency.

County	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Q1-Q3 2017
Leitrim	0	1	2	8	8	3
Sligo	6	10	7	15	20	12

Trade Missions

649. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her plans to have a trade mission to Spain; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1996/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Enterprise Ireland (EI) has an office located in the Spanish capital of Madrid which offers a large network of contacts and support across various sectors for EI client companies. In that regard, EI is playing a key role in supporting companies seeking out opportunities in Spain across a range of sectors including in telecoms and pharmaceuticals.

The value of EI client company exports to Spain reached €326 million in 2016 with over 350 EI client companies reporting exports to Spain in 2016.

EI has an established process for working with companies as they identify opportunities and begin to enter new markets. EI's overseas structure through its network of 33 overseas offices and its extended Pathfinder (Trade Consultant) network has the capability of providing client companies with the appropriate support in markets where there are identified opportunities matched by client capability and client demand. The activities of the overseas network are supported by the Market Research Centre and Strategic Marketing Unit based in Dublin along with a range of financial and capability development supports aimed at helping client companies to compete and win sales in overseas markets.

To support the internationalisation activity of companies based in Ireland, EI offers a programme of trade missions, trade fairs and knowledge events giving companies the opportunity to connect with existing and new customers, to access key decision makers, to increase sales in international markets and to exchange ideas.

In general, proposals for Ministerial led trade missions and events are developed on the basis of priority markets and specific sectoral interests of EI client companies. In 2017, EI ran 57 ministerial led trade events. Insofar as 2018 is concerned, the programme of ministerial-led trade missions and events is currently in the process of being finalised and I will ask my officials and agencies to include consideration of a formal Trade Mission to Spain to augment the ongoing engagements and activities in that market over the course of 2018.

Health and Safety Authority

650. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her plans to resolve the situation which has arisen with the HSA and the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council to ensure that all qualified first aid response course instructors here are recognised for workplace training and are permitted to advertise their courses in order to ensure fairness to all involved. [2066/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen): Neither the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation nor the Health and Safety Authority have imposed any restrictions on either occupational first aid instructors or on health and safety training organisations in relation to the advertising of occupational first aid courses.

As the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council is an organisation under the aegis of the Department of Health and Children, I am not in a position to comment on that organisation. The Deputy may wish to address his concerns to my colleague the Minister for Health in that regard.

Departmental Communications

651. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if her Department uses anti-profanity software on its email systems and online contact forms; if so, the level of human oversight that is applied to the monitoring of this software and its effectiveness; her views on whether persons' legitimate right to petition Government may be blocked unintentionally by errors in the use of such software in determining that which qualifies as profanity being communicated in email and-or online contact forms; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2079/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I can confirm that my Department does not use any anti-profanity software on its email systems or online contact forms. Past experience indicates that there are occasions when legitimate email correspondence may contain profanities, and attempting to filter such material would block this correspondence.

Departmental Strategies

652. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the Government's initiatives in her Department in 2017 that promoted State services or welfare payments, public awareness of regulatory changes and public consultations that involved advertising and promotion on television, radio, newspapers and online, in tabular form; and the level of expenditure for each such initiative. [2256/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): In the time available, it has not been possible to provide the information requested. I will provide this to the Deputy once it is available.

Eating Disorders

653. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the number of young children and teenagers ruled to have died in the past five years as a result of eating disorders. [54438/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Services for People with Disabilities

654. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Health if there is a permanent speech and language therapist in place in the schools for the deaf in Dublin; and the reason a school (details supplied) does not have a permanent speech and language therapist. [54440/17]

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.

Medicinal Products Prices

655. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health if persons (details supplied) in County Kildare are paying on the double for their weekly medication. [54483/17]

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.

General Medical Services Scheme Data

656. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Health if there is a cap on the number of patients per general practitioner within the general medical services scheme; if so, the cap; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54660/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the terms of the General Medical Services and GP Visit Card contracts, the number of persons who hold a medical card or GP visit card on a GP's patient panel may not exceed 2,000, except in exceptional circumstances.

Under the terms of the contract for the provision of services to children under six years of age, the aggregate number patients under six and all other patients who hold a medical card or GP visit card on a GP's patient panel may not exceed 2,200, except in exceptional circumstances.

General Medical Services Scheme Data

657. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Health the number of doctors leaving the general medical services scheme from 2012 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54661/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to a service matter,

I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

General Medical Services Scheme Administration

658. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Health the reason the GMS panel is frozen when a doctor retires or resigns from the GMS scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54662/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to a service matter, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Health Services

659. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the unwinding of the FEMPI cuts imposed on employees of section 39 organisations; the progress being made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54800/17]

660. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if funding will be made available to his Department and the HSE to ensure that the section 39 pay restoration will take place in compliance with the Labour Court ruling in the case taken by an association (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55155/17]

717. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the cost of restoring section 39 grants to pre-2008 levels in order to account for pay restoration in section 39 organisations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54570/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 659, 660 and 717 together.

Whilst it is understood that pay cuts were implemented in many section 39 organisations, it is not clear if these cuts were applied in a universally consistent manner across all section 39 agencies. So while staff may have been subject to cuts, it is not known if the cuts were to the same extent as those applied to public servants. There are significant cost implications to be considered. Also, staff in these organisations are not public servants and, as such, are not entitled to the pay restoration provided for in the Public Service Agreements. Indeed, the issue of public servant status for the employees of such organisations is an issue which goes beyond the health sector with far reaching implications across the public sector as a whole.

However, I am continuing to engage with my colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, in an effort to find a way to address this complex situation.

Motorised Transport Grant Closure

661. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the progress to date in determining the appropriate scheme to replace the mobility allowance and motorised transport grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2148/18]

662. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health when a replacement for the mobility allowance and motorised transport grant will be announced; the potential criteria for the new scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54304/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 661 and 662 together.

I was pleased to have the opportunity to discuss the proposed Health (Transport Support) Bill with the Joint Committee on Public Petitions on Wednesday 11 October. The Deputy will be familiar with the background to the closure of both the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grant schemes in February 2013. Since the closure of the Mobility Allowance, the Government has directed that the Health Service Executive should continue to pay an equivalent monthly payment of up to €208.50 per month to the 4, 133 people in receipt of the Mobility Allowance, on an interim basis, pending the establishment of a new Transport Support Scheme.

The Government decided that the detailed preparatory work required for a new Transport Support Scheme and associated statutory provisions should be progressed by the Minister for Health. The Programme for a Partnership Government acknowledges the ongoing drafting of primary legislation for a new Transport Support Scheme to assist those with a disability to meet their mobility costs. I can confirm that work on the policy proposals for the new Scheme is at an advanced stage. The proposals seek to ensure that:

- There is a firm statutory basis to the Scheme's operation;
- There is transparency and equity in the eligibility criteria attaching to the Scheme;
- Resources are targeted at those with greatest needs; and
- The Scheme is capable of being costed and is affordable on its introduction and on an ongoing basis.

The draft General Scheme and Heads of Bill were circulated to other government Departments and have been the subject of consultation between the Department of Health and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. When the consultation with other relevant Departments has been completed, the next step will be to seek Government approval to the drafting of a Bill for the new Scheme.

It is important to note that the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers scheme operated by the Revenue Commissioners, remains in place. This scheme provides VRT and VAT relief, an exemption from road tax and a fuel grant to drivers and passengers with a disability, who qualify under the relevant criteria set out in governing regulations made by the Minister for Finance.

Specifically adapted vehicles driven by disabled persons are also exempt from payment of tolls on national toll roads and toll bridges. Transport Infrastructure Ireland has responsibility for this particular Scheme.

Departmental Funding

663. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health if an organisation (details supplied) has received funding from his Department or the HSE directly or indirectly for the provision of information technology services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54313/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The organisation in question has not received any ICT Capital funding from my Department. I have arranged for the HSE to respond on their behalf directly to the Deputy regarding this matter.

Ambulance Service Funding

664. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health if funding will be provided and ring-fenced to provide an ambulance base and staff in the north Connemara area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54314/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Hospital Appointments Status

665. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health if the case of a person (details supplied) will be examined and the issues raised progressed. [54315/17]

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 Facilities

666. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health the process for the tendering of a shop at Our Lady's Children's Hospital (details supplied); and when it went out for tender. [54316/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly.

Hospital Waiting Lists

667. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health if an operation for a person (details supplied) will be scheduled as a matter of urgency. [54321/17]

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 Reform

668. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health if a person has been appointed to head the implementation office of Sláintecare; if not, when the advertisement will be placed; the timeframe for the recruitment process to be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54327/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department is seeking to appoint an exceptional candidate to lead the Sláintecare programme of reform of the health service in Ireland as soon as possible. The process for appointing the Executive Director of the Sláintecare programme office has commenced, with the advertisement of the position by the Public Appointments Service on Friday 12 January 2018. As part of the recruitment process, a broad and comprehensive executive search is also being undertaken. The closing date for receipt of applications by the Public Appointments Service is 1 February 2018 and it is expected that a recommendation on the person to be appointed will be made to my Department before April 2018.

Health Services Staff Data

669. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health the number of assaults that have been recorded against front-line staff, including nurses, doctors, social workers, ambulance staff and other health professionals, in each of the past five years by geographical location and profession; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54329/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Health Services Staff Data

670. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health the number of work days that have been lost as a result of assaults on staff in health care employments; the cost to the Exchequer of such enforced absences from work; the number of staff who have not returned to duties as a result in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54330/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Cross-Border Health Services Provision

671. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health the estimated effect the UK's exit from the European Union will have on the operation of the Cross Border directive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54341/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The European Commission Taskforce, led by Chief Negotiator, Michel Barnier, represents the EU27 in the Article 50 negotiations with the UK. These negotiations are proceeding on the basis of the phased approach set out in the European Council Guidelines of 29 April 2017, which foresaw that discussions on the future EU-UK relationship would get underway as soon as sufficient progress was made on the EU's key priorities under the withdrawal process – notably citizens' rights, the UK's financial settlement and the Irish specific issues.

The Government welcomes the decision of the European Council on 15 December 2018 that sufficient progress has been made in phase one of the Article 50 negotiations. This was a very important step in the negotiations, not least because it allows for discussions on the framework for the future relationship to begin.

There is no question that Brexit poses very significant and serious challenges to Ireland's economy and trade, as well as across a range of other sectors, including healthcare. As a committed member of the EU, Ireland has engaged fully in the negotiations, as part of the EU27 team and will continue to do so in phase two, where our approach will be to work towards ensuring that the future EU-UK relationship will be as close to the current arrangements as possible.

In this regard, Ireland's approach to phase two of the negotiations will continue to be informed by the detailed sectoral work being done by individual Departments, including the Department of Health. To that end, my Department is actively engaging through the cross-Departmental coordination structures chaired by the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade with a view to informing the Government's overall response to Brexit, including its priorities for the next phase of the Article 50 negotiations.

The Department of Health and its agencies have been conducting detailed analysis on the impacts of Brexit in the area of Health, including the Cross Border Directive. A number of issues are being examined and contingency planning for a range of eventualities is being conducted. 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.

Cross-Border Health Services Provision

672. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health the discussions that have taken place between the Government, the EU and the UK Government regarding the future operation of the Cross Border directive after Brexit; the outcome of such discussions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54342/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The European Commission Taskforce, led by Chief Negotiator, Michel Barnier, represents the EU27 in the Article 50 negotiations with the UK. These negotiations are proceeding on the basis of the phased approach set out in the European Council Guidelines of 29 April 2017, which foresaw that discussions on the future EU-UK relationship would get underway as soon as sufficient progress was made on the EU's key priorities under the withdrawal process – notably citizens' rights, the UK's financial settle-

ment and the Irish specific issues.

The Government welcomes the decision of the European Council on 15 December 2018 that sufficient progress has been made in phase one of the Article 50 negotiations. This was a very important step in the negotiations, not least because it allows for discussions on the framework for the future relationship to begin.

There is no question that Brexit poses very significant and serious challenges to Ireland's economy and trade, as well as across a range of other sectors, including healthcare. As a committed member of the EU, Ireland has engaged fully in the negotiations, as part of the EU27 team and will continue to do so in phase two, where our approach will be to work towards ensuring that the future EU-UK relationship will be as close to the current arrangements as possible.

In this regard, Ireland's approach to phase two of the negotiations will continue to be informed by the detailed sectoral work being done by individual Departments, including the Department of Health. In this regard, my Department is actively engaging through the cross-Departmental coordination structures chaired by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade with a view to informing the Government's overall response to Brexit, including its priorities for the next phase of the Article 50 negotiations.

Cross-Border Health Services Provision

673. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons who have received treatment under the Cross Border directive in Northern Ireland, the rest of the UK and other countries each year since its introduction, by procedure or treatment carried out; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54343/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the HSE has responsibility for the administration of the Cross Border Directive, I have asked the HSE to examine the issue raised and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Physiotherapy Provision

674. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health if he will request the HSE to provide physiotherapy services to a person (details supplied) following their discharge from hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54349/17]

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.

Medical Card Applications

675. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal will have a medical card application processed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54350/17]

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 Data

676. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of elective surgeries that have been cancelled or rescheduled from December 2016 to date in each CHO, in tabular form. [54361/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Having sought clarification from the Deputy's office, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

677. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of elective procedures and surgeries cancelled at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda from December 2016 to date. [54362/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I fully acknowledge the distress and inconvenience for patients and their families when elective procedures are cancelled.

Maintaining scheduled care access for all patients is a key priority for hospitals, and balancing this with emergency demand at times is challenging. However, all efforts are made by hospitals to limit cancellations particularly for clinically urgent procedures.

Cancellation of elective procedures can occur for a variety of exceptional reasons including cancellations because a bed or the clinical team are not available, cancellations by the patient or because the patient may not be fit for surgery at the time.

Based on data provided by the NTPF, collated from reports by hospitals, approximately 3,400 elective procedures, on average, are cancelled per month. However, this must be seen in context. The most recent data available shows that for 2016, typically in a month, there were approximately 53,000 admissions to acute hospitals on a daycase and an inpatient basis.

It is essential that hospitals continue to improve how they manage, and balance, the demand for emergency care with the planning of elective procedures, to minimise the impact on patients. In addition, the HSE continues to improve its processes to minimise the number of sessions lost when patients cancel or do not attend for their procedures.

In response to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

678. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the inpatient and outpatient waiting times across all specialities at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda from December 2016 to date. [54363/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The NTPF publishes the Inpatient/Daycase and Outpatient waiting list figures by specialty for each hospital on its website each month. This information is available at www.NTPF.ie. The most recent figures published by the NTPF for the end of December 2017 indicate that there is a total of 829 people on the Inpatient/Day

case waiting list for Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda and a total of 12,737 people on the Outpatient waiting list for Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital.

National Maternity Hospital

679. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if the State will own the ground on which the new national maternity hospital is to be built; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54375/17]

680. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the status of negotiations regarding the construction of the new national maternity hospital; the parties involved in these negotiations; and if the new hospital building will remain in State ownership as stated in August 2017 (details supplied). [54376/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 679 and 680 together.

Following the grant of planning permission for the new National Maternity Hospital (NMH) on the St. Vincent's University Hospital campus, the Design Team is continuing to work on the detailed design of the hospital and the preparation of tender documents. However, before final tender documents issue, and construction of the new hospital commences, it will be necessary to secure agreement between the State, the NMH and St. Vincent's Healthcare Group (SVHG) in relation to the future operation of the new hospital. To this end a draft legal framework is currently being finalised which will *inter alia* ensure that the State's significant investment in the new hospital will be protected.

Industrial Relations

681. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a company (details supplied) that receives public contracts from his Department does not recognise trade unions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54383/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): The Department of Health has not contracted any services from the company referred to by the Deputy.

I have therefore referred the matter to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to him.

Primary Care Centres

682. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the range of health services and professional services that have been agreed for the new primary health care facility in Kilcock, County Kildare; the number of general practitioners that will operate in the facility; the out-of-hours general practitioner services that have been agreed; the commencement date for services in the facility; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54397/17]

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 Facilities

683. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if a resuscitation area has been developed in Cavan hospital emergency department in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54398/17]

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.

Medicinal Products

684. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health the status of the reimbursement of the drug otezla; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54399/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the community drug schemes, in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Waiting Lists

685. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if a reimbursement will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54400/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I acknowledge that waiting times are often unacceptably long and I am conscious of the impact of this on people's lives. Reducing waiting times for the longest waiting patients is one this Government's key priorities.

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.

Mental Health Services Provision

686. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if a follow-up assessment and treatment through CAMHS will be scheduled for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54403/17]

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

687. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be scheduled for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54404/17]

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 Appointments Status

688. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if a hospital appointment will be scheduled for a person (details supplied). [54405/17]

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 Appointments Status

689. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a hip operation for a person (detail supplied) will be expedited. [54408/17]

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.

Medical Card Expenditure

690. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the additional cost of allocating a medical card for all persons with disabilities who do not have a medical card. [54410/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In accordance with the provision of the Health Act 1970 (as amended), eligibility for a medical card is determined by the HSE. The Act obliges the HSE to assess whether a person is unable, without due hardship, to arrange general practitioner services for himself or herself and his or her family, having regard to his or her overall financial position and reasonable expenditure and every application must be assessed on that basis.

Under the legislation having a particular illness or disability in itself, does not establish eligibility for a medical card and therefore, the medical conditions of applicants for this scheme are not monitored on that basis. Where the applicant's income is within the income guidelines, a medical card or GP visit card will be awarded. If a person's only income is a means tested Social Welfare Allowance, for example, a Disability Allowance, he/she will qualify for a Medical Card.

In certain circumstances the HSE may exercise discretion and grant a medical card even though an application exceeds his or her income threshold where he or she faces difficult circumstances, such as extra costs arising from an illness or disability.

The Deputy may be aware of the *Report of the Expert Panel on Medical Need for Medical Card Eligibility*, which was published in 2014. It made a recommendation that a person's means should remain the main qualifier for a medical card and also recommended that it is neither feasible nor desirable to list conditions in priority order for medical card eligibility.

As stated in previous PQ responses, with regard to the cost of awarding a medical cards to all adults with disabilities, detailed financial analysis would need to be conducted in order to establish as accurately as possible the expected costs to the Exchequer and this information is not readily available to the HSE.

Health Services Staff Data

691. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health the number of community occu-

pational therapists operating in the County Kildare and west County Wicklow areas; the towns they cover; if there are vacancies; if so, the length of time the vacancies have existed; the steps being taken to secure therapists for the positions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54424/17]

692. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health the number of community physiotherapists operating in the County Kildare and west County Wicklow areas; the towns they cover; if there are vacancies; if so, the length of time the vacancies have existed; the steps being taken to secure therapists for the positions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54425/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 691 and 692 together.

As these questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for them to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

693. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that one tenth of the national waiting list for gastrointestinal endoscopy procedures is at Naas General Hospital; his views on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54427/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Waiting Lists

694. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be scheduled for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54434/17]

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 the Deputy directly.

Hospital Services

695. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the reason treatment was not offered to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54435/17]

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

Hospital Appointments Status

696. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); the timeframe for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54436/17]

801. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); the timeframe for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54900/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 696 and 801 together.

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 the Deputy directly.

Home Care Packages

697. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated additional cost of home care if home-care entitlements were put on a statutory footing. [54437/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Improving home-care services so that people can continue to live with confidence, dignity and security in their own homes for as long as possible is a key commitment of the Government. To support this, the Department of Health is currently engaged in the development of a new stand-alone statutory scheme for the financing and regulation of home-care. This will introduce clear rules in relation to the services for which individuals are eligible and in relation to service-allocation. It will therefore be an important step in ensuring that the system operates in a consistent and fair manner and will help to improve access to home-care services on an affordable and sustainable basis. The introduction of a system of regulation for home-care will help to ensure public confidence in the services provided.

The development of a new home care scheme is a complex undertaking which will involve significant legislative, operational and financial resources. A significant amount of detailed work remains to be undertaken before final decisions are taken on the form of a home care scheme and the regulation of these services. Work in relation to the cost of the new statutory scheme is ongoing as part of this process.

However, on the basis of current demand and demographic projections, it is likely that increased investment will be required to support the implementation of the new statutory scheme. The HSE home-care services budget for 2018 is €408 million, which it is anticipated will support the delivery of 17.094 million hours of home support to 50,500 people. It is expected that there will be a significant increase in demand for home-care over the coming years. Furthermore home-care service-users have increasingly complex care needs and there are sustained cost-pressures within the sector which are likely to inflate in the coming years.

Hospital Waiting Lists

698. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; the reason the surgery was cancelled by the consultant two years ago and never rescheduled; if this person will have to apply to Northern Ireland for surgery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54470/17]

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 the Deputy directly.

Hospital Waiting Lists

699. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied). [54485/17]

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 the Deputy directly.

Hospital Waiting Lists

700. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) has been waiting two years for a procedure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54511/17]

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 the Deputy directly.

HSE Agency Staff

701. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding temporary and agency workers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54513/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Services for People with Disabilities

702. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of children and adults, respectively, with disabilities on a waiting list with each service provider and on a HSE waiting list for a residential placement; the level of priority attached to each category in circumstances in which the sole carer is incapacitated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54516/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and

plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Services for People with Disabilities

703. **Deputy Hildegarde Naughton** asked the Minister for Health the location to which the National Rehabilitation Hospital refers patients from County Galway for outpatient therapy post-discharge; if there is a rehabilitation centre in Galway for stroke patients who do not attend the National Rehabilitation Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54517/17]

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

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Dental Services Staff

704. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the number of locum doctors working in the public dental system in the past five years; the wage bill for each year; the number of directly employed dentists who work in the public dental system; and the wage bill in each of these years. [54521/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Emergency Departments Data

705. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the number of accident and emergency admissions in Our Lady's Hospital, Navan, County Meath, in each of the past five years; the number of persons who were on trolleys at the hospital in each of the past five years; the number of overnight medical patients who have been admitted to the hospital in each of the past five years; the budget for the accident and emergency department in each of the past five years; and the budget for the medical department in each of the past five years. [54522/17]

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 the Deputy directly.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Eligibility

706. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health the reason haemochromatosis is not classed as a long-term illness; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54523/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The LTI Scheme was established under Section 59(3) of the Health Act 1970 (as amended). The conditions covered by the LTI are: acute leukaemia; mental handicap; cerebral palsy; mental illness (in a person under 16); cystic fibrosis; multiple sclerosis; diabetes insipidus; muscular dystrophies; diabetes mellitus; parkinsonism; epilepsy; phenylketonuria; haemophilia; spina bifida; hydrocephalus; and conditions arising from the use of Thalidomide. Under the LTI Scheme, patients receive drugs, medicines, and medical and surgical appliances directly related to the treatment of their illness, free of charge.

There are no plans to extend the list of conditions covered by the Scheme.

My Department is currently examining arrangements for patients with Hereditary Haemochromatosis in the context of the recommendations set out in the HSE’s ‘Model of Care Report for Therapeutic Phlebotomy for Patients with Hereditary Haemochromatosis.

Medical Card Eligibility

707. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health his plans to allocate a free general practitioner card automatically to carers in 2018; the process and criteria involved; the timeframe for its introduction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54524/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Deputy will be aware that in December 2017, I announced the Government’s intention to provide all carers who are in receipt of a Carer’s Allowance access to GP care without charge. Primary legislation will be required to give effect to this measure and my Department has begun work in that regard. Subject to the agreement of Government to the specific legislative proposals drawn up, it is my objective to have this legislation prepared and brought to the Oireachtas as soon as it is possible.

Hospital Appointments Status

708. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54525/17]

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 the Deputy directly.

Respite Care Services Provision

709. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health his plans for the extra €10 million in funding that is to be provided for respite care for persons with disabilities; the dedicated respite house that will benefit in community health area one; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54526/17]

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.

The full details of the services to be provided with the additional €10 million for respite care will be contained in the HSE's detailed operational plan. This initiative will provide for nine new dedicated houses for respite in each Community Health Area, plus an additional three houses in the greater Dublin area to respond to the very high demand for respite from this area. These additional twelve respite houses will provide 19,000 extra respite nights to the people living in those areas, on a yearly basis. In addition, a further €2 million extra funding will be used for innovative respite solutions, such as Home Sharing and extended day services, to provide assistance where people need it most.

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.

Health Services Staff Data

710. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 418 of 21 November 2017 and the referred response to same by the HSE (details supplied), the number of locums compared with the number of HSE staff by professional medical discipline at each hospital under the aegis of the HSE by month from January 2016 to December 2017; and the way in which the salaries paid to staff compares to salaries paid to locums by medical discipline at each hospital for the same period. [54533/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Clinical Indemnity Scheme

711. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the status of a clinical indemnity scheme (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54540/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department is currently completing its review and consolidation of earlier Delegation Orders since 2003 which delegated the management of clinical indemnity claims under the Clinical Indemnity Scheme (CIS) to the National Treasury Management Agency.

A number of bodies, currently not covered by the CIS including the one listed by the Deputy, have requested that the State would provide clinical indemnity cover to them. The consolidation process has taken a considerable number of months to complete. My officials expect to provide me with details of the updated Scheme and details of new bodies seeking cover under the CIS and the criteria under which new bodies should be accepted into the CIS within the coming months. When a decision is made on this request, my officials will advise the body in due course.

The amended Delegation Order will be subject of a Memorandum for Government before it is signed into law.

Hospital Waiting Lists

712. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive a hospital appointment. [54551/17]

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 the Deputy directly.

Services for People with Disabilities

713. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if the circumstances of a person (details supplied) will be reviewed with a view to releasing funding. [54553/17]

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

714. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the reason funding was refused to an organisation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54558/17]

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

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Departmental Agencies

715. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the number of section 39 agencies under the Health Act 2004; the number of employees in these organisations; and the number of whole time equivalents. [54568/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Departmental Agencies Funding

716. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the allocation in 2017 of funding for salaries for section 39 organisations. [54569/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Question No. 717 answered with Question No. 659.

Mental Health Services

718. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive an appointment with the local CAMHS service. [54576/17]

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.

Occupational Therapy

719. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive an appointment for occupational therapy. [54577/17]

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.

Departmental Expenditure

720. **Deputy Michael Collins** asked the Minister for Health the budget allocation in the 2018 HSE service plan for the Cork University Maternity Hospital obstetrics and gynaecology service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54578/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am pleased to confirm that additional funding is being made available for Cork University Maternity Hospital in 2018. I have asked the HSE to reply to the Deputy directly with the specific details requested.

Hospital Waiting Lists

721. **Deputy Michael Collins** asked the Minister for Health the number of women currently waiting for inpatient and outpatient gynaecology appointments in Cork university maternity hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54579/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The NTPF published the most recent waiting list figures for Dec 2017 on 12 January. This information is available on the website *www.NTPF.ie*.

The total number of people on the IPDC Gynaecology waiting list in Cork University Maternity Hospital is 425.

The number of people on the Outpatient Gynaecology Waiting List for Cork University Maternity Hospital is 3,790.

Drugs Payment Scheme Coverage

722. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health when a decision will be made on the reimbursement of a drug (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54581/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the community drug schemes, in accordance with 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 may have been sought by the HSE, including, for example, advice from the National Centre for

Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE).

The NCPE Health Technology Assessment was completed in July 2017 estimated on the basis of the price originally proposed that a budget of in excess of €65 million over 5 years would have been required to support reimbursement of palbociclib (Ibrance). They did not recommend reimbursement.

The HSE has engaged with the company in question in relation to pricing and budget impact and the outcome of those commercial discussions is being carefully considered.

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 2013 Act.

Hospital Staff

723. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the status of a position at Letterkenny University Hospital (details supplied); if the current holder of the post is employed on a locum or permanent basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54582/17]

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 the Deputy directly.

Departmental Correspondence

724. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 248 of 12 December 2017, if the action being taken on foot of the correspondence received has been communicated to the person by his Department or the agency under the remit of his Department; and if the fact of action being taken on foot of the correspondence received has been communicated to the person concerned. [54583/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The person concerned is aware of the action being taken by the agency concerned on foot of the correspondence received.

Hospital Services

725. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health his plans to extend the PPCI service at university hospital Waterford; the way in which this service will be extended; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54585/17]

727. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether extending the opening hours of the cath lab at university hospital Waterford for PPCI requires an additional laboratory; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54587/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 725 and 727 together.

Funding of €0.5 million was allocated in 2017 for cardiology services in University Hospital Waterford (UHW), as recommended in the Herity report, to increase planned cath lab sessions by 20%. I requested that the HSE maximise the benefit for patients from the €0.5m funding in respect of both additional sessions at the existing cath lab and the temporary use of a mobile cath lab for a specific period. The mobile cath lab has been deployed for the short

term provision of cardiac diagnostic angiogram services on the grounds of University Hospital Waterford from 2 October 2017 for a period of 20 weeks and is currently providing a scheduled diagnostic angiography service on a 3 day per week basis.

The HSE has advised that the process for the recruitment of staff in order to support extension of the operating hours of the existing cath lab by 20%, as recommended in the Herity report, has commenced with the increase in hours of the existing cath lab to come into effect once the contract for the mobile cath lab ceases (after 12 February, 2018).

Furthermore, in July 2017, I agreed to expedite the commencement of the national review of all PPCI services, encompassing the South East region. One of the guiding principles for this review is to strive to provide a PPCI service that can deliver clinical outcomes on a par with international standards. The Steering Group for this National Review has now been established and the first meeting will occur on 31 January 2018. The Chair of the Steering Group is Professor Philip Nolan, President of Maynooth University. The National Review aims to report to the Minister within 12-18 months of its first meeting. The National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services will examine all activity in cardiac catheterisation laboratories nationally. This will include the activity data from the mobile lab in UHW.

Hospital Services

726. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of hours and days the cath lab at University Hospital Waterford was out of commission or not in use during the normal opening hours for PPCI (details supplied) in each of the years 2015 to 2017; the reason for it being out of commission or not in use; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54586/17]

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.

Question No. 727 answered with Question No. 725.

Hospital Waiting Lists

728. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons at University Hospital Waterford waiting for stented procedures or intervention procedures in each of the years 2015 to 2017, by year, month, volume and wait times in bands (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54588/17]

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 Consultant Contracts

729. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if an examination has commenced on compliance with consultants' contracts in which they work part of their time in HSE publicly-funded hospitals; the arrangements in place to ensure that consultants who are expected to work a certain amount of hours actually do so; and if he will make a statement on

the matter. [54595/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Section 20 of the 2008 Consultant Contract gives the employer of the consultant full authority to take all necessary steps to ensure a Consultant's practice shall not exceed the agreed ratio of public to private practice. Responsibility for reporting individual consultant compliance was devolved to the Hospital Groups in 2014. The main reason for this is to ensure local accountability. Hospitals know their consultants and the work they deliver.

I have asked the HSE to ensure that more robust measures are in place in 2018 to make sure all consultants comply with their contractual obligations. My Department is working closely with the HSE to find a solution to ensure compliance is monitored more effectively and remedial action pursued where required.

On 21 December the Director General advised the Secretary General of the structures currently in place in the context of the HSE's Performance Accountability Framework with monthly performance meetings between the Hospital Groups and their individual hospitals and the expectation that Groups review public/private mix and consultant contract compliance as part of the monthly engagement. He also advised that further assurance processes with the Groups were being put in place to confirm contract compliance, including written annual confirmation that: reports are provided to consultants monthly, there is appropriate review by the clinical director, processes are in place locally to determine compliance with contracted hours.

My Department has also engaged with the HSE in response to some broader issues which the HSE has raised concerning oversight of the contract, including the impact of the Health (Amendment) Act 2013 and the need for hospitals to collect private patient income. However, the HSE has already been advised that those issues do not affect the implementation of measures required to ensure robust governance and monitoring of compliance with the contractual provisions applicable to consultants engaging in private practice, with remedial action pursued where required. A meeting between my Department and the HSE on the immediate requirements regarding monitoring of compliance at the individual consultant level and the broader issues is to take place shortly.

I have also established an independent group, chaired by Dr. Donal de Buitléir, to examine the impact of separating private practice from the public hospital system. This Group has now commenced its work and is to conclude by the end of next summer. This was one of the key recommendations of the Sláintecare Report.

HSE Staff

730. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that counties Sligo and Leitrim are suffering due to the fact that there is no staff cover for essential services such as speech therapy, paediatric physiotherapy and occupational therapy in situations in which a key staff member is out on maternity leave or sick leave or has moved to another position (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54600/17]

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.

Mental Health Services Staff

731. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health if the clinical lead consultant psychiatrist for CAMHS in counties Sligo and Leitrim is only available for the service one day per week; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54647/17]

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

732. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal can expect to receive an appointment for surgery at Letterkenny University Hospital; if, in the event that a cancellation should arise, an appointment will issue to this person; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54648/17]

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 the Deputy directly.

Nursing Home Services

733. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons awaiting admission to County Wexford nursing homes; the average waiting times for persons awaiting admission to nursing homes in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54654/17]

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 Funding

734. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health if his Department will make up the shortfall in funding allocated to an organisation (details supplied) by the HSE lottery grant scheme in 2017 which will prevent it from implementing projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54655/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): My Department no longer operates a National Lottery Scheme and the Minister for Health has no role in relation to the Health Service Executive's National Scheme.

HSE Staff Recruitment

735. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE will employ medical professionals who specialise in Lyme disease in view of the fact that the number of persons diagnosed with the disease has increased over the years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54656/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the hiring of medical professionals is a service matter, this PQ has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Services

736. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health the reason venesection and phlebotomy therapy is a free treatment in St James's Hospital, Dublin for haemochromatosis patients and not a free treatment in all hospitals; his views on whether this is discriminatory based on location; his further views on whether there is no justification for persons to pay an €80 fee for a 15 minute outpatient procedure which prevents organ damage and saves lives; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54658/17]

749. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding the charge for venesection; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54738/17]

751. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Health if he will review the recently introduced charge of €80 imposed by a number of hospital groups on persons with haemochromatosis who require venesection with a view to reversing the decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54748/17]

850. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Health if he has given consideration to reimbursing the €80 charge that persons with haemochromatosis must pay if they do not hold a medical card for venesection procedures; if the petition from persons who are anxious for the charge to be removed will be responded to; if further consideration will be given to adding haemochromatosis to the long-term illness scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55038/17]

864. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a charge of €80 has been imposed on haemochromatosis patients requiring venesection; if his attention has been further drawn to the fact that some haemochromatosis patients may need up to four venesections per month; the justification for this charge; his plans to abolish same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55073/17]

968. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health his plans to provide services for haemochromatosis sufferers; his further plans to provide funding and support to implement the recommendations of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1090/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 736, 749,

751, 850, 864 and 968 together.

The Health Act 1970 (as amended) provides that all people ordinarily resident in the country are entitled, subject to certain charges, to public in-patient hospital services, including consultant services, and to public out-patient hospital services. Under the Health (In-Patients Charges) (Amendment) Regulations 2008, a person who has been referred to a hospital for an in-patient service, including that provided on a day case basis, will have to pay the statutory daily charge, currently €80 per day, up to a maximum of €800 per year. On this basis, where venesection is classed as a day case procedure and is not carried out in an out-patient setting, the public in-patient charge applies.

My Department is currently examining arrangements for patients with Hereditary Haemochromatosis in the context of the recommendations set out in the HSE's 'Model of Care Report for Therapeutic Phlebotomy for Patients with Hereditary Haemochromatosis'.

Health Services Charges

737. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Health the actions that have been taken by the HSE in relation to persons with general practitioner visit cards or medical cards being charged by general practitioners for blood tests; the circumstances in which general practitioners may charge for blood tests; the engagement he has had with the HSE and general practitioner representative bodies on this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54664/17]

896. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health if a person on a medical card is required to pay for blood tests; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55182/17]

901. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if measures are being considered to assist medical card patients who are charged by general practitioners for form-signing and bloods; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55203/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 737, 896 and 901 together.

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."

The GMS contract also stipulates that fees are not paid to GPs by the HSE in respect of certain medical certificates which may be required, for example, "under the Social Welfare Acts or for the purposes of insurance or assurance policies or for the issue of driving licences". Consultation fees charged by GPs outside the terms of the GMS or GP Visit Card contracts are a matter of private contract between clinicians and their patients and I have no role in relation to such fees.

There is no provision under the GMS GP contract for persons who hold a medical card or GP visit card to be charged for routine phlebotomy services provided by their GP which are required to either assist in the diagnosis of illness or the treatment of a condition. The HSE has advised GPs that where a blood test forms part of the investigation or necessary treatment of a patient's symptoms or conditions, this should be free of charge for patients who hold a medical card or GP visit card. Notwithstanding this, I am aware that in recent times some GPs have begun to charge GMS patients for phlebotomy services in some circumstances.

This is a matter of concern for me as it has long been the position, under successive Governments, that no user charges should apply to GP services provided to GMS and GP visit card patients. If a patient who holds a medical card or GP visit card believes he or she has been incorrectly charged for routine phlebotomy services by his or her GP, then that patient may take the matter up with the HSE Local Health Office, who will deal with the matter in accordance with the HSE's Complaints Policy.

In order to achieve clarity on this issue, I have asked that any difference of perspective in relation to the provision of phlebotomy services be addressed in the GP contractual review process, which is currently underway. The aim is to develop a contract which has a population health focus, providing in particular for health promotion and disease prevention and for the structured ongoing care of chronic conditions. I look forward to constructive and positive engagements with a view to achieving a satisfactory outcome.

Services for People with Disabilities

738. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health the funding for an organisation (details supplied); his plans to increase funding to the organisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54667/17]

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

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Services for People with Disabilities

739. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health the average waiting times for children seeking special needs assessments for disability; the way in which these waiting times tally with the times outlined in the Disability Act 2005; the way he plans to ensure that these timeframes will be adhered to; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54668/17]

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

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Eligibility

740. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to add haemochromatosis to the list of medical conditions for which a person can apply to the long-term illness scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54674/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The LTI Scheme was established under Section 59(3) of the Health Act 1970 (as amended). The conditions covered by the LTI are: acute leukaemia; mental handicap; cerebral palsy; mental illness (in a person under 16); cystic fibrosis; multiple sclerosis; diabetes insipidus; muscular dystrophies; diabetes mellitus; parkinsonism; epilepsy; phenylketonuria; haemophilia; spina bifida; hydrocephalus; and conditions arising from the use of Thalidomide. Under the LTI Scheme, patients receive drugs, medicines, and medical and surgical appliances directly related to the treatment of their illness, free of charge.

There are no plans to extend the list of conditions covered by the Scheme.

My Department is currently examining arrangements for patients with Hereditary Haemochromatosis in the context of the recommendations set out in the HSE's 'Model of Care Report for Therapeutic Phlebotomy for Patients with Hereditary Haemochromatosis.

Respite Care Services

741. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health if the €10 million respite initiative funding will contribute to the re-establishment of Solas as a respite facility in County Sligo; if not, when and the location in which a dedicated respite house will be operational in counties Sligo and Leitrim as per the announcement that €8 million will provide 12 dedicated respite houses around the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54686/17]

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.

The full details of the services to be provided with the additional €10 million for respite care will be contained in the HSE's detailed operational plan. This initiative will provide for nine new dedicated houses for respite in each Community Health Area, plus an additional three houses in the greater Dublin area to respond to the very high demand for respite from this area. These additional twelve respite houses will provide 19,000 extra respite nights to the people living in those areas, on a yearly basis. In addition, a further €2 million extra funding will be used for innovative respite solutions, such as Home Sharing and extended day services, to provide assistance where people need it most.

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 Appointments Status

742. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54689/17]

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 the Deputy directly.

Health Services

743. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health when funding will be available from the HSE for home subcutaneous immunoglobulin treatment for a person (details supplied). [54692/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the particular issue raised relates to an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Respite Care Services

744. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding respite funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54694/17]

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.

The full details of the services to be provided with the additional €10 million for respite care will be contained in the HSE's detailed operational plan. This initiative will provide for nine new dedicated houses for respite in each Community Health Area, plus an additional three

houses in the greater Dublin area to respond to the very high demand for respite from this area. These additional twelve respite houses will provide 19,000 extra respite nights to the people living in those areas, on a yearly basis. In addition, a further €2 million extra funding will be used for innovative respite solutions, such as Home Sharing and extended day services, to provide assistance where people need it most.

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 Waiting Lists

745. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment can be put in place for a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [54710/17]

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 the Deputy directly.

Departmental Funding

746. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the steps a body must take in order to submit an application for section 39 funding from the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54721/17]

1077. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the steps a body must take in order to submit an application for section 39 funding from the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1736/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 746 and 1077 together.

I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Health Services

747. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health when a final response will issue to an interim reply (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54731/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): At the outset, I would like to apologise for the delay in replying to your representation. It has been necessary to seek input from a number of areas within the Department to cover the issues raised and a reply will issue within the next ten days.

Ministerial Meetings

748. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 124 of 11 October 2017, when the information will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54736/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In response to the particular query raised, this document has been sent to the Deputies Office on the 16 January 2018.

Question No. 749 answered with Question No. 736.

Hospital Services

750. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health if tonsillectomies are being performed on persons under 16 years of age in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda; the detail of the withdrawal of these services from the hospital; the number of consultants in the hospital who carry out tonsillectomies; his plans to increase the service being offered at present; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54739/17]

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.

Question No. 751 answered with Question No. 736.

Mental Health Services

752. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be provided with an appointment to CAMHS. [54754/17]

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.

Primary Care Centres Provision

753. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of a primary care centre in Finglas, Dublin 11; if a final location has been identified for this centre; if the provision of this centre remains a high priority for the HSE; the timeframe he is working to for the completion of this project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54756/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to the Deputy regarding the current status of this project.

Cross-Border Health Services Provision

754. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if a payment will be issued to a person (details supplied) who availed of treatment under the cross-Border treatment scheme. [54757/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the HSE has responsibility for the administration of the Cross Border Directive, I have asked the HSE to examine the issue raised and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Departmental Funding

755. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the name and number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from his Department that have expended resources seeking the repeal of the eighth amendment; the amount these organisations have received from the State in the past five years; the amount that they have spent on this particular campaign during that time; the number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from his Department that have expended resources seeking the retention of the eighth amendment; the amount these organisations have received from the State in the past five years; and the amount of money that they have spent on this particular campaign during that time. [54768/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Department of Health does not hold the detailed information sought by the Deputy on campaign funding regarding the Eighth Amendment. A list of organisations in receipt of direct funding from the Department of Health may be provided to the Deputy in follow-up correspondence, should this be useful.

Hospitals Building Programme

756. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health the net increase in the number of beds at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda expected when the new hospital extension is opened; when the new beds will come on stream; the overall cost of the extension project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54777/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Tackling overcrowding in EDs is a key commitment of this Government and €30 million was made available for winter pressures in 2017 and a further €40 million in 2018 as part of the 2018 Budget.

I can assure the Deputy that all the Winter Plan measures funded by increased investment by Government, like increased access to home care, transitional care and diagnostics along with additional acute bed capacity, are being implemented to deal with the extra pressures our health service is experiencing. As part of these measures, I can confirm that 25 beds have already been opened at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospitals Funding

757. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the reason a funding request from a hospital (details supplied) has not been approved; the reason for the delay in an-

swering the request; when he expects the request to be answered in view of the fact that it was submitted in summer 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54783/17]

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 the Deputy directly.

Hospital Services

758. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health the number of surgeries that have been cancelled at Merlin Park hospital, Galway since a leak in the roof of the operating theatre was discovered, by category of surgery; when the operating theatre will be back to full capacity; the number of additional surgeries expected to be cancelled until the theatre is operational, by category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54791/17]

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 the Deputy directly.

Hospital Appointments Status

759. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54794/17]

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.

Home Care Packages

760. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health if there is scheme similar to the fair deal scheme for persons who would prefer to stay at home and receive their care there; if not, the other supports available to a couple, one of whom is in need of 24-hour care in the home; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54805/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive provides a range of community-based services aimed at ensuring older people receive safe, timely and appropriate care and treatment at the lowest level of complexity, and as close to home as possible. This means that they are facilitated and supported to stay in their own homes and communities for as long as it is viable with services such as home support, day care, community support and/

or intermediate care beds to avoid unnecessary acute hospital admissions.

Traditionally, home care was viewed as providing a lower level of support than residential care, and not as an alternative to it. Increasingly, however, it is considered possible to support many people to continue to live at home who would previously have gone into residential care. Funding for Older Persons' Services has increased from €763 million in 2017 to €811 million in 2018. This includes approximately €408 million for the provision of home support services by the HSE or other providers. The HSE's National Service Plan provides for a target of 17.094 million home support hours to be provided to 50,500 people, which compares with 16.34 million hours delivered to 50,000 people in 2017 (home help and home hours combined), an increase of 754,000 hours to 500 more people year on year. In addition 235 intensive home care packages will provide 360,000 home support hours for people with complex needs. The HSE will continue to encourage local integration of services and build appropriate care pathways, in particular for people with dementia and complex needs.

Improving home-care services so that people can continue to live with confidence, dignity and security in their own homes for as long as possible is a key commitment of the Government. However, the only statutory scheme in place at present to support older people is the Nursing Home Support Scheme. The Government intends to address this by establishing a new stand-alone statutory scheme for the financing and regulation of home care services and the further development of home care services to provide a more viable alternative to nursing home care for a greater number of people. The Department of Health is currently engaged in a detailed process to progress this. The statutory scheme for home care will introduce clear rules in relation to the services for which individuals are eligible and in relation to how decisions are made on allocating services. For that reason, developing a new statutory scheme will be an important step towards ensuring that the system operates in a consistent and fair manner for all those who need home care services. It will also help to improve access to the home care services that people need, in an affordable and sustainable way. The system of regulation for home care will help to ensure that the public can be confident that the services provided are of a high standard.

The development of a new home care scheme is a complex undertaking which will involve significant legislative, operational and financial resources. A significant amount of detailed work remains to be undertaken before final decisions are taken on the form of a home care scheme and the regulation of these services. This is necessary if reforms are to be successful, affordable and sustainable.

Disability Services Funding

761. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health if consideration has been given to funding an organisation (details supplied) in 2018 out of the Dormant Account Fund in view of the work it is doing assisting persons with a disability; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54808/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): Under the Dormant Accounts Fund Action Plan, €2.7 million was allocated in January 2016 by my Department to projects focused on supporting people with disabilities and substance misuse prevention initiatives. My Department has no plans to introduce a similar dormant accounts initiative in 2018.

Home Help Service

762. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect a decision on their application for home help. [54813/17]

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

763. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54814/17]

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 Facilities

764. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the status of the development of a 12-bed short stay unit at Tullamore hospital. [54823/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly.

Hospitals Policy

765. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the status of the development of an integrated care steering committee between the Dublin Midlands hospital group and relevant community health organisation 7 and 8 respectively. [54824/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In response to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly.

Health Services Provision

766. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the status of the development of a model of care proposal for the expansion of rehabilitation services in counties Laois and Offaly in conjunction with community health organisation 8. [54825/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services Provision

767. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the status of the implementation of the model for integrated care programme for older persons at Tallaght hospital in association with the local CHO, clinical strategy and programmes and social care division. [54826/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Older Persons Integrated Care Team for Tallaght Hospital in association with Community Healthcare Organisation 7 was established in October 2016. It became fully operational in January 2017 when a full compliment of six whole time equivalents were recruited, comprising of a full time Consultant Geriatrician, a Case Manager, a Social Worker, a Physiotherapist, a Occupational Therapist and an Administrator.

The team targets older persons with complex care needs in the community, typically frail older adults, receiving an average of 24 referrals per month and is carrying a caseload of about 320 clients at any one time. The majority of interventions take place in a client's home with the remainder in outpatient settings. Located in the Primary Care Centre, Tallaght Cross and funded through CHO 7, the team has established linkages with other community services, statutory and voluntary, in addressing its core function of keeping older people living at home.

Hospital Facilities

768. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the development of a frailty intervention therapy team and additional telemetry units in St. James's Hospital emergency department. [54827/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly.

Hospital Facilities

769. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the commissioning of a MRI unit at Tullamore hospital. [54828/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly.

Hospital Facilities

770. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional staff recruited for the phased increase in radiation oncology services at St. Luke's Hospital, Rathgar. [54829/17]

771. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the status of the commissioning of new linear accelerators at St. Luke's Hospital, Rathgar, during 2017; and the number now in place. [54830/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 770 and 771 together.

Two new linear accelerators were installed in St. Luke's Hospital in order to provide additional capacity to meet increasing demand. Clinical commissioning of these linear accelerators is now complete. There are now a total of four linear accelerators at St Luke's Hospital and 14 linear accelerators in total in Dublin.

A total of 24.5 posts have been allocated relating to these new linear accelerators.

Maternity Services

772. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health his plans for the relocation of the Coombe maternity hospital to the St. James's site; the progress made on this in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54831/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As announced in June 2015, the Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital will in time relocate to the St James's campus, achieving tri-location of adult, paediatric and maternity services. The National Maternity Strategy, published in January 2016, reaffirms the commitment to the provision of tri-located maternity services on the campus; a site for the proposed maternity hospital is identified in the St James's campus Master Plan.

Of course the new children's hospital is currently under construction on that campus. The Deputy may however wish to note that construction of the new maternity hospital will not commence until after the new children's hospital is completed. I can confirm that the new children's hospital design has incorporated the required operational links with both the maternity and adult hospitals.

Hospital Services

773. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health his plans to increase access to the weight management programme and to bariatric surgery within the Ireland East hospital group during 2017; the number of persons who accessed the programmes during the year; and the equivalent figures for 2016. [54832/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly.

Hospital Facilities

774. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the status of the development of the 31-bed complex discharge facility in Beaumont hospital. [54833/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE is awaiting the final transfer of the Rockfield facility, which is not currently owned by the HSE. The scope and cost of any development proposals will be reviewed once the transfer has been completed.

Hospital Facilities

775. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the status of the progression of the phase II capital development of 81 beds and five theatres in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda. [54834/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the HSE is responsible for the delivery of health care infrastructure projects, the Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in relation to the status of Phase 2 development at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda.

Health Services Staff Recruitment

776. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if eight medical scientists were recruited by the RCSI group for the laboratory modernisation implementation of the MedLIS system. [54835/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): This is a service matter and I have asked the HSE to reply directly to the Deputy.

Hospital Facilities

777. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if will report on increased radiology capacity within the RCSI hospital group; if there is a PET scanner now situated in Beaumont Hospital; and if there is a second CT scanner for Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital and a MRI situated at Connolly Hospital. [54836/17]

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 Groups

778. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if implementation plans are in place for the emergency department review, the orthopaedic review, the haematology review and the histopathology review in the Saolta University Health Care Group. [54837/17]

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.

Hospital Facilities

779. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the progress made during 2017 on the replacement emergency department in Galway University Hospital. [54838/17]

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 Facilities

780. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the progress made during 2017 on the replacement of end-of-life catheterisation laboratories in Galway University Hospital and managed service for an additional catheterisation laboratory in Galway University Hospital and Sligo University Hospital. [54839/17]

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.

Hospital Facilities

781. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the progress made during 2017 with regard to the blood and tissue establishment and integrated medical sciences laboratory in Galway University Hospital. [54840/17]

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.

Hospital Accommodation Provision

782. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if capital funding has been secured for the development of a 50 bedded replacement block in Portiuncula University Hospital. [54841/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the HSE is responsible for the delivery of health care infrastructure projects, the Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in relation to the proposed development of a 50 bed ward block at Portiuncula University Hospital, Ballinasloe.

Hospital Facilities

783. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if the interventional suite in Sligo University Hospital has been replaced. [54842/17]

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.

Hospital Services

784. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if a diabetic centre has been provided to facilitate the commencement of a paediatric insulin pump service in Sligo University Hospital. [54843/17]

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.

Hospital Facilities

785. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the progress that has been made in relation to the emergency department surgical block in Sligo University Hospital. [54844/17]

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 Services

786. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the additional capacity that has been provided in Mayo University Hospital to address capacity deficits. [54845/17]

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.

Hospital Services

787. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the progress that has been made in relation to the rehabilitation unit in Roscommon University Hospital. [54846/17]

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.

Hospital Facilities

788. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the upgrades that were made to infrastructure within the Saolta hospital group for meeting hygiene standards. [54847/17]

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.

Hospital Services

789. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the improvements that were made during 2017 to the early supported discharge stroke programme across the Saolta hospital group. [54848/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, it has been re-

ferred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Staff Data

790. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional theatre staff recruited during 2017 for each public and voluntary hospital for the purposes of increasing theatre capacity, in tabular form. [54849/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Hospital Staff Data

791. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of new and additional staff that were recruited to support DEXA services within the Saolta hospital group. [54850/17]

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.

Hospital Services

792. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the progress that was made in the development of a respiratory support unit in Galway University Hospital during 2017. [54851/17]

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.

Hospital Staff Recruitment

793. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if a second breast surgeon was appointed in Letterkenny University Hospital during 2017. [54852/17]

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.

Hospital Staff Recruitment

794. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if an oncologist was appointed in Letterkenny University Hospital during 2017. [54853/17]

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.

Hospital Facilities

795. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the way in which the capacity

of an ambulatory haematology and oncology day care in the UHG centre was increased during 2017. [54854/17]

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.

Hospital Staff Data

796. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional registered advanced nurse practitioners and clinical nurse specialists that were recruited during 2017 by the Saolta hospital group to address the growing volume of new patients and increased treatment options available for persons presenting with and surviving cancer; and the number of registered advanced nurse practitioners and clinical nurse specialists in place for such purposes within the group. [54855/17]

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.

Hospital Staff Data

797. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of nurses registered to prescribe medicinal products for each hospital group in 2016 and 2017 respectively, in tabular form. [54856/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Given that this is an operational matter, it is appropriate that it should be dealt with by the HSE, I have referred the Deputy's question to the HSE for attention and direct reply.

Hospital Staff Data

798. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of nurses registered to prescribe ionising radiation for each hospital group in 2016 and 2017 respectively, in tabular form. [54857/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Given that this is an operational matter, it is appropriate that it should be dealt with by the HSE, I have referred the Deputy's question to the HSE for attention and direct reply.

Hospital Procedures

799. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if the Schwartz rounds pilot in Galway University Hospital was completed in 2017; and when the Schwartz rounds will be introduced on all sites in the Saolta group. [54858/17]

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 Groups

800. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the detail of the critical care network within the south and south west hospital group. [54859/17]

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

Question No. 801 answered with Question No. 696.

Primary Care Centres Provision

802. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the provision of a new health care facility (details supplied); when this project will proceed to the next stage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54902/17]

803. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the provision of a new health care facility (details supplied); when this project will proceed to the next stage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54903/17]

804. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the provision of a new health care facility (details supplied); when this project will proceed to the next stage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54904/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 802 to 804, inclusive, together.

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.

Hospital Appointments Status

805. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will have surgery scheduled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54915/17]

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.

Protected Disclosures

806. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health the options open to a person employed by the HSE who would like to make a protected disclosure regarding practices in their workplace that they are of the view are covered by the whistleblowing legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54916/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): A protected disclosure is defined in the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 as a disclosure of information which, in the reasonable belief of a worker, tends to show one or more relevant wrongdoings came to the attention of the worker in connection with the worker's employment; and is disclosed in the manner prescribed in the Act. The definition of the term "worker" used in the legislation includes current and former employees, independent contractors, trainees and agency staff. Prior to the enactment of this Act persons employed by the HSE could make protected disclosures to an Authorised Person under the Health Act 2004 (as amended in 2007). Some sections of this legislation are also still in force.

Section 5 of the 2014 Act provides protection for workers who disclose information in relation to the following wrongdoings:

- a. the commission of an offence;
- b. the failure of a person to comply with any legal obligation, other than one arising under the worker's contract of employment or other contract whereby the worker undertakes to do or perform personally any work or services;
- c. a miscarriage of justice;
- d. a danger to the health and safety of any individual;
- e. damage to the environment;
- f. an unlawful or otherwise improper use of funds or resources of a public body, or of other public money;
- g. an act or omission by or on behalf of a public body that is oppressive, discriminatory or grossly negligent or constitutes gross mismanagement; or
- h. information tending to show any matter falling within any of the preceding paragraphs (a) to (g) has been, is being, or is likely to be concealed or destroyed.

A worker must make a disclosure in the manner set out in the Act to be entitled to the protections of the Act. Different standards apply depending on the person or body to whom the worker discloses.

A disclosure may be made to the employer. The HSE encourages all workers to make disclosures internally to their employer in the first instance. Such disclosures will be taken seriously and the worker making a protected disclosure, as defined by and in accordance with the Act, will be entitled to the protections set out in the Act.

Alternatively, a worker may make a disclosure to persons other than their employer in certain circumstances. Different requirements need to be met in different cases, as set out at (a) to (e) below:

- a. Other responsible person

Where the worker reasonably believes that the wrongdoing relates solely or mainly to the conduct of a person other than the worker's employer or to something for which that other person has legal responsibility, then the worker may disclose to that other person.

b. A prescribed person

I am committed to facilitating the disclosure of wrongdoing and encouraging workers to make protected disclosures at the earliest possible opportunity. I would also encourage workers to make disclosures to their employer in the first instance and to use the internal procedures provided.

Such disclosures will be taken seriously and the worker making a protected disclosure will receive appropriate protection as set out in the legislation. There is an onus on the HSE to address any disclosure made, to conduct an investigation where warranted and to address all findings of that investigation that require attention. The legislation emphasises that workers will be protected from penalisation and from dismissal for having made a protected disclosure.

The contact details for the Authorised Person in the HSE are:

By post: Office of the Authorised Person, PO Box 11571, Dublin 2;

By phone: 01-6626984 or 071-9834651 (10am-1pm and 2-5pm; Monday-Friday);

By email: *protected.disclosures@hse.ie*.

Special Educational Needs Expenditure

807. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health his plans to increase funding for an organisation (details supplied); the reason a recent application by the organisation to the HSE for funding for an education officer and information officer was refused; his further plans to ensure children with dyspraxia receive the necessary supports and services to help them deal with this condition in childhood in order to it does not adversely affect their adult lives; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54919/17]

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

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Occupational Therapy

808. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for occupational therapy will be scheduled for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54920/17]

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.

Mental Health Services Staff

809. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health the number of whole time equivalent staff working in CAMHS services in the counties Laois and Offaly catchment area as a percentage of the staffing levels recommended in A Vision for Change; the number of CAMHS staff working in a locum position; if locum CAMHS staff are qualified for the positions they are filling; and if locum consultant child and adolescent psychiatrists are on the Medical Council specialist register for child psychiatry. [54922/17]

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 Services Expenditure

810. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health the costs of HSE disciplinary procedures or confidential investigations involving staff in CAMHS in the catchment area of counties Laois and Offaly in the past ten years; and the cost of locum replacements for suspended staff in the same period. [54923/17]

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.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

811. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health when the omnipod insulin pump will be provided for children with diabetes under the long term illness scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54924/17]

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

Rare Diseases Strategy Implementation

812. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the action taken to implement recommendations 1 to 29 and 40 to 48 of the national rare disease plan, in tabular form. [54925/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In 2017 the Department published a progress report on the National Rare Disease Plan and this is available on the Department's website under 'Publications'.

An update is provided on all 48 recommendations of the Plan and on progress to date.

Establishment of a National Clinical Programme for Rare Diseases was one of the principal recommendations in the Plan. The Programme is responsible for assisting with mapping and

developing care pathways for rare diseases; facilitating timely access to centres of expertise-nationally and internationally; and developing care pathways with European Reference Centres for those ultra-rare disorders where there may not be sufficient expertise in Ireland.

In line with the National Rare Diseases Plan, the National Clinical Programme for Rare Diseases and the Department of Health, encouraged designated centres of expertise in Ireland to apply for membership of European Reference Networks (ERNs) during the first round of calls from the European Commission for participation in European Reference Networks. Three of these centres are now represented on ERN network.

Membership of ERNs will bring opportunities for engaging in research relating to Rare Diseases in keeping with the National Rare Diseases Plan. Further centres are expected to apply for membership or affiliated membership of ERNs when the next call takes place in early 2018.

The establishment of a National Rare Disease Office (NRDO) was a key recommendation of the Rare Disease plan. The office provides current and reliable information about rare diseases to the general public, health care professionals, researchers and policy makers. The National Rare Diseases Office is responsible for updating Orphanet Ireland. Orphanet is the international rare disease reference and information portal funded by the EU. The office also manages the National Rare Diseases Information Line (a Freephone service) and provides online information about rare diseases on their website.

A number of recommendations about access to appropriate drugs and technologies were contained in the plan. One chief recommendation in this regard refers to the HSE developing a Working Group to bring forward appropriate decision criteria for the reimbursement of orphan medicines and technologies; and that the approach should include an assessment system similar to that for cancer therapies established under the National Cancer Control Programme. The HSE Acute Hospitals Division has developed the terms of reference, required membership and reporting relationship for this committee. A Chairperson has now been identified and it is expected that the Group will convene in early 2018.

One of the recommendations of the National Plan for Rare Diseases was that the Health Identifiers Bill and the Health & Patient Safety Bill be published. The former was published in 2013 and enacted in 2014. The Individual Health Identifier part of the project is now being implemented by the HSE. A revised and much expanded General Scheme of a Health Information and Patient Safety Bill was approved by the government in November 2015 and published on the Department's website.

Two recommendations referred to training in rare diseases for healthcare professionals. The Department of Health has contacted formally the various healthcare representative and professional bodies about implementing these recommendations. The National Rare Diseases Office developed eLearning modules for healthcare professionals. These modules are available on HSE website.

The issue of rare diseases and of the creation of an all-island patient register has been raised in the context of on-going discussions at North-South meetings. It is also anticipated that the Model of Care for Rare Diseases will set out recommendations for rare disease registries. This model of care is in development by the National Clinical Programme for Rare Diseases. At the EU level, the Joint Research Centre is developing a joint European Platform on Rare Disease Registration which will promote EU level standards for data collection and contribute to the development of rare disease registries across the EU.

The Plan also recommended that an Oversight Implementation Group of relevant stakeholders, including patients' groups, be established to oversee and monitor implementation of the

plan's recommendations. This group was established by the Department of Health in 2015 and it has met on a number of occasions .

The National Rare Disease Plan continues to be implemented. The Department will consider the matter of a further plan as part of its Work Programme for 2018.

Health Services Reform

813. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the integrated care pathways that have been developed across the acute hospitals and community interface. [54926/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Committee on the Future of Health's Sláintecare report strongly supports a real shift in our model of care. This will represent a move away from a hospital centric approach to one which is focussed on prevention and early intervention and which will provide the majority of care in the community. This greater integration between primary and acute care will provide person-centred, co-ordinated care, with improved care and outcomes for patients.

There is already much activity underway across the health service to develop better integration across acute hospitals and community care services. This has been supported by the HSE's Clinical Care Programmes and a wide range of initiatives that have developed at a local level. The HSE's Clinical Strategy and Programmes Division is leading a large-scale programme of work to develop a system of integrated care within our health and social care services. Currently work is underway under four Integrated Care Programmes (ICP for Older Persons, ICP for the Prevention and Management of Chronic Disease, ICP Patient Flow, ICP for Children) and the national, regional and local governance structures are now in place to guide and support the implementation of the required changes. Several pilot schemes have been established and in 2018 new integrated care models and pathways will be developed.

Building on the work underway, the delivery of integrated care, with collaboration between care professionals across primary, social care and hospital settings will have positive benefits for patients, providing a better care pathway and facilitating more care outside the hospital.

Hospital Accommodation Provision

814. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the solutions found by the HSE social care division to the current regulatory requirements in order to protect public bed capacity which is vital to support the acute hospital system. [54927/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Community Nursing Units are an essential part of our national infrastructure of nursing homes. They provide over 5,000 long stay residential care beds and about 2,000 short-stay public beds providing step-up, step-down care; intermediate care; and rehabilitation and respite care. The public centres providing short-stay beds are a mixture of stand-alone centres and centres with separate wings for rehabilitation /respite etc.

While the care delivered to residents in our community hospitals is generally of a very high standard, many of these services are delivered in buildings that are less than ideal in the modern context. It is important therefore that we upgrade our public bed stock and this is the aim of the five year Capital Investment Programme for Community Nursing Units which was announced in 2016. This provides the framework to allow for an enhanced programme to replace, upgrade

and refurbish these care facilities, as appropriate. Significant work has been undertaken by the HSE in determining the most appropriate scheduling of projects over the 5 year period from 2016 to 2021, within the phased provision of funding, to achieve compliance and registration with HIQA.

Health Services Provision

815. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the way in which the HSE social care division has developed appropriate public long-term capacity in order that complex patient needs can be met consistently. [54928/17]

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 Services Provision

816. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the detail of the HSE social care division's local clinical governance model to ensure clear links between discharging hospitals and existing community services. [54929/17]

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 Services Funding

817. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if there is a ring-fenced funding stream in place for older patient groups, those with chronic illness and young persons with chronic neurological conditions, for example, acquired brain injury, multiple sclerosis and motor neurone disease. [54930/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): As recently announced by the Government, the overall health budget for 2018 is in the region of €15.5 billion, which represents an increased budget of over €600 million compared to 2017. This represents the fourth year in a row where significant additional resources have been allocated to the health services.

The Health Service Executive (HSE)'s National Service Plan for 2018, which was published on 20th December 2017, outlines the range of services that the Executive will provide over the coming year. I understand that the Executive is currently in the process of finalising detailed Operational Plans for each of its service areas and that these will include information on the funding allocations to specific services and priority areas.

As the specific issue raised by the Deputy is a service matter in the first instance for the HSE, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Strategies

818. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the action taken for each of the 21 priority actions due to commence in the first year of the obesity policy and action plan 2016 to 2025, in tabular form. [54931/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): ‘A Healthy Weight for Ireland’, the national Obesity Policy and Action Plan (OPAP), was launched in September 2016 under the auspices of the Healthy Ireland agenda. The OPAP covers a ten year period up to 2025 and aims to reverse obesity trends, prevent health complications and reduce the overall burden for individuals, families, the health system, and the wider society and economy.

Every sector of our society has a role in reducing the burden of obesity. The OPAP clearly acknowledges this.

The OPAP prescribed Ten Steps Forward that would be taken to prevent overweight and obesity. These contain a number of actions, some of which have been identified for early implementation. A summary of progress with implementation of the Ten Steps Forward is outlined in the following table:

No.	Action	Progress
1.	Embed multi-sectoral actions on obesity prevention with the support of government departments and public sector agencies.	My Department has established an Obesity Policy Implementation Oversight Group. The national Obesity Policy Implementation Oversight Group (OPIOG) - under the Chair of my Department - is comprised of representatives from the following Departments and Agencies: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; Department of Children and Youth Affairs; Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection; Department of Education and Skills; Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government; University College Cork; the Food Safety Authority of Ireland; the Health Service Executive (HSE) - including the National Clinical Lead for Obesity; and Safefood. I am pleased to advise the Deputy that the OPIOG held its inaugural meeting on the 19th of October last with further meetings to be arranged at agreed intervals for the purposes of providing oversight to the implementation of the national Obesity Policy and Action Plan (OPAP). The OPIOG will identify processes for engaging with networks of stakeholders. It will elaborate on this aspect of its functions over the course of its work to implement the OPAP that runs up to 2025. The Minister for Finance has also announced in Budget 2018 the introduction of a sugar tax, at a rate of 30 cent per litre on drinks with over eight grams of sugar per 100 millilitres, along with a reduced rate of 20 cent per litre on drinks with between five and eight grams of sugar per 100 millilitres.

No.	Action	Progress
2.	Regulate for a healthier environment	The development of legislation for calorie posting to support people to make healthy choices is underway by the Department. Currently, a behaviour study on how best to make the posting of calories meaningful to customers and more likely to impact on their behaviours is being carried out by the ESRI. In addition, actions in this area are being progressed through engagement with other Government Departments to support the work of stakeholders involved in planning and developing the built environment.
3.	Secure appropriate support from the commercial sector to play its part in obesity prevention.	At its inaugural meeting, the OPOIG agreed to establish two sub-groups for Reformulation and Healthy Eating. Further sub-groups will be established as required. Both sub-groups have agreed to meet and agree their draft Terms of Reference, which in the interim, remain under active consideration in the Department. Note that one of the priority actions under Step 3 of the OPAP was to 'Establish a forum for meaningful engagement with industry on best practice initiatives towards a healthy food environment'. It is intended to progress this action under the auspices of the OPIOG in 2018. The Department is planning to launch a Code of Practice for Non-Broadcast Media Advertising and Marketing of Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages, including Sponsorship and Retail Product Placement in the coming weeks.

Questions - Written Answers

No.	Action	Progress
4.	Implement a strategic and sustained communications strategy that empowers individuals, communities and service providers to become obesity aware and equipped to change, with a particular focus on families with children in the early years.	I recently launched a new child obesity campaign under the auspices of Health Ireland. It's called the START campaign and it aims to inspire, empower and support parents to start building and persist with healthy lifestyle habits in the family to prevent childhood obesity. The first phase of the campaign features advertising on TV, radio, video on demand, outdoor and digital platforms. This will be supported by the Healthy Ireland 2018 campaign. It seeks to encourage people to make positive choices to improve their physical and mental health, while also providing support and information to help people make those healthier choices.

No.	Action	Progress
5.	The Department of Health, through Healthy Ireland, will provide leadership, engage and co-ordinate multi-sectoral action and implement best practice in the governance of the Obesity Policy and Action Plan.	As referred to at step 1 above, the establishment of an Obesity Policy Implementation Oversight Group is well advanced. New Healthy Eating Guidelines, Food Pyramid and supporting resources have already been published, disseminated and communicated in 2017, including dissemination of the new Guidelines to all primary and post-primary schools. Work has also commenced on developing Healthy Eating Guidelines for the 1-5 year old age group. As a first step in this work, the Scientific Committee of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) are currently developing scientific recommendations for food based dietary guidelines for 1 to 5 year olds. Health and Wellbeing, DOH will then lead out on the development of food based Healthy Eating Guidelines for this age group. New Nutrition Standards for schools, with an initial focus on school meal programmes funded by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, have also been developed. These Nutrition Standards were published in September 2017. The Standards were developed by the Department of Health with the assistance of safefood and the Health Service Executive, in cooperation with the members of the School Meals Programme in the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and the Department of Education and Skills.

No.	Action	Progress
6.	Mobilise the health services to better prevent and address overweight and obesity through effective community-based health promotion programmes, training and skills development and through enhanced systems for detection and referrals of overweight and obese patients at primary care level.	A Healthy Eating, Active Living Programme has been established as a Policy Priority Programme within the HSE and a three-year plan for the programme has been finalised. The GP contract for the provision of free care to children under 6 years, already provides that the medical practitioner shall take an active approach toward promoting health and preventing disease through the provision of periodic assessments to child patients. The HSE is also implementing a Breastfeeding Action Plan and a new Making Every Contact Count brief intervention framework was launched earlier this year by the HSE which aims to capitalise on the opportunities that occur every day within the health service to support people to make healthy lifestyle choices.
7.	Develop a service model for specialist care for children and adults.	The HSE National Clinical Lead for Obesity was recently appointed. This appointment will be important in further advancing the implementation of many of the recommendations in the OPAP including the development of a national integrated service model for the health and social care of overweight and obese people and for developing quality assurance guidance for obesity services.
8.	Acknowledge the key role of physical activity in the prevention of overweight and obesity.	‘Get Ireland Active! The National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland’ (NPAP) is one of the key developments arising from Healthy Ireland, and implementation of that Plan is well underway in collaboration with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and a range of other stakeholders. This will be supported by the Healthy Ireland 2018 campaign. It seeks to encourage people to make positive choices to improve their physical and mental health, while also providing support and information to help people make those healthier choices.

No.	Action	Progress
9.	Allocate resources according to need, in particular to those population groups most in need of support in the prevention and management of obesity, with particular emphasis on families and children during the first 1,000 days of life.	The implementation of the Healthy Eating and Active Living Plan within the HSE will begin to address this action area, with a particular focus on supporting parents and families.
10.	Develop a multi-annual research programme that is closely allied to policy actions, invest in surveillance and evaluate progress on an annual basis.	The establishment of the national oversight structure referred to earlier will foster developments under this step of the OPAP.

Special Educational Needs Expenditure

819. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Health if he will increase the funding for an organisation (details supplied) in order to employ an education and information officer in addition to services it provides such as a helpline, counselling and advice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54934/17]

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

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Home Care Packages Provision

820. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if a home care package will be expedited for a person (details supplied); the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54938/17]

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 Accommodation Provision

821. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health if there are pending ward or bed closures at university hospital Kerry; if so, the number of beds that will be affected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54959/17]

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.

Disability Support Services Provision

822. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health the days and hours on which the early intervention team and the school age teams use a building (details supplied); the number of children involved in each programme; the staff complement for each of the programmes; the nature of the services provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54962/17]

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

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Disabilities Assessments

823. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the timeframe for an assessment of need for a person (details supplied). [54963/17]

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 Appointments Status

824. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54967/17]

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 Appointments Status

825. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect a hospital appointment. [54970/17]

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.

Medicinal Products Availability

826. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if the availability of Vimizim will be considered as a priority at the upcoming HSE drug group meeting on 18 January 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54971/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the community drug schemes, in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

Health Services Provision

827. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54973/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this PQ refers to a service issue regarding an individual, I have referred it to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Medicinal Products Supply

828. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE has had discussions on the provision of a drug (details supplied); if the drug will be made available here for multiple sclerosis patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54974/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the community drug schemes, in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

Respite Care Services

829. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if the respite facility at Kilmorna, Listowel, which is due to open shortly, will be open on a full-time basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54975/17]

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 Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Addiction Treatment Services

830. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health if an organisation (details sup-

plied) or its affiliate organisations has been granted certification, accreditation or a licence by organisations under the direction of his Department to deliver health, education or addiction programmes; and if the organisation must have certification, accreditation or a licence to deliver health, education or addiction services here. [54980/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The advice of my Department would be that anyone seeking treatment for addiction should contact their local HSE addiction service.

The Department has no jurisdiction over agencies that provide private addiction services. There is currently no provision in legislation for the regulation or inspection of residential treatment or rehabilitation centres specialising in addiction.

Organisations which provide addiction services and are funded by the HSE are required to meet minimum standards in the delivery of services across a range of criteria which form the basis of any service level agreement.

There is no evidence to suggest that the drug treatment programme, provided by the organisation referred to by the Deputy, would meet any of the criteria set out by the HSE for agencies that provide addiction services in its behalf.

That organisation's drug treatment programme comprises a series of interventions with limited or no basis in a scientific understanding of human physiology and brain functioning.

Hospital Appointments Status

831. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be scheduled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54982/17]

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.

Mental Health Services Provision

832. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54998/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter, I have asked Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as a matter of urgency.

The Deputy may be aware that the HSE provides advice on their website: <http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie/supports-services/urgent-help.html> for people who may have concerns regarding persons with suicidal tendencies. The HSE advises that where someone has such concerns, they should contact as quickly as they can their G.P., their local Emergency Department, HSE Mental Health Services or the Samaritans. The Samaritans 24 hour helpline number is 116 123 and further information regarding support services can be found at the following weblink <http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie/>.

Question No. 833 withdrawn.

Hospital Appointments Status

834. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; when an appointment will be forthcoming; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55007/17]

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

835. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the position of a person (details supplied) on the waiting list for two facilities; if an appointment will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55009/17]

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.

Disability Services Provision

836. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to a recent cut to funding of the counties Louth and Meath branch of an organisation (details supplied) through the national lottery grant scheme 2017; and his views on whether this cut will reduce the ability of the branch to carry out work in the community. [55011/17]

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

As the Deputy's question relates to a service matter, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme

837. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the action that has been taken to implement the 2015 review of the nursing homes support scheme recommendations on the administration of the scheme, in tabular form (details supplied). [55016/17]

838. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the action that has been taken to implement the 2015 review of the nursing homes support scheme recommendations on the price of long-term residential care, in tabular form (details supplied). [55017/17]

839. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the action that has been taken to implement the 2015 review of the nursing homes support scheme recommendations for future service provision, in tabular form (details supplied). [55018/17]

840. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the action that has been taken to implement the 2015 review of the nursing homes support scheme recommendations on residential care capacity, in tabular form (details supplied). [55019/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 837 to 840, inclusive, together.

When the Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS) commenced in 2009, a commitment was made that it would be reviewed after three years. The Report of the Review was published in July 2015. Arising out of the Review, a number of key issues have been identified for more detailed consideration across Departments and Agencies.

An Interdepartmental/Agency Working Group has been established to progress the recommendations contained in the Review. This Group is chaired by the Department of Health and includes representatives from the Department of the Taoiseach, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the HSE, the Revenue Commissioners, and when required, the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF). These recommendations include:

- Examining the treatment of business and farm assets for the purposes of the financial assessment element of the Scheme;

- The implementation of administrative reforms to the Scheme (Chapter Four of NHSS Review);

- A review by the NTPF of present pricing arrangements in private residential facilities.

Work is on-going across the range of recommendations and many of these have been completed and operationalised. A number of the recommendations in the Review relate to the identification of specific areas of the Scheme that require further and considerable detailed analysis and review. One of these recommendations included a detailed review of pricing mechanisms by the NTPF, with a view to:

- Ensuring value for money and economy, with the lowest possible administrative costs for clients and the State and administrative burden for providers;

- Increasing the transparency of the pricing mechanism so that existing and potential investors can make as informed decisions as possible; and

- Ensuring that there is adequate residential capacity for those residents with more complex needs.

A Steering Committee has been established to oversee the review of the pricing system for private long-term residential care facilities. This Steering Committee is chaired by the NTPF and includes representatives from the Department of Health, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, and the NTPF, and work in this area is ongoing and well advanced.

The Review also recommended that a Value For Money (VFM) and Policy Review of the differences in the comparative cost of public and private long-term residential care be undertaken. Work on the scoping of this review began in late 2017. Detailed work on the VFM review will commence in 2018 and is expected to be completed in 2019.

The following table provides the current status in relation to the consideration of the recommendations contained in the review.

Review of Nursing Homes Support Scheme

Progress in Actions

No.	Recommendation – Administration of Scheme	Position – January 2018
1	Centralise certain elements of the scheme where appropriate, with built in appropriate management and training processes to ensure customer service is maintained	This recommendation is not being progressed at this time as agreed with the NHSS Inter Departmental Review Group
2	Consolidate local NHSOs (from 17 to 4)	Work in Progress
3	Develop a web based form to enable nursing homes to submit invoices electronically	Work in Progress

No.	Recommendation – Administration of Scheme	Position – January 2018
4	Centralise the processing of invoices	This recommendation is not being progressed at this time as agreed with the NHSS Inter Departmental Review Group
5	Centralise the calculation of loan repayments	This recommendation is not being progressed at this time as agreed with the NHSS Inter Departmental Review Group
6	Clarify for how long the application form/documentation and the CSAR form remain valid without any new processes or medical checks	Implemented
7	Provide additional information regarding nursing homes to assist with the process of identifying one that is suitable	This recommendation is not being progressed at this time as agreed with the NHSS Inter Departmental Review Group
8	Review documents and application forms with advice from the National Adult Literacy Agency to ensure they are sufficiently user-friendly and informative and that they include clear guidance on where relevant information/documentation can be obtained	Implemented
9	Consider whether any additional questions should be included in the application form	Implemented
10	Make sample completed application forms available	Implemented
11	Include in the application form a mechanism for an applicant to authorise a representative to submit the application on their behalf	Implemented
12	Consider the need to establish an NHSS Best Practice Group (consisting of NHSO/national office staff) to share experiences and agree on best practice	Implemented

Questions - Written Answers

No.	Recommendation – Administration of Scheme	Position – January 2018
13	Consider splitting application form into two parts to avoid delaying the care needs assessment while financial information and documentation is being assembled	This recommendation is not being progressed at this time as agreed with the NHSS Inter Departmental Review Group
14	Standardise informal advice provided to applicants regarding the nursing home loan, including clarity re legal aspects	Implemented
15	Provide advice regarding the possibility of claiming tax relief for medical expenses/ nursing home fees	Implemented
16	Review current letter templates and, where possible, replace with alternative, quicker forms of communication	Work in Progress
17	Review content of correspondence to ensure it is as clear as possible	Work in Progress
18	Examine the possibility of scanning/electronic transmission of forms and documentation from NHSOs to the national office	This recommendation is not being progressed at this time as agreed with the NHSS Inter Departmental Review Group
19	Clarify that the involvement of a solicitor is not required in order to apply for the loan	Implemented
20	Consider making it a condition of availing of the loan that the required details, including the PPSN of the responsible person are provided	Implemented
21	Complete analysis of home ownership levels	Implemented

No.	Recommendation – Administration of Scheme	Position – January 2018
22	Establish what databases exist that may contain useful data for the financial assessment and establish the access by NHSOs to these, including standard operating procedures, requiring review, of such information sources	Work in Progress
23	Develop a consistently applied standard operating procedure for the initial financial assessment based on available resources of information	Implemented
24	Introduce a policy of undertaking random spot checks of financial data	Work in Progress
25	Follow up with the Revenue Commissioners on the scope for improved validation of declarations of income/assets	Work in Progress
26	Consider the options to encourage realistic valuations of declared property assets	Work in Progress
27	Standardise procedures in relation to reviews across NHSOs and ensure that all available information is utilised and accessed	Implemented
28	Consider amending legislation to provide for fluctuating values of assets and incomes	Requires legislative change. This may be considered as part of amendment for 2018
29	Continue to operate the national placement list in chronological order	Implemented
30	Increase time for recovery of loan to 18 months	Requires legislative change. This may be considered as part of amendment for 2018
31	Amend definition of ordinarily resident to ‘those who have been living in Ireland for at least a year’	Work in Progress

Questions - Written Answers

No.	Recommendation – Administration of Scheme	Position – January 2018
32	Consideration should be given to whether a cap should be applied to the charge for nursing home care based on non-residential productive assets which are passed on to a direct family member after, or in the five years prior to, the death of an NHSS participant, and where the new owner carries on the farm or other business as their principal livelihood	Amendment to legislation planned for 2018
No.	Recommendations on Price of Long Term Residential Care	Position January 2018
1	Nursing homes to consider offering access to a ‘house’ doctor in each facility.	This is for individual Nursing Homes to consider
2	A person in a long-term residential care setting should receive the same level of other health services as they would if they remained in their own home and it is important that this policy is implemented consistently by the relevant HSE personnel.	Residents in Long Term residential Care are entitled to the same level of service as those who remain in their own homes
3	The existing system of agreeing prices facility by facility should continue for the immediate future.	The NTPF continue to negotiate the cost of care in private Nursing Homes registered under NHSS

No.	Recommendations on Price of Long Term Residential Care	Position January 2018
4	<p>Within 18 months, the NTPF should review the present system and submit future pricing proposals to the Minister for Health with a view to:- i) Ensuring that there is adequate residential capacity for those residents who require higher level or more complex care; ii) Ensuring value and economy, with the lowest possible administrative cost for the State and administrative burden for providers; iii) Increasing the transparency of the pricing mechanism so that existing and potential investors can make as informed decisions as possible</p>	<p>The NTPF was asked to conduct the pricing review by the Secretary General in January 2016. This review is well advanced and a report is expected to be submitted to the Minister for consideration in the first half of 2018</p>
5	<p>The cost of public long-term residential care should be based on a pricing model that is objectively and consistently formulated, and which takes account of and accurately quantifies unavoidable price distortions.</p>	<p>The NTPF has statutory independence in the performance of its function, and negotiates with each nursing home on an individual basis.</p>
6	<p>It is important that the position of section 39 voluntary agencies be addressed. A clear plan must be developed by such facilities, supported by the HSE to agree their purpose and function and where necessary to get the cost structures into line within a reasonable and specified timeframe.</p>	<p>Work in progress</p>
7	<p>Nursing homes should have a published fee schedule showing all the costs associated with being a resident.</p>	<p>Minister Daly has requested that NHI request its members to make proposed contracts of care (containing fee schedules) available to potential nursing home clients at enquiry stage</p>

Questions - Written Answers

No.	Recommendations on Price of Long Term Residential Care	Position January 2018
8	Consideration should be given to introducing a new provision under the scheme to prohibit the levying of additional charges for any service or facility from which residents can not readily opt out without penalty while remaining as residents of that facility, or in which they cannot participate because of the level of their dependency.	The inter departmental working group has been asked to examine the issue of additional charges. This is currently being examined by a Department of Health/ HSE Group.
9	Consideration should be given to including in the price contracts with facilities, details of what additional charges are proposed, of the opt-out arrangements that exist for residents and confirmation that residents will not be charged for extra services that they cannot participate in because of their dependency or lack of capacity.	As above
10	It may continue to be necessary for the HSE to make additional payments in circumstances where very specialist care is required. Engagement with acute, disability and other services is required to give a more comprehensive service for this co-hort.	This HSE approach is continuing to operate.
11	The HSE should publish the cost of care on an annual basis.	The weekly cost of care for private and voluntary nursing homes is published following agreement being reached with the NTPF

No.	Recommendations on Price of Long Term Residential Care	Position January 2018
12	The HSE should continue to review the costs in its facilities to examine if facilities can be made more cost efficient. The review should start with the most expensive nursing homes and then cascade down.	HSE continue to review the cost of care in their Nursing Home Facilities
13	A value for money and policy review will be undertaken of HSE public long-term residential care facilities to examine the extent to which cost differentials with care in private facilities can be attributed to patient dependency characteristics or other objective factors for which a higher level of cost is justified.	A VFM review will be undertaken by the Department of Health. Scoping commenced on this in 2017 and detailed work will commence in 2018

No.	Recommendations for Future Service Provision	Position January 2018
1	Development of a community based model of care that includes: a) access to short-stay community beds, b) sufficient home help and home care packages, c) Intensive home care packages, d) Integration and communication links between the acute hospital and community services, e) Access to the expertise of the consultant geriatrician team when required with additional supports from the voluntary sector.	Additional resources have been provided in recent years to strengthen supports, in particular for homecare and transitional care, to facilitate speedier discharge from acute hospitals. The Integrated Care Programme for Older Persons will, in 2018, consolidate progress to date within the existing 12 pioneer sites in accordance with the 10-step integrated care framework. Home support services from 2018 onwards will be delivered through a single funded model.
2	Addressing the uneven availability of home care.	The Department is currently engaged in a detailed process to develop plans for a new statutory scheme and system of regulation for home care services.

Questions - Written Answers

No.	Recommendations for Future Service Provision	Position January 2018
3	Developing clear and effective linkages and co-ordination between acute hospitals and home care services, including the development of an IT System.	This will be part of the statutory homecare scheme currently being developed
4	Reviewing, simplifying and standardising procedures for assessing, approving and procuring home supports across the system.	This will be part of the statutory homecare scheme currently being developed.
5	Providing additional short-stay beds, particularly in areas that are most relevant to major acute hospitals.	Additional resources have been provided in recent years to strengthen supports, in particular for homecare and transitional care beds, to facilitate speedier discharge from acute hospitals. In 2018 a further approx €6m has been provided for additional transitional care and bed capacity
6	Including day care beds as appropriate in planning future services.	Currently accounted for in Service Planning
7	Explore the potential of assistive technology in possible collaboration with researchers and industry.	The HSE have explored and encouraged the take up of assistive technology.
8	Exploring the potential of a collaborative approach across the Departments of Health, Environment, Community and Local Government to provide appropriately supported sheltered housing.	The Department of Health and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government are collaborating on a policy framework for supported housing and support for a demonstration project on supported living.
9	Considering the extension of the boarding out model where appropriate.	The HSE has examined this model and the Department will consider same in due course
10	Maintaining and fostering links with the voluntary sector which can make an important contribution in supporting older people to remain in their own communities.	This relationship is being maintained and a National Positive Ageing Strategy Stakeholder Forum was established in 2017

No.	Recommendations for Future Service Provision	Position January 2018
11	Evaluating the Older People Remaining at Home (OPRAH) project with a view to applying learning from the project to other areas.	Learning from OPRAH will be considered on an on-going basis including in the context of inter alia the development of a Statutory Home Care Scheme
12	Considering ways to bring greater clarity and consolidation to budgets for older person's community services.	The home care and home help services have been streamlined into one single funded home support service. This will improve the efficiency of the system and also improve oversight by making performance data clearer and easier to understand.

No.	Recommendations on Residential Care Capacity	Position January 2018
1	The Department of Health continues to progress the project to identify and assess the various options available to encourage the provision, including the upgrading and refurbishment, of long-term residential care facilities for older people.	5 year Capital investment programme for Community Nursing Units 2016-2021 is on-going
2	The implications for HSE residential facilities of the relevant standards should be clarified with a view to agreeing an approach that achieves the best achievable outcome for residents.	5 year Capital investment programme for Community Nursing Units 2016-2021 is on-going
3	Detailed consideration should be given to whether there is potential for new models of collaboration between the public and private sectors.	5 year Capital Investment programme for Community Nursing Units includes a number of CNU's for Public Private Partnership
4	The potential of sheltered housing and assisted housing models should be considered in consultation with the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government.	Collaboration with the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government is on -going and includes the development of a demonstration project for supported living

Hospital Waiting Lists

841. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health his views on the dropping of the four scoliosis surgery wait targets for 2018 contrary to the Ombudsman for Children's recommendations contained in the report, *Waiting for Scoliosis Treatment - A Children's Rights Issue*; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55028/17]

842. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health his views on the fact that there are no agreed surgical criteria for scoliosis surgery or agreed plan for 2018 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55029/17]

845. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the plan for 2018 in regard to children who are waiting on scoliosis surgery and procedures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55032/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 841, 842 and 845 together.

I continue to support the HSE in its efforts to bring down the waiting times for and improve access to scoliosis services. Waiting list numbers on the scoliosis active waiting list dropped from 312 patients in February 2017 to 156 by 31 December 2017. This is as a result of the concerted efforts of staff and clinicians across the treating hospitals, HSE and Children's Hospital Group to increase activity within our children's hospitals, the Mater and Cappagh hospitals as well as of outsourcing initiatives developed by the HSE. 371 surgeries took place in 2017 across all treating hospitals both home and abroad, including two hospitals which were successful in an international tender run by the HSE for paediatric spinal fusion procedures.

A Paediatric Scoliosis Services Co-Design group is in place, which includes clinicians, hospital staff and representatives from the scoliosis advocacy groups, to design a comprehensive contemporary and patient-centred approach to the delivery of scoliosis services.

€9 million investment funding has been allocated for 2018 to the HSE for the development of paediatric orthopaedic services including scoliosis. The 2018 Service Plan includes a commitment from the HSE to continue to improve access to paediatric orthopaedics, including surgery for scoliosis, in conjunction with the Children's Hospital Group to achieve clinically appropriate waiting times. This will be underpinned by the development of a standardised pathway of care for children and adolescents with scoliosis which will be evidence-based and patient-centred. Further development of Scoliosis services will be guided by the recommendations emerging from the work of the Co-Design Group. The Co-Design Group is also working towards publishing agreed criteria for surgery which are based on clinical grounds and national and international best practice.

The HSE has confirmed that the 4-month target for accessing surgery for scoliosis will be maintained into 2018 and beyond.

Hospital Waiting Lists

843. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the HSE surgery target wait time for children who are clinically tested for scoliosis surgery as of 1 January 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55030/17]

844. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the reason the 20 scoliosis surgeries due to be completed in France did not go ahead (details supplied); the number of com-

pleted surgeries outsourced under the scoliosis plan; the number of parents who were formally asked if they would consent to their child's surgery being outsourced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55031/17]

848. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health when the amalgamation of wait lists for paediatric scoliosis intervention across the children's hospital group to one central wait list will take place (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55035/17]

849. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the progress that has been made to date especially on Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin, waiting times for first appointment with a paediatric orthopaedic consultant (details supplied); the measures that have been taken to ensure that no child is at risk while waiting for their first consultation with an orthopaedic consultant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55036/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 843, 844, 848 and 849 together.

As these are service matters, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly.

Question No. 845 answered with Question No. 841.

Paediatric Services

846. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health when the two additional orthopaedic consultants for Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin, will be appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55033/17]

847. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the timeframe for the orthopaedic theatre in Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin, to open for additional days and to be at full capacity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55034/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 846 and 847 together.

€9million investment funding has been allocated to the HSE for the development of paediatric orthopaedic services including scoliosis for 2018. The 2018 Service Plan includes a commitment from the HSE to continue to improve access to paediatric orthopaedics including surgery for scoliosis in conjunction with the Children's Hospital Group to achieve clinically appropriate waiting times.

In relation to the queries on staffing and theatre capacity, as these are service issues, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Questions Nos. 848 and 849 answered with Question No. 843.

Question No. 850 answered with Question No. 736.

Mental Health Commission

851. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health if a report has been commissioned by him or submitted to his Department by an external body on or relating to the Mental Health Commission; if these reports found issue with the Mental Health Commission; if the reports are of the view it is not fit for purpose; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55039/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): No report has been commissioned by my department or myself on or relating to the Mental Health Commission. Likewise, neither my department nor myself have received a report on or relating to the Mental Health Commission from an external body finding issue with the Commission or expressing the view that it is not fit for purpose.

The Mental Health Commission itself contracted Mazars Ireland consultancy services to conduct an organisation structure review of the Commission. The final report was submitted to my department in late December 2016. The report noted that resource gaps have emerged across the organisation but these are being addressed by my department in conjunction with the Commission to ensure that it continues to deliver on its current and future mandate.

Mental Health Commission

852. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health when the appointment of the board and CEO of the Mental Health Commission began. [55040/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Seven members were appointed to the Board of the Mental Health Commission on 5 April 2017. Two were appointed on 26 September 2017, with the final appointment on 31 October 2017.

Mr John Saunders was appointed Chair Designate of the Mental Health Commission on 5 April 2017. His re-appointment as Chair was confirmed by Cabinet on 14 November 2017.

The term of all Board members is to 4 April 2022 and details of each member can be found on the Commission website – www.mhcirl.ie.

Ms Patricia Gilheaney was appointed CEO of the Mental Health Commission on 29 October 2011.

Mental Health Commission

853. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health the timeframe for the enacting, signing, commencement and implementation of primary and secondary legislation related to the Mental Health Commission; and when outstanding work in this regard will be completed. [55041/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Mental Health Commission is a statutory body whose functions are set out in the Mental Health Act 2001.

Amendments to the Mental Health Act 2001 based on the recommendations of an Expert Group Review of the Act in 2015 are currently being progressed. The review contained 165 recommendations, most relating to proposed changes to our mental health legislation. The Deputy can find the full text of the Review on my Department's website at the following link: <http://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Dept-Health-Report-Expert-Group-for-website.pdf>. The report contains recommendations relating to revised criteria for detention, revised definitions of mental illness and treatment, a greater role for Authorised Officers where involuntary admissions are being considered, improved safeguards for involuntary admission to approved centres, improved safeguards for change of status from voluntary to involuntary patient and shorter times for Tribunal hearings. These changes and others, when included in revised mental health legislation, will further improve the protections available to involuntary patients in this country.

Government has approved plans to proceed with the general scheme of a bill and officials are working on the heads of the amending bill which will legislate for the recommendations of the Review. My Department and I accept the importance of advancing this work as quickly as possible. It is a comprehensive legislative undertaking which must also now take account of the provisions of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 which was enacted after completion of the Expert Group Report. I expect the text of the General Scheme of a Bill to be significantly progressed by mid-year with consultation then to take place in Quarters 3 and 4 with the Mental Health Commission on refining the draft text. Once the General Scheme is completed, it will be forwarded to Government for approval before publication.

Mental Health Commission

854. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health the respective annual budgets for the Mental Health Commission since its establishment; the details of costs incurred, in tabular form; the date on which funding was allocated; and if funding was returned. [55042/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Please find, in tabular form, the Mental Health Commission annual allocation and the funds drawn down each year and not drawn down, since its establishment in 2002.

Year	Allocation - €m	Actual Drawdown - €m	Under-drawn - €m
2002	0.120	0.120	0.000
2003	2.000	2.000	0.000
2004	3.975	3.975	0.000
2005	15.464	5.980	9.484
2006	12.000	6.250	5.750
2007	20.500	17.380	3.120
2008	16.600	16.600	0.000
2009	19.012	17.950	1.062
2010	18.190	11.625	6.565
2011	15.000	13.200	1.800
2012	14.700	13.165	1.535
2013	14.406	12.430	1.976
2014	13.974	12.205	1.769
2015	13.974	12.750	1.224
2016	13.974	13.250	0.724
2017	14.274	13.000	1.274

A more detailed breakdown of the Commission's Annual Financial Statements, including costs incurred for each year, can be found on their website – www.mhcirl.ie.

The date of issue of letter of determination to the Commission each year has varied due to the finalisation of the Annual Finance Budget, the HSE National Service Plan and the work of the Department of Health in general.

Mental Health Commission

855. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health the recruitment process for staff

for the Mental Health Commission; and the steps in the process such as approval, advertising, interviewing, offers and commencement of employment. [55043/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I have been advised by the Mental Health Commission (MHC) that the following is a summary of the recruitment process:

Approval Stage

- Where a vacant and/or replacement post is identified the process in terms of approval and recruitment for vacancies and/or replacements is the same;
- The MHC prepares and submits a Business Case to the Mental Health Unit in the Department of Health. A standard template is used;
- The Department of Health Mental Health Unit reviews the request and may revert to the Mental Health Commission (MHC) for clarification/further information;
- Following review the Mental Health Unit forwards the MHC Business Case with a recommendation to the National Human Resources Unit in the Department for decision;
- If the Business Case is for a Principal Grade or above, the National Human Resources Unit liaises with Department of Public Expenditure and Reform;
- If the Business Case is for a grade up to and including Assistant Principal, the National Human Resources Unit can make a decision based on the merits of the case;
- The MHC receives the decision in relation to sanction including any conditions that must be met (for example, commencement at the first point of the relevant pay scale).

Recruitment Stage

- On receipt of sanction the MHC proceeds to commence the recruitment campaign which involves the following steps;
- The recruitment agency (appointed through public procurement processes) is formally requested to assist in the recruitment of the relevant post(s);
- Detailed candidate information booklet(s) are compiled by the recruitment agency with assistance from the MHC;
- Advertisements for the National Press are prepared and appropriate arrangements made for publication;
- The standard application process follows which may vary depending on the post being advertised and the urgency of the requirement
 - Submission of an application within 2-3 weeks of the advertisement.
 - Shortlisting and/or
 - Preliminary interview and/or
 - Competitive interview.
 - Interview board make a recommendation to the Chief Executive.
 - Issuing of a preliminary letter to successful applicants regarding appointment subject to

satisfactory completion of the verifications process to include reference checks, qualifications identified as essential criteria, Garda vetting and overseas police vetting if the applicant has lived abroad for a period greater than six months (for certain posts); health check.

- Prior to issuing a contract of employment the draft contract must be prepared and submitted to the Department of Health National Human Resources Unit and copied to the Mental Health Unit. The terms and conditions including pension arrangements may vary depending on whether the successful applicant is an established officer or a new entrant.

- The Department of Health National Human Resources Unit notifies the MHC of its decision in relation to the draft contract.

- A letter of appointment with contract is issued to the successful applicant.

- Commencement date varies as it takes into consideration the notice period that the successful candidate may have to serve with a current employer.

- Contract of employment is signed by the appointee and the MHC and a copy is submitted to the Department of Health National Human Resources Unit and copied to the Mental Health Unit.

- The appointee receives an induction programme on commencement in their role with the Commission. Depending on the role concerned specific training may be required.

Mental Health Commission

856. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health the nature of the services provided by the Mental Health Commission; the dates these services began; and his future plans for greater service provision. [55044/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Mental Health Commission is an independent body which was set up in 2002. Its functions are set out in the Mental Health Act 2001. The main functions are to promote, encourage and foster high standards and good practices in the delivery of mental health services and to protect the interests of patients who are involuntarily admitted to a mental health approved centre.

Responsibilities as set out in legislation include:

- Appointing persons to mental health tribunals to review the detention of involuntary patients and appointing a legal representative for each patient;

- Establishing and maintaining a Register of Approved Centres, i.e. a register of inpatient facilities providing care and treatment for people with a mental illness and mental disorder;

- Setting up Mental Health Tribunals for patients, who are involuntarily admitted to an approved centre. The Tribunal consists of independent people who review a patient's admission to decide if the law was followed;

- Making Rules regulating the use of specific treatments and interventions such as ECT (Electroconvulsive Therapy), seclusion and mechanical restraint;

- Developing Codes of Practice to guide those working in the mental health services and enable them to provide high quality care and treatment to service users; and

- Appointing the Inspector of Mental Health Services who annually inspects mental health

services.

Amendments to the Mental Health Act 2001 based on the recommendations of an Expert Group Review of the Act in 2015 are currently being progressed. The review contained 165 recommendations, most relating to proposed changes to our mental health legislation. The report contains recommendations relating to revised criteria for detention, revised definitions of mental illness and treatment, a greater role for Authorised Officers where involuntary admissions are being considered, improved safeguards for involuntary admission to approved centres, improved safeguards for change of status from voluntary to involuntary patient and shorter times for Tribunal hearings. These changes and others, when included in revised mental health legislation, will further improve the protections available to involuntary patients in this country.

The Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015 provides for the establishment of the Decision Support Service within the Mental Health Commission to support decision-making by and for adults with capacity difficulties and to regulate individuals who are providing support to people with capacity difficulties.

The Act extends the statutory remit of the Mental Health Commission to include wide-ranging regulatory and information functions for the Director of the Decision Support Service.

Further information on the Mental Health Commission, its role and the nature of services provided can be found on their website – www.mhcirl.ie.

Health Services Staff Remuneration

857. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the steps he will take to address the problem of health care assistants receiving lower pay than HSE staff for the same work in view of the fact that much of their funding comes from the HSE; his views on health care assistants receiving minimum wage while much of the revenue of profit-making private homes comes directly from the State; and if this is a policy of his Department. [55045/17]

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 and therefore, the HSE has no role in determining the salaries or other terms and conditions applying to these staff. Accordingly such arrangements offered by individual providers will vary. 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.

Health Services Provision

858. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 239 of 31 May 2017, the status of the provision of a service at a hospital (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55051/17]

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.

Hospital Appointments Status

859. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health when an appointment for cataract surgery will be scheduled for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55059/17]

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 Care Professionals

860. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the role, responsibilities and duties of the outreach paediatric palliative care nurse based at Letterkenny University Hospital and servicing County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55065/17]

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

861. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of families of service users that were contacted to take part in the ongoing review into services for children with complex needs and their families in CHO1, specifically County Donegal; the reason not all the families of service users were asked to take part; the reason the families of service users and other relevant stakeholders have not been kept adequately updated on the progress of the review to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55066/17]

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

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Services for People with Disabilities

862. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the membership of the steering group in respect of the national quality assurance initiative established as part of the review into services for children with complex needs in CHO1; the reason the steering group is not open to external groups and stakeholders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55067/17]

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

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Respite Care Services Data

863. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of children in County Donegal who require respite services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55068/17]

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 Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Question No. 864 answered with Question No. 736.

National Treatment Purchase Fund Eligibility

865. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if cataract operations are available under the National Treatment Purchase Fund; if so, the hospitals in which it is available; the qualifying criteria for persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55080/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Reducing waiting times for patients is one of the Government's key priorities. October's Budget announced a total 2018 allocation of €55m for the National Treatment Purchase Fund for 2018. This significant increase in funding more than doubles their 2017 total allocation of €20m.

Cataracts are among the most common procedures carried out in the Ophthalmology spe-

cialty and were a key focus of the NTPF initiatives in 2017 with significant progress achieved. Between July and December the overall cataract waiting list was reduced by 2,000 and the number waiting over 15 months was reduced from almost 1,600 to just over 300. NTPF figures for the end of December showed more than half of cataract patients are waiting less than 6 months and 72% are waiting less than 9 months. In 2018 the NTPF will continue to arrange the provision of treatment for Inpatient/Daycase patients across a range of specialties and procedures including the provision of cataract operations and I expect to see further progress due to the increased Government funding being made available.

The NTPF work with public and private hospitals in order to provide access for patients to treatment and the hospitals and initiatives are evaluated in line with standard procurement practice. This criteria consists of a combination of price per treatment and the experience of the hospital in providing similar treatments to its patients.

The HSE and NTPF are working together to develop Waiting List Action Plans for 2018. These plans will see a continued focus on long-waiting patients and overall waiting lists.

Cross-Border Health Services Provision

866. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if cataract operations are available for Irish persons in Belfast under the cross-border directive; his views on whether it would be more appropriate and cost-effective to have these treatments carried out here under the National Treatment Purchase Fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55081/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Directive on Patients' Rights in Cross Border Healthcare provides rules for the reimbursement to patients' of the cost of receiving treatment abroad, where the patient would be entitled to such treatment in their home Member State and supplements the rights that patients already have at EU level through the legislation on the coordination of social security schemes (Regulation 883/04).

The Health Service Executive (HSE) operates the EU Directive on Patients' Rights in Cross Border Healthcare in Ireland. In line with practice in other EU Member States, the HSE, through the National Contact Point (NCP) office, provides information for patients on the Cross-Border Directive on its website - <http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/schemes/cbd/> - and also by phone. The principal function of the NCP is to facilitate exchange of information for patients concerning their rights and entitlements relating to receiving healthcare in another Member State, in particular the terms and conditions for reimbursement of cost and the procedures for accessing and determining those entitlements.

The HSE have confirmed that a person may avail of cataract surgery under the Cross Border Directive.

Reducing waiting times for patients is one of this Government's key priorities. October's Budget announced a total 2018 allocation of €55m for the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) for 2018. This more than doubled its 2017 total allocation which was €20m. This year, there will be continued focus on long-waiting patients and overall waiting list numbers. This funding will enable the provision of treatment patients on the Inpatient/Daycase Waiting List across a range of specialties and procedures. The NTPF will work with both public and private hospitals in order to provide access for patients to treatment. Further, additional funding of €10m in 2018 will be dedicated to addressing other waiting lists, including children in need of paediatric orthopaedic and scoliosis procedures. Planning for 2018 is ongoing by the HSE and the NTPF.

The NTPF made significant progress on cataracts in 2017. Between July and December the overall cataract waiting list was reduced by 2,000 and the number waiting over 15 months was reduced from almost 1,600 to just over 300. NTPF figures for the end of December showed more than half of cataract patients are waiting less than 6 months and 72% are waiting less than 9 months. I expect further progress to be achieved in this speciality in 2018 given the significant increase in the NTPF budget.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

867. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health if the delay in providing medical footwear for a person (details supplied) will be investigated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55085/17]

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

Services for People with Disabilities

868. **Deputy Hildegarde Naughton** asked the Minister for Health when funding will be provided to an organisation to enable it to commence an agreed outpatient care package for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55096/17]

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.

Medicinal Products

869. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Health if consideration has been given to publishing the minutes and scheduled agenda of all future HSE drugs committee meetings to ensure transparency in this process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55133/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the community drug schemes, in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

Community Care

870. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health when an appointment for the community physiotherapy paediatric service will be provided for a person (details supplied) in

Dublin 11; the reason for the delay in providing an appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55134/17]

871. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the average waiting times for the community physiotherapy paediatric service in north-west County Dublin; the number of children on the waiting list, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55135/17]

873. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the staffing constraints affecting the north-west County Dublin community physiotherapy paediatric service which are causing serious delays to children seeking appointments with the service; the steps he will take to address this matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55137/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 870, 871 and 873 together.

As these questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for them to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Health Services Staff Data

872. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff serving in the north-west County Dublin community physiotherapy paediatric service; the grade, whether full-time or part-time, job description and location of each, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55136/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Question No. 873 answered with Question No. 870.

Hospitals Funding

874. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the budget allocations in each of the years 2009 to 2017 for each hospital in the Ireland East Hospital Group, in tabular form. [55140/17]

875. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the budget allocations in each of the years 2009 to 2017 for each hospital in the RCSI hospitals group, in tabular form. [55141/17]

876. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the budget allocations in each of the years 2009 to 2017 for each hospital in the Dublin Midlands Hospital Group, in tabular form. [55142/17]

877. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the budget allocations in each of the years 2009 to 2017 for each hospital in the University of Limerick Hospitals Group, in tabular form. [55143/17]

878. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the budget allocations in each of the years 2009 to 2017 for each hospital in the South-South-west Hospital Group, in tabular form. [55144/17]

879. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the budget allocations in each of

the years 2009 to 2017 for each hospital in the Saolta hospital group, in tabular form. [55145/17]

880. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the budget allocations in each of the years 2009 to 2017 inclusive for each hospital in the Children's Hospital Group, in tabular form. [55146/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 874 to 880, inclusive, together.

As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Hospital Staff Data

881. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff, by itemised categories, for each hospital in the Ireland East Hospital group in each of the years 2009 to 2017. [55147/17]

882. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff, by itemised categories, for each hospital in the RCSI hospitals group in each of the years 2009 to 2017 [55148/17]

883. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff, by itemised categories, for each hospital in the Dublin Midlands Hospital Group in each of the years 2009 to 2017. [55149/17]

884. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff, by itemised categories, for each hospital in the University of Limerick Hospitals Group in each of the years 2009 to 2017. [55150/17]

885. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff, by itemised categories, for each hospital in the South-South-west Hospital Group in each of the years 2009 to 2017. [55151/17]

886. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff, by itemised categories, for each hospital in the Saolta hospital group in each of the years 2009 to 2017. [55152/17]

887. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff, by itemised categories, for each hospital in the Children's Hospital Group in each of the years 2009 to 2017. [55153/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 881 to 887, inclusive, together.

I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Medicinal Products Availability

888. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Health the reason a drug (details supplied) is not available to persons suffering from multiple sclerosis here in view of the fact it is being reimbursed in the UK and Scotland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55158/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the community drug schemes, in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

Community Care Provision

889. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if a long-term plan will be provided for a facility (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55164/17]

890. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the number of long-term patients in a location (details supplied); the number of respite patients; his plans in terms of using it as a step-down facility; the occupational therapy provided on the site; the rehabilitation provided on the site; the number of staff on the site; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55165/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 889 and 890 together.

As these are service matters I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Dental Services Provision

891. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when an appointment for urgent orthodontic treatment will be allocated to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55168/17]

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

Disabilities Assessments

892. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 336 of 28 November 2017, the reason a person (details supplied) is only on the HSE's assessment of need waiting list since 13 June 2017 even though the HSE acknowledged the application for an assessment of need by the person's parents in October 2016. [55170/17]

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.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Eligibility

893. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether parents of children with ADHD who need medication should be legally entitled to retrospective repayment from the HSE for the costs of treatment for ADHD from the time that the Ombudsman decided that it should be included in the long-term illness scheme in 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55177/17]

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.

Hospital Waiting Lists

894. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be called for cataract surgery in the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital. [55178/17]

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.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Eligibility

895. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that under the Child Care Act 1991 the legal definition of a child is a person under 18 years of age, excluding a person who has been married; the reason funding for children needing access to ADHD medicine under the long-term illness scheme is stopped at 16 instead of 18 years of age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55181/17]

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.

Question No. 896 answered with Question No. 737.

Hospital Overcrowding

897. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health his plans to support Naas General Hospital in addressing overcrowding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55183/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

898. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the length of the waiting list in Tallaght hospital to visit a consultant in a department. [55184/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The NTPF publishes the Inpatient/Daycase and Outpatient waiting list figures by specialty for each hospital on its website each month. This information is available at *www.NTPF.ie*. The most recent figures published by the NTPF for the end of December 2017 indicate that there is a total of 4,176 people on the Inpatient/Day case waiting list for Tallaght Hospital and a total of 26,808 people on the Outpatient waiting list for Tallaght Hospital.

Counselling Services Provision

899. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the educational background required for a counselling position with the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55189/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Dental Services Provision

900. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the reason the Tuesday dental surgery which operates at Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown, for persons with special needs has had its output cut from treating three persons per session to treating just one person; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that this is causing delays for persons seeking such treatment; if his decision will be reversed and the full service restored; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55202/17]

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

Question No. 901 answered with Question No. 737.

Departmental Properties

902. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the vacant properties and land not in use, owned, rented or leased by his Department or by bodies and agencies under its aegis by square footage for buildings and acres for land, in tabular form; the address and location of

these properties; and the last date of occupancy or use of these properties. [55214/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department does not have any vacant or unused properties or land not in use. Details for other bodies under the aegis of the Department are operational matters for the bodies concerned and the Deputy should contact the relevant Director/CEO/Registrar directly.

Hospital Appointments Status

903. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55221/17]

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.

Water Fluoridation

904. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Health if the expert body on fluorides and health will consider a paper (details supplied); and his views on its conclusions. [55222/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health to examine the study to which the Deputy refers and I will write directly to the Deputy once the Expert Body has provided its advice.

National Lottery Funding Disbursement

905. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the reason the disbursement of lottery grants to a group (details supplied) has been delayed; if this disbursement can be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55223/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department administered a National Lottery Discretionary Fund during the years 2008 to 2016 from which once-off grants were paid to community and voluntary organisations providing a range of health related services. My Department no longer operates a National Lottery Fund. However, the HSE operates a similar scheme and continues to provide grants to health agencies and other organisations from National Lottery funds.

I have asked the Health Service Executive to reply directly to the Deputy regarding this particular query.

Hospital Appointments Status

906. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of appointments for two scans for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55224/17]

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.

HSE Funding

907. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE is making funding available to an organisation (details supplied) in order to pay for legal advice regarding the release of the final reports on the two audits of that organisation carried out by the HSE in 2015. [55225/17]

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

908. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55226/17]

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 Appointments Status

909. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be maintained for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55233/17]

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.

Medical Card Applications

910. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when a medical card will issue in the case of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55234/17]

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.

Home Help Service Provision

911. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if allocated hours of home help service will be commenced for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55235/17]

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.

Medicinal Products Availability

912. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the status of the assessment of Kuvan; when a final decision will be made to make Kuvan available to persons with PKU; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55246/17]

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.

Home Help Service Data

913. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the figures regarding a service (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55250/17]

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

914. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect to be called; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55254/17]

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 Funding

915. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health if there are grants or rebate schemes to help persons diagnosed with COPD with the cost of running some of the oxygen machines and other electrical appliances required as part of their treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55257/17]

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

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

916. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a device for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55266/17]

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

Hospital Appointments Status

917. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55268/17]

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

Medical Card Eligibility

918. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding the issuing of general practitioner card to carers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55270/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In December 2017, I announced the Government's intention to provide all carers who are in receipt of a Carer's Allowance access to GP care without charge. Primary legislation will be required to give effect to this measure and my Department has begun work in this regard. Subject to the agreement of Government to the specific legislative proposals drawn up, it is my objective to have this legislation prepared and brought to the Oireachtas as soon as it is possible.

I acknowledge the important role that GPs play in our health service and I remain strongly committed to the development of a new, modernised GP services contract. Engagement with GP representatives in this regard is underway and I am hopeful that agreement can be reached

in the coming months on service developments that can be introduced during 2018. It is open to GP representative bodies to raise any which their members may have with my Department and the HSE as part of the ongoing contractual engagement process.

The Government is committed to the continued development of GP capacity to ensure that patients across the country continue to have access to GP services and that general practice is sustainable in all areas into the future. I want to ensure that existing GP services are retained and that general practice remains an attractive career option for newly qualified GPs. Efforts undertaken in recent years to increase the number of practising GPs include changes to the entry provisions to the GMS scheme to accommodate more flexible/shared contracts, and to the retirement provisions for GPs under the GMS scheme, as well as the introduction of enhanced supports for rural GP practices. Separately, the number of GPs being trained is being increased. The Programme for Partnership Government commits to increasing the number of GP training places to 259 places annually. In 2009, there were 120 places available and in 2017 there were 170 places filled an increase of over 40%. The HSE's 2018 National Service Plan envisages a further increase, to 187 places this year.

Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council

919. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if he will request the PHECC and the HSA to meet with non-recognised institutions or instructors for first-aid training in order to resolve the ongoing problems as a result of their prohibition on advertising by non-recognised and smaller providers. [55271/17]

1104. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding first-aid courses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1972/18]

1116. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health his plans to resolve the situation which has arisen with the HSA and the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council to ensure that all qualified first-aid response course instructors here are recognised for workplace training and are permitted to advertise their courses in order to ensure fairness to all involved. [2067/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 919, 1104 and 1116 together.

The Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) is the statutory body responsible for standards, education and training in the area of pre-hospital emergency care. In 2014, PHECC developed the First Aid Response (FAR) education and training standard, building on its foundational Cardiac First Response course.

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) is responsible for the enforcement of Occupational First Aid (OFA) provisions of Part 7 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007. I understand that since September last, FAR is now recognised by the HSA as the recognised standard to meet occupational first aid needs in the workplace. Both the HSA and PHECC have issued joint communications to inform OFA providers and instructors, recognised institutions, students and employers of the key activities and milestones over the course of the transition from OFA to FAR, the most recent of which was provided on 13 December 2017.

Training institutions/individuals who wish to conduct courses and award PHECC qualifications must comply with and meet the Council approved PHECC Education and Training standard commensurate with the particular course they wish to conduct and certificate they seek to

award. Therefore, training organisations, including sole traders, who wish to deliver FAR and FAR instructor training are encouraged to become Recognised Institutions (RI) with PHECC. This involves an application process and a commitment to adhere to Council rules for Recognised Institutions and the Quality Review Framework. There is no prohibition on any training provider being recognised by PHECC to deliver training, provided that they meet the standard set by Council. In the interest of protecting patients and the public, only approved organisations and individuals are permitted to advertise PHECC approved courses or use the PHECC logo on promotional material.

I have been assured that PHECC has and will continue to meet organisations and/or individuals to address any issues or concerns that have arisen in relation to the transition from the OFA to the FAR standard.

Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council

920. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission legal assessment regarding the PHECC approach to non-recognised and small first-aid training instructors. [55272/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) is an independent statutory body with responsibility for professional regulation in the area of pre-hospital emergency care including the recognition of professional qualifications.

Accordingly, the Deputy's query has been referred to PHECC for direct response.

Services for People with Disabilities

921. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health the timing of a person's (details supplied) transition from nursing home care in Newcastle West, County Limerick, through a six-week trial in a supported-living environment to independent living accommodation at Cashel, County Tipperary, including dates of each planned stage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55276/17]

922. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application for a wheelchair by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55277/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 921 and 922 together.

As these are service matters I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Administration

923. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health the status of the rule of the fair deal scheme to cap at three years the assets of persons and small business owners; when he expects it to be implemented; the way in which it will impact on persons already in nursing homes and paying these assets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55278/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS) is a system of financial support for those in need of long-term nursing home care. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their income and assets while the State pays the balance of the cost. The Scheme aims to ensure that long-term nursing home care is accessible and affordable for everyone and that people are cared for in the most appropriate settings.

When the NHSS commenced in 2009, a commitment was made that it would be reviewed after three years. The Report of the Review was published in July 2015. Arising out of the Review, a recommendation to examine the treatment of business and farm assets for the purposes of the financial assessment element of the Scheme. The programme for a Partnership Government has also committed to reviewing the NHSS to remove any discrimination against small businesses and family farms. I am committed to this review, however, it is important to remember that the NHSS is largely underpinned by primary legislation and changes to the NHSS will require legislative implementation.

On this basis, I requested legal advice from the office of the Attorney General regarding potential changes to the legislation that will address this matter. The Department has recently received this advice and are exploring the legislative changes necessary and any potential impacts as a result of amending the scheme. It is not possible to comment on the specific queries the Deputy has raised at this time in advance of any proposed changes to the scheme being presented and progressed through the Oireachtas.

I have recently met with representatives from the I.F.A and the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association to discuss the matter and will continue to do so in the future.

Mental Health Services Provision

924. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 375 of 21 November 2017, his plans for a national forensic mental health ICRU to be constructed in the south east; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55279/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As indicated in my reply of 21 November last, and also a follow-up response of 7 December last to the Deputy from the Health Service Executive, Phase 2 of the National Forensic Mental Health capital project envisages the provision of regional Intensive Care Rehabilitation Units (ICRUs). This will be in addition to the new Unit under construction at Portrane, as part of the overall forensic mental health complex now being developed there. It is intended that additional regional ICRUs will be prioritised within the HSE capital programme over the medium term, as resources allow, and in light of evolving service priorities overall for the mental health. It has been proposed over recent times that such new units be located in the HSE South and HSE West regions, with possibly another located in the Midlands, thus enabling the enhancement of the Forensic Mental Health infrastructure nationally.

The Deputy can rest assured that I, in conjunction with the HSE, will keep the development of the National Forensic Mental Health Service under review, including best meeting the needs of all regions of the country.

Mental Health Services Provision

925. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health his plans to provide an inpatient

mental health unit for children in the south east; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55280/17]

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 Care Infrastructure Provision

926. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the amount of capital funding that has been allocated for the national forensic mental health hospital in each of the years 2015 to 2018; the total amount allocated to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55281/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the HSE is responsible for the delivery of health care infrastructure projects, the Executive has been requested to reply directly to the Deputy in relation to the capital funding that has been allocated for the national forensic mental health facility for each of the years 2015 to 2018.

HSE Data

927. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 333 of 14 December 2017, the overpayments identified in 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55283/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Dental Services Provision

928. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health the reason children in second and sixth classes nationally will be called back for dental checks and not all primary and secondary school-going children; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that it is very often at school dentist appointments that issues are detected at an early stage and resolved; and the reason HSE school dentists who retire are not being replaced. [55286/17]

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

HSE Staff Data

929. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of HSE employees written to in 2017 regarding an overpayment of wages and salaries in each of the years 2004 to 2007; the number of employees in each category such as nurses and so on, in tabular form; the amount of the overpayment and the reason for the overpayment; the reason for the delay in the HSE notifying the employees concerned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55288/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the

Deputy directly on this matter.

Hospital Appointments Status

930. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1003/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Departmental Correspondence

931. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Health if a reply will issue to representations submitted on behalf of a person (details supplied); the reason a response has not issued; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1005/18]

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.

Respite Care Services

932. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health the reason a full-time medical officer is required at a facility (details supplied) in County Cork in order to carry out its full-time respite care services in view of the fact that similar facilities that offer this service do not have the presence of a full-time general practitioner medical officer on-site but respite care services remain unaffected. [1009/18]

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.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Eligibility

933. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Health the reason those who suffer from haemochromatosis who do not have a medical card must pay €80 for each hospital visit to have blood removed in view of the fact that persons suffering from other long-term illnesses such as

diabetes can be treated for free; and if he will request the HSE to enable persons with haemochromatosis likewise to receive their treatment free. [1010/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Act 1970 (as amended) provides that all people ordinarily resident in the country are entitled, subject to certain charges, to public in-patient hospital services, including consultant services, and to public out-patient hospital services. Under the Health (In-Patients Charges) (Amendment) Regulations 2008, a person who has been referred to a hospital for an in-patient service, including that provided on a day case basis, will have to pay the statutory daily charge, currently €80 per day, up to a maximum of €800 per year. On this basis, where venesection for persons suffering from haemochromatosis is classed as a day case procedure and is not carried out in an out-patient setting, the public in-patient charge applies.

While it is not envisaged that haemochromatosis will be included on the Long Term Illness scheme, my Department is currently examining arrangements for patients with Hereditary Haemochromatosis in the context of the recommendations set out in the HSE's 'Model of Care Report for Therapeutic Phlebotomy for Patients with Hereditary Haemochromatosis'.

Hospitals Building Programme

934. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health the development plans for the accident and emergency facility at Mayo University Hospital; if a modular extension is planned for 2018; when a permanent structure will be built; the staffing plans in place for 2018 across all grades; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1012/18]

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.

Nursing Home Services

935. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the reason nursing homes caring for elderly clergy are not subject to the same regulations as all other nursing homes; and his plans for same. [1014/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is an independent statutory authority established to drive high quality and safe care for people using health and social care services in Ireland. Since 2009 all nursing homes whether public or private are registered and inspected by HIQA. This includes a number of nursing homes operated by religious organisations. Under Section 2 of the Health (Nursing Homes) Act 1990, premises in which the majority of the persons being maintained are members of a religious order or priests of any religion are offered an exemption to registration. The exclusion of Religious orders was debated at the time of passage of the Bill in 1989 and 1990. It was recognised that a religious community caring for its members was akin to the family of the members of the religious order and therefore should be excluded in the same manner as the legislation excludes care by a family member of another family member such as a child caring for a parent or a spouse.

Dental Services Provision

936. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health the status of a dental clinic (de-

tails supplied); the measures being taken to continue to provide dental services and speech and language therapy for the community; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1016/18]

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

Hospital Admissions

937. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding hospital admissions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1017/18]

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 Admissions

938. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) who suffered a severe stroke and is currently a patient at University Hospital Kerry and has been recommended for the National Rehabilitation Hospital, Dún Laoghaire, can expect to be transferred there; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1018/18]

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.

Hospitals Building Programme

939. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health the reason there is no reference to the promised 96-bed unit for University Hospital Limerick in the capital infrastructure section of the HSE 2018 national service plan; when the design team will be appointed; when it is anticipated that the project will go to tender; when it is expected that a capital allocation will be made to allow for construction to commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1024/18]

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.

My Department has asked the HSE to reply directly to the Deputy in respect of the proposed 96-bed extension at University Hospital Limerick.

Hospital Overcrowding

940. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health the interim arrangements planned to address the shortage of beds in the mid-west that is contributing to University Hospital Limerick having the highest number of persons waiting on trolleys in 2017, a trend that is continuing in 2018 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1025/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Tackling overcrowding in EDs is a key commitment of this Government and €30 million was made available for winter pressures in 2017 and a further €40 million in 2018 as part of the 2018 Budget.

I can assure the Deputy that all the Winter Plan measures funded by increased investment by Government, like increased access to home care, transitional care and diagnostics along with additional acute bed capacity, are being implemented to deal with the extra pressures our health service is experiencing. As part of these measures, I can confirm that 17 beds have already been opened at University Hospital Limerick.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Home Care Packages Provision

941. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if further home care hours will be provided for a person (details supplied) as a matter of urgency. [1034/18]

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 Data

942. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the cardiology wait times at University Hospital Waterford from August to December 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1046/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The NTPF publishes waiting list figures by specialty for each hospital on its website each month. This information is available at *www.NTPF.ie*.

The Waiting List data published by the NTPF for University Hospital Waterford indicates the following in respect of cardiology wait times:

- August Waiting List: Inpatient Day Case: 441 waiting; Outpatient: 750 waiting;
- September Waiting List: Inpatient Day Case: 450 waiting; Outpatient: 764 waiting;
- October Waiting List: Inpatient Day Case: 324 waiting; Outpatient: 800 waiting;

- November Waiting List: Inpatient Day Case: 318 waiting; Outpatient: 822 waiting; and
- December Waiting List: Inpatient Day Case: 425 waiting; Outpatient: 844 waiting.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

943. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the PPCI wait times at University Hospital Waterford for each month in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1047/18]

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 reply to you directly.

Services for People with Disabilities

944. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide the funding necessary for the full-time appropriate day-care services required in the case of a person (details supplied); if he will investigate the matter and provide a lifelong care plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1048/18]

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.

Disability Support Services Provision

945. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of nursing support for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1050/18]

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.

Disability Support Services Provision

946. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application for nursing support by a school (details supplied). [1053/18]

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.

Hospital Staff Data

947. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health the number of radiologists in each hospital, in tabular form; and the amount of radiology scans carried out by each hospital in each of the years 2011 to 2017. [1054/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Hospital Staff Data

948. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health the number of consultants working at University Hospital Kerry who were not, or are not now, on the specialist register in each of the years 2011 to 2017, inclusive, by department, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1061/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

HSE Reviews

949. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health the new procedures put in place at University Hospital Kerry after a recall and review of a number of radiology scans at the hospital in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1062/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In early September, the HSE advised of a patient safety issue which had been identified in University Hospital Kerry (UHK) involving three cases of misdiagnosis/failure to diagnose. An extensive review is now underway, involving an audit of 46,202 images relating to 26,751 patients. The audit commenced on 23 October 2017 and is expected to be completed shortly. A South/South West Hospital Group Safety Incident Management Team (SIMIT) commissioned by the CEO of the S/SWHG and chaired by the Chief Operations Officer is in place and meets weekly. University Hospital Kerry is currently operating a helpline for patients who may have queries which is open 9am-5pm on working

days.

The current priority is to ensure this look back review is completed as swiftly as possible, following which there will be a more detailed focus on identifying any and all issues arising in relation to processes and procedures.

Services for People with Disabilities

950. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health the reason funding was not provided to an organisation (details supplied) for the appointment of an education officer and information officer; if a recent application from this organisation seeking support for two additional full-time positions will be reviewed; the level of funding received by the organisation in each of the past five years; if there is an up-to-date data base showing the numbers who have dyspraxia, DCD; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1065/18]

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

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Emergency Departments Data

951. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients on trolleys in 2017 in Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin, in tabular form. [1069/18]

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.

Emergency Departments Data

952. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients on trolleys in 2017 in the Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital in tabular form. [1070/18]

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.

Emergency Departments Data

953. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients on trolleys in 2017 in Tallaght children's hospital in tabular form. [1071/18]

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.

Emergency Departments Data

954. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients on trolleys in 2017 in Children's University Hospital, Temple Street, in tabular form. [1072/18]

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.

Substance Misuse

955. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons treated for steroid use or abuse in each of the years 2009 to 2017, by sex and age ranges; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1073/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

HSE Planning

956. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the target set by the HSE for hospitals for private practice income to be generated for 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1074/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Following the delivery of the national budget in October, and the receipt of the Letter of Determination from the Department of Health, the HSE completes its service planning for the next year. This process starts with the preparation of the National Service Plan for the year which sets out the type and volume of health and social services to be delivered at a national level, within the resources available. The completed National Service Plan 2018 has been published on the HSE website.

The next step in the planning process, after approval of the Service Plan, is the preparation of the more detailed operational plans for each Division/Hospital Group. The 2018 income targets for the hospital groups will be agreed between the Hospital Groups and the HSE Directorate as part of the operational planning process. When the operational plans are completed they are also published on the HSE website.

The detailed operational plans are currently being prepared by the HSE. I am not in a position to comment further in relation to this until the process has been completed.

HSE Planning

957. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if the recommendation by the national stroke programme, as part of the phased introduction of early supported discharge for a further nine teams to be established over a three-year period, is part of the 2018 national service plan; his plans to fund same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1075/18]

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

Hospital Beds Data

958. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health his plans to increase the number of stroke beds; the number and location of each; if funding is being made available in the HSE service plan for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1076/18]

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

Stroke Care

959. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health his plans to increase the number of stroke units; if so, the number and the locations of each; if funding is being made available in the HSE service plan for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1077/18]

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

Stroke Care

960. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the consideration being given to the expansion of thrombectomy; the actions being taken to advance the recommendations of the HIQA health technology assessment of mechanical thrombectomy; if this is part of the 2018 national service plan; his plans to fund same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1078/18]

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

Stroke Care

961. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health his plans to address infrastructural and equipment issues in respect of the provision of thrombectomy services in Beaumont Hospital; the level of capital expenditure required to replace the existing angiography suite and open a second angiography suite; if this is being provided for in the HSE national service plan or otherwise; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1079/18]

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 Services

962. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health his plans to address the geographical gap in heart failure services in the South/South West hospital group area; if this has been provided for as a priority in the HSE service plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1080/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the specific issues raised, I

have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Home Help Service

963. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if the agreed name change from home help to community health care assistant has been finalised; when it will come into operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1083/18]

964. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if the recommendations of the WRC regarding community health care assistants around the issues of rosters, travel time and time off have been implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1084/18]

977. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when his Department will approve the new contracts and the name change for persons who are currently working as HSE home helps to community home care assistants (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1158/18]

1085. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter raised in correspondence (details supplied) concerning the change of title of home care staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1785/18]

1099. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health his plans to amend the job title of home help assistant to community health care assistant as per recommendations from the various workers' unions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1951/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 963, 964, 977, 1085 and 1099 together.

I can confirm that my Department did not object to any name changes proposed for Home Helps. I understand that agreement between the parties was reached at the Workplace Relations Commission on 10 January 2018 on various issues, including a new title for the grade. A time frame for the implementation of the provisions of the agreement will be determined between the parties.

Hospital Services

965. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the number of times the maximum capacity protocol was engaged at Letterkenny University Hospital during 2017; the way in which this compares to 2015 and 2016; the number of operations cancelled in 2017 as a result of the maximum capacity protocol being engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1085/18]

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 the Deputy directly.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

966. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a list of each orphan medicine reimbursed here, in tabular form. [1088/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of

Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the pricing and reimbursement of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

967. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a list of each orphan medicine not reimbursed here, in tabular form. [1089/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the pricing and reimbursement of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Question No. 968 answered with Question No. 736.

Services for People with Disabilities

969. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health his plans to provide funding for an education officer and an information officer for an organisation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1091/18]

970. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health his plans to increase funding for an organisation (details supplied) to enable it to provide services for families living with dyspraxia/DCD; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1092/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 969 and 970 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 service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

971. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if clinical expert opinion will be included in the decision-making process for the reimbursement of Vimizim; if consultation with local expert opinion will also be taken into account by the HSE drugs group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1093/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the community drug schemes, in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

972. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether the current QALY-based system for reimbursing orphan drugs is inappropriate; his plans to engage with key stakeholders to reform the system to take into account evidence from other jurisdictions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1094/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the community drug schemes, in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

Hospice Services Provision

973. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health his plans to ensure there is appropriate funding for night-time community palliative hospice care in the home for persons at end-of-life stage in order that the necessary level of care is maintained over the Christmas period and not reduced (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1108/18]

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.

Nursing Staff Recruitment

974. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the progress made by the Government by the end of 2017 on its commitment, following the Workplace Relations Commission negotiations with the INMO in summer 2017, to increase the nursing and midwifery workforce by over 1,200 to over 37,000 before the end of 2017; the number of additional nurses recruited; the total number of nurses and midwives employed by the Government at the end of 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1117/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): This Government acknowledges the need to increase the numbers of consultants, doctors, nurses and midwives in the public health service and it remains a priority for this Government despite a backdrop of global shortages in health professionals. The Nursing Recruitment and Retention Agreement reached last year at the Workplace Relations Commission between this Department, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the HSE, INMO and SIPTU Nursing provided for a number of specific measures to attract and retain nursing staff.

The Agreement committed to increasing the number of nurses and midwives by 1,224 additional permanent posts in 2017. According to the most recent figures nursing and midwifery numbers at the end of November 2017 stood at 36,616 whole time equivalents. The number of nursing posts has increased by 820 in the 12 months from end November 2016 and by over 2,500 in the four years from end November 2013 to end November 2017.

In addition to increasing the number of nursing staff, management agreed to other key measures such as extensive education and personal development opportunities for nurses and midwives to upskill including 120 Advanced Nurse Practitioner training places which are now filled. The Agreement also includes 127 promotional posts for staff nurses/midwives to Clinical Nurse/Midwife Manager 1 and a pilot pre-retirement initiative has been offered as a method

of retaining the expertise of experienced nursing/midwifery staff. Following discussions at the public sector pay talks in the summer last year a number of nursing allowances were restored.

I am awaiting a report with the December 2017 figures which is due at the end of this month. However, based on information to date it appears unlikely that the target of 1,224 posts will be achieved but I can assure the Deputy that the recruitment of nurses and midwives remains a key priority for 2018.

Hospital Appointments Administration

975. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1156/18]

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 the Deputy directly.

HSE Staff Data

976. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 298 of 10 October 2017, when his Department will allow the HSE to record data for home help workers in the general staffing numbers of HSE employees, in view of the fact that the employment framework for the HSE has to be approved by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1157/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): From the beginning of 2018, the Department of Health has requested that Home Helps should be included by the HSE in the formal Health Services Personnel Census.

Question No. 977 answered with Question No. 963.

Hospital Appointments Administration

978. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be scheduled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1162/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its be-

half, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The 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 the Deputy directly.

Hospital Services

979. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the number of times the full capacity protocol was initiated at University Hospital Limerick in 2017 and to date in 2018. [1163/18]

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 the Deputy directly.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

980. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients outsourced at University Hospital Limerick in 2017, in tabular form. [1164/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Reducing waiting times for patients is one of the Government's key priorities. Throughout 2017, the HSE and NTPF have worked together to drive down long wait times for inpatient and daycase procedures. The NTPF has worked with both private hospitals to arrange insourcing and outsourcing initiatives. Patients on the waiting list for University Hospital Limerick were authorised for treatment through these initiatives.

The NTPF has not as yet received the final reports of numbers who accepted the offer of treatment and numbers of patients who received their treatment. In relation to the specific query regarding the numbers of patients outsourced, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Emergency Departments Data

981. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the number of emergency department attendances at University Hospital Limerick in 2017, in tabular form. [1165/18]

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 the Deputy directly.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

982. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the outpatient waiting times at University Hospital Limerick in 2017, by speciality and wait time bands (details supplied). [1166/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The NTPF publishes the waiting list figures by specialty and time band each month. This information is available on *www.NTPF.ie*. With respect to those waiting over 2 years I have asked the HSE to reply to the Deputy directly.

Emergency Departments Data

983. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on trolleys in each month of 2017 at University Hospital Limerick, in tabular form. [1167/18]

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 the Deputy directly.

Hospitals Funding

984. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the operating budget for University Hospital Limerick in 2017 and 2018, in tabular form. [1168/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospitals Expenditure

985. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the capital budget or capital spend at University Hospital Limerick for the years 2017 and 2018, in tabular form. [1169/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the HSE is responsible for the delivery of health care infrastructure projects, the Executive has been requested to reply directly to the Deputy in relation to the capital budget or spend at University Hospital Limerick for the years 2017 and 2018.

Hospitals Expenditure

986. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the agency spend at University Hospital Limerick for the years 2016 and 2017; and the estimated spend for 2018, in tabular form. [1170/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Nursing Staff Data

987. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the number of whole-time

equivalent nursing positions in place at University Hospital Limerick in each of the years 2016 and 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [1171/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Beds Data

988. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the number of beds operational at University Hospital Limerick in each of the years 2016 and 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [1172/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospitals Data

989. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the number of outpatient hospital cancellations at University Hospital Limerick in each of the years 2016 and 2017, in tabular form. [1173/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospitals Data

990. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the number of inpatient hospital cancellations at University Hospital Limerick in the years 2016 and 2017, in tabular form. [1174/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospitals Data

991. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the number of inpatient and outpatient did-not-attends at University Hospital Limerick in the years 2016 and 2017, in tabular form. [1175/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospitals Data

992. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the number of theatres operational at University Hospital Limerick in each of the years 2016 and 2017 and to date in 2018. [1176/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospitals Capital Programme

993. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the capital projects agreed and funded at University Hospital Limerick; and the details of each project. [1177/18]

994. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the cost of each capital project funded by the HSE and-or his Department at University Hospital Limerick in each of the years 2016 and 2017 and to date in 2018. [1178/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 993 and 994 together.

As the issues raised by the Deputy are operational matters, I have asked the HSE to reply to him directly.

Hospital Accommodation Provision

995. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if the opening of beds in community hospitals in Kenmare and Dingle will be sanctioned (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1188/18]

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 Administration

996. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be scheduled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1195/18]

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 the Deputy directly.

Occupational Therapy Data

997. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff in paediatric occupational therapy services in the HSE's Dublin north-west area and the area covered by the Navan Road primary care centre who are on long-term sick leave, maternity leave or other such leave; if these members of staff will have their leave covered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1197/18]

998. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Health the waiting times for paediatric occupational therapy in the area covered by the Navan Road primary care centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1198/18]

999. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Health the waiting times for paediatric occupational therapy services in the HSE's Dublin north-west area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1199/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 997 to 999, inclusive, together.

As these questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for them to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Mental Health Services Provision

1000. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Health the national policy with regard to the provision of adolescent psychotherapy services; the various services provided in each CHO area; his plans to enhance adolescent psychotherapy services in each CHO area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1214/18]

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.

Long-Term Illness Scheme

1001. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if FreeStyle Libre will be added to the long-term illness scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1253/18]

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.

Hospital Facilities

1002. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health if there is 24-hour CCTV camera coverage at the HSE car park at the Crosslanes, Drogheda; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1301/18]

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 Care Professionals

1003. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of holiday pay for health care assistants (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1302/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Hospital Appointments Administration

1004. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be expedited for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1315/18]

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

Home Help Service Provision

1005. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if he will liaise with the Minister of State, Deputy Finian McGrath, in order to ensure sufficient home help services are provided in a case as a matter of urgency (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1322/18]

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

1006. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1324/18]

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 the Deputy directly.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

1007. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health his plans for the funding of the drug Vimizim; and the detail of his reply to the families he met recently on the issue. [1325/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the community drug schemes, in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

When this matter was raised in the Dáil in late November, I answered questions on the topic and then later met families in the Dáil Gallery. I listened to what the families had to say and I have discussed the matter with the HSE.

HIQA Reports

1008. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 453 of 4 April 2017, if the HIQA report submitted in November 2015 by a person (details supplied) will now be made available to the family; his plans to take action arising from the report; if the HSE and HIQA representatives will meet the family to discuss the report's findings; if the full medical records have been made available to the family; if he will review the reply given to Parliamentary Question No. 527 of 23 May 2017 in view of the reply given to the previous question referenced and provide a comprehensive reply; if a post mortem was conducted; if an inquest will be held; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1327/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is an independent authority established to promote high-quality and safe care for people using health and social care services in Ireland. HIQA's mission is to safeguard people who use health and social care services, to promote sustainable improvements and to support informed decisions about how services are delivered.

HIQA has assured the Department that information on the quality, safety and experience of people using services is vital to its work. The Authority receives, analyses and risk-assesses information from a range of sources, including residents and their families. All information is used to inform HIQA's ongoing monitoring and inspection programme.

I understand that HIQA received information from the persons concerned, and responded accordingly. The interested party was made aware of HIQA's statutory remit and that the Authority does not have the legal power to investigate individual concerns or complaints. In relation to the report of November 2015 referred to by the Deputy, which was in fact a HSE report, HIQA has advised the Department that it is not in a position to release details of that report, which is a matter between the HSE and the family members of the individual referenced. Three reports on inspections carried out by HIQA on the designated centre in question during the relevant period were published on HIQA's website between July 2016 and August 2017.

The HSE has been asked to reply directly to the Deputy in relation to those aspects of the question that come within its remit.

Emergency Departments Data

1009. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons admitted to emergency departments for the past five years due to alcohol intoxication and drugs misuse, respectively. [1329/18]

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 the Deputy directly.

Health Insurance

1010. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1338/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Officials from my Department contacted Vhi in relation to the Deputy's query. Without the specific case details it can only be assumed that this customer signed a claim form at the time of the treatment in November 2016, authorising Vhi to pay the invoices.

Vhi have advised that they process claims when they have received the collated claim from the hospital. This would include all relevant invoices from the hospital and treating consultants, in addition to a fully completed and signed claim form.

At the time of this customer's admission to hospital (November 2016), the hospital had a period of 2 years within which to submit a claim for payment following the date of discharge of the patient from hospital. This timeline has now reduced further to 1 year. Vhi have concluded and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the HSE and Voluntary Hospitals in relation to the accelerated submission and processing of claims.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

1011. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health when medical equipment will be provided to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1341/18]

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

Hospital Appointments Administration

1012. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health if he will address an issue concerning a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1349/18]

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 the Deputy directly.

Services for People with Disabilities

1013. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the efforts being made to progress a building project (details supplied) as part of a service which provides supports and training to persons with intellectual disabilities in County Donegal; if capital funding has been approved and sanctioned for this project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1351/18]

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

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

HSE Reviews

1014. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the promised regional review; and when it will be completed. [1355/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In July 2017, I agreed to expedite the commencement of a national review of all PPCI services, encompassing the South East region, and to commence the preparatory work, including examining the scope of the review. One of the guiding principles for this review is to strive to provide a PPCI service that can deliver clinical outcomes on a par with international standards. The Steering Group for the National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services has now been established and its first meeting is due to take place on 31 January. The Chair of the Steering Group is Professor Philip Nolan, President of Maynooth University. The National Review aims to report to the Minister within 12-18 months of its first meeting. Specialist cardiac services cover scheduled and unscheduled hospital-based services for the diagnosis and treatment of cardiac disease. For the purposes of this National Review, services will include diagnostic (invasive and non-invasive) services, interventional services (to manage coronary artery disease, rhythm disturbances, structural abnormalities and adult congenital heart disease with such interventions usually being performed in cardiac catheterisation laboratories), intensive cardiac care unit, heart failure service, arrhythmia management service, in-patient care for chronic cardiovascular disorders, out-patient services, rehabilitation, teaching, management functions, and sub-specialist clinics and electrophysiological services where appropriate. The National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services will examine all activity in cardiac catheterisation laboratories nationally. This will include the activity data from the mobile lab in UHW.

Patient Data

1015. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in the south-east region who had a heart attack in 2017; the number of these who were treated in County Waterford; and the number who were transported to counties Cork and Dublin. [1356/18]

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.

Patient Data

1016. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the individual travel times for the transportation of each of the persons in the south-east region who had a heart attack in 2017 out of that region when the catheterisation laboratory at UHW was closed. [1357/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Patient Data

1017. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in the south east who had a heart attack in 2017 and died from a cardiac arrest outside of the nine-to-five, Monday to Friday period. [1358/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Services

1018. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of times in 2015, 2016 and 2017 the catheterisation laboratory at UHW was opened out of hours; and the reason, date and time in each instance. [1359/18]

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 Services

1019. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of times the catheterisation laboratory was out of commission in 2015, 2016 and 2017; and the reason in each instance. [1360/18]

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.

Patient Data

1020. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons who were diagnosed in the mobile catheterisation laboratory. [1361/18]

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.

Patient Data

1021. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons treated with stents and so on in the mobile catheterisation laboratory. [1362/18]

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.

Patient Data

1022. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for interventional cardiology procedures in the main catheterisation laboratory in 2015, 2016 and 2017. [1363/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The NTPF publishes the waiting list figures each month by hospital and specialty. This information is available on the website www.NTPF.ie.

The most recent waiting list figures published by the NTPF for December 2017 indicate that there are 884 people on the Outpatient Cardiology Waiting list and 425 people on the Inpatient Daycase Cardiology Waiting List for University Hospital Waterford.

I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly with regard to the persons on the waiting list for interventional cardiology procedures.

Hospital Services

1023. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the overall cost of installing the mobile catheterisation laboratory, that is, the initial set-up costs, the day-to-day running costs and so on. [1364/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The mobile cath lab at Waterford University Hospital has been deployed for the short term provision of cardiac diagnostic angiogram services on the grounds of the hospital from 2 October 2017 for a period of 20 weeks i.e. until end of week commencing 12 February 2018. The mobile cath lab is providing a scheduled diagnostic angiography service on a 3 day per week basis. The HSE has advised that the estimated cost of the temporary additional service is €800,000 for the 20 week period.

Pharmacy Services

1024. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health his plans to introduce a pharmacy-based minor ailment scheme. [1369/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the HSE has responsibility for this matter, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this issue.

Pharmacy Services

1025. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health his plans to review regulations to allow pharmacists to treat common illnesses without the need for a person to attend a doctor's surgery, as a means of easing the pressure on general practitioner offices and accident and emergency departments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1371/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the HSE has responsibility for this matter, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this issue.

Hospital Beds Data

1026. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health when the hospital beds capacity report will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1374/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Capacity Review is examining health service capacity across all key areas of primary care, acute care and services for older people.

My Department had direct engagement with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on the terms of reference for the Review early last year. The emerging findings from the process have also been the subject of broader discussions with that Department in relation to health reform and future capital investment in the context of the mid-term review of the current capital plan and the forthcoming ten year National Development Plan.

By October 2017, significant progress had been made on data collection, data analysis, and the development of baseline projections. A public stakeholder consultation process and detailed engagement with health system experts had been carried out and the International Peer Review Group had substantively validated the Review's approach and methodology. Sufficient progress had also been made on modelling the impact of potential policy and productivity changes over the projection period.

Work on the Health Service Capacity Review is at an advanced stage. As previously indicated, the review has a wider scope than previous exercises in that it is examining key elements of primary and community care capacity in addition to acute hospital capacity. This Review will provide a basis for determining both the extent of capacity requirements over the next 15 years and the type of capacity needed. The findings will also inform the development of a new 10 year national development plan.

I expect to receive the final report very shortly and I intend to bring the report to Government and have it published as soon as possible thereafter.

Hospital Waiting Lists

1027. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1376/18]

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

1028. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited at the South Infirmiry Victoria University Hospital, Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1377/18]

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

1029. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for surgery for a person (details supplied); if an appointment will be expedited; the reason for the five year delay for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1381/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Ser-

vice 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.

Home Care Packages Provision

1030. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if home care hours will be assigned to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1388/18]

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 Provision

1031. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if home care hours will be assigned to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1389/18]

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.

Capital Expenditure Programme

1032. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Health his plans to include the day care centre in Monasterevin for funding in the HSE's capital programme. [1393/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the HSE is responsible for the delivery of health care infrastructure projects, the Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in relation to the day care centre in Monasterevin.

Paediatric Services

1033. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the waiting times for assessment for paediatric occupational therapy services, by community health organisation, for each of the past three years; the waiting times for delivery of paediatric occupational therapy services, by community health organisation, for each of the past three years, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1396/18]

1034. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons employed in paediatric occupational therapy services, by community health organisation, for each of the past three years, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1397/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1033 and 1034 together.

As these questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for them to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Hospital Waiting Lists

1035. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect an appointment [1406/18]

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.

Medical Products

1036. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the reason self-adhesive pain relief pads, previously available free of charge to medical card holders, are no longer available and have been replaced by a rub on pain relief gel, save for the purpose of pain management for persons with shingles; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that older persons and those with reduced mobility have great difficulty when applying this alternative product to sores; if this decision will be revised in view of said difficulties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1449/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Medicines play a vital role in improving the health of Irish patients. Securing access to existing and new and innovative medicines is a key objective of the health service. However, the challenge is to do this in an affordable and sustainable manner. The medicines bill for the community drugs schemes – primarily the GMS, Long Term Illness and Drugs Payment schemes and the High Tech Arrangement – is forecast at just over €1.7 billion in 2017.

To ensure patients receive the highest quality care, resources invested in medicines must be used efficiently and effectively. This requires an integrated approach to secure best value for money for all treatments, greater efficiencies in the supply chain and the use of the most cost-effective treatments.

Lidocaine 5% medicated plaster is licensed for the symptomatic relief of neuropathic pain associated with previous herpes zoster (shingles) infection, known as post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN), in adults. It has been reimbursed in the community drugs schemes from 2010. The projected budget impact was low due to the specific licensed indication but total expenditure has increased significantly, from €9.4 million in 2012 to over €30 million in 2016, mainly from off-license use for pain not associated with shingles.

An HSE Medicines Management Programme (MMP) review of this product highlighted that the clinical evidence for its use in PHN is limited due to lack of comparative data and its value is uncertain for all other types of pain. The National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics estimated that, in Ireland, between 5-10% of prescribing of this product has been for the licensed indication of PHN.

Following the MMP review, the HSE introduced a new reimbursement system for the product from 1 September 2017. This process supports its appropriate use, ensuring that PHN patients continue to receive this treatment. The HSE estimates that this protocol will reduce expenditure on this product by approximately 90%.

Under the protocol, all patients who were receiving antivirals for shingles were automatically approved for the lidocaine medicated plaster for three months. No action was required by GPs and the patient's pharmacy was notified of his or her approval status. However, from 1 December 2017, non-shingles patients no longer receive this item under the community drugs schemes. The HSE has produced information leaflets for patients and advised GPs on treatment alternatives.

In exceptional circumstances, the product may be approved for supply through the community schemes for unlicensed indications. GPs may apply for reimbursement for unlicensed indications through the online system. The MMP reviews applications before a decision is made and communicated to the GP.

Full details of the review are available on the HSE website at <http://hse.ie/eng/about/Who/clinical/natclinprog/medicinemanagementprogramme/yourmedicines/lidocaine-plaster/lidocaine-medicated-plaster.html>.

This decision is a matter for the HSE. However, I fully support the objectives of the HSE Medicines Management Programme.

Medical Card Applications

1037. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if a medical card application by a person (details supplied) can be expedited. [1451/18]

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

1038. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1453/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Ser-

vice 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.

Hospitals Capital Programme

1039. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health if plans or submissions have been made to the national social care division of the HSE on the upgrading of Lifford Community Hospital, County Donegal; when such plans or submissions were made; the details of those proposals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1454/18]

1040. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health if plans or submissions have been made to the national capital property steering group of the HSE on the upgrading of Lifford Community Hospital, County Donegal; when such proposals were made; the details of those proposals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1455/18]

1041. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health if plans or submissions have been made to the national social care division of the HSE on upgrading Ramelton Community Hospital, County Donegal; when such plans or submissions were made; the details of those proposals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1456/18]

1042. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health if plans or submissions have been made to the national capital property steering group of the HSE on the upgrading of Ramelton Community Hospital, County Donegal; when such proposals were made; the details of those proposals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1457/18]

1043. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health if plans or submissions have been made to the national social care division of the HSE on upgrading St. Joseph's Community Hospital, Stranorlar, County Donegal; when such plans or submissions were made; the details of those proposals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1458/18]

1044. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health if plans or submissions have been made to the national capital property steering group of the HSE on the upgrading of St. Joseph's Community Hospital, Stranorlar, County Donegal; when such proposals were made; the details of those proposals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1459/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1039 to 1044, inclusive, together.

The Deputy will be aware that since the announcement of the 5 year Capital Investment Programme for Community Nursing Units 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. I understand that a report has been submitted to the HSE National Social Care Division and the HSE National Capital Property Steering Group. The report will be considered by the HSE National Capital Property Steering Group in due course. Any proposals for changes to the approved Capital Investment Programme will be considered in the context of capital funding available to Health, potential revenue implications and compliance with the agreed capital approval process.

Hospital Beds Data

1045. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health the amount of long-stay residential beds, long-term accommodation beds, step-down assessment beds and dementia long-stay and short-stay beds in County Donegal for each of the years 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2017; his plans to increase bed capacity in the county; his plans to increase staffing numbers to cater for the increase; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1460/18]

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 Services

1046. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health the consultation his Department or the HSE officials have had with the Church of Ireland community on the retention of the Church of Ireland at St. Joseph's Community Hospital, Stranorlar; the level of engagement they had with the community prior to the submission of the plan to the national social care division of the HSE; the outcome of consultations other than initial contact; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1461/18]

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 Accommodation Provision

1047. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health the grant level which was approved for the retention of the long-term residential accommodation capacity in Lifford, Ramelton and St. Joseph's Community Hospitals, County Donegal in 2016 and 2017; if applications made in either 2016, 2017 or to date for the three hospitals are still awaiting funding approval by the HSE for long-term accommodation capacity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1462/18]

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 Accommodation Provision

1048. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the average number of acute

hospital beds available in public hospitals for each of the years from 2015 to 2017, by public, private and non-designated hospitals, in tabular form. [1481/18]

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 Provision

1049. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the date on which a person (details supplied) in County Cork joined the waiting list for an assessment by the child and adolescent mental health services in Cork; the timeframe for the assessment to be carried out; the number of persons ahead of this person on the waiting list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1483/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Medical Card Applications

1050. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application for a medical card by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1489/18]

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 Provision

1051. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if dialectical behaviour therapy is available to service users in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1494/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

General Practitioner Contracts

1052. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Health the status of general practitioner contract negotiations; his views on whether the outcome of these talks will have a positive impact on the delivery of out-of-hours GP services, such as the County Clare service known as Shannondoc; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1532/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The development of primary care is central to the Government's objective to deliver a high-quality, integrated and cost effective health service. The Programme for Government and Sláintecare commit to shifting the model of healthcare towards a more comprehensive and accessible primary care service in order to deliver better care close to home in communities across the country. The development of a new,

modernised contract for the provision of general practitioner services will be a key element in facilitating this process.

The aim is to develop a contract which has a population health focus, providing in particular for health promotion and disease prevention and for the structured ongoing care of chronic conditions. A new contract should be flexible and be able to respond to the changing nature of the GP workforce. It should also include provisions in relation to service quality and standards, performance, accountability and transparency. This will be key in making general practice a more attractive career.

Since 2015, negotiations have resulted in a number of service developments including the provision of free GP care to under 6's and over 70's, the introduction of a Diabetes Cycle of Care for adult GMS patients with Type 2 Diabetes and enhanced supports for rural GPs. The next phase of discussions on a new GP contract is under way and officials from the Department of Health and the HSE meet with GP representatives on a regular basis.

I am hopeful that agreement can be reached with GP representatives in the coming months on service developments that can be introduced during 2018.

Separately, the HSE's National Primary Care Division has undertaken a national review of current GP out of hours services and a final report is expected to be completed shortly. This report will make recommendations regarding the future provision of GP out of hours services.

I am confident that the GP contract review process and the out of hours review will result in service improvements across general practice, including out of hours services, benefitting both patients and GPs.

Road Traffic Accidents Data

1053. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the way in which data on serious injuries from road traffic collisions is collected and collated; the number of persons who presented to hospitals around the country with serious injuries due to road traffic collisions in each of the years 2015, 2016 and 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1542/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly.

Road Traffic Accidents Data

1054. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the way in which data on cyclists' injuries is collected and collated; the number of persons who presented to hospitals around the country with such injuries in each of the years 2015, 2016 and 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1543/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly.

Pharmacy Services

1055. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health further to parliamentary question number 213 of 4 May 2017 and subsequent replies, if he will he arrange for a comprehensive answer to be provided; and the reason for the inability to provide such an answer to date [1556/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the HSE has responsibility for this matter, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this issue.

Legislative Process

1056. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Health the projects undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation, including the cost, the duration, the number of staff required and if this process was carried out by his Department or outsourced in each of the years from 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [1567/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department did not undertake any projects on Bills to consolidate or amalgamate existing Acts during the years 2007 to 2017.

Hospital Waiting Lists

1057. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be called for surgery in St. Vincent's University Hospital. [1587/18]

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

1058. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be called for surgery in the outpatient's department at Waterford University Hospital. [1588/18]

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.

Primary Care Centres

1059. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of a primary care centre (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1595/18]

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

1060. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health if a centre (details supplied) in County Donegal will be in receipt of capital funding in view of the fact that the interim building has been occupied for nearly two years and service users are in need of a permanent structure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1608/18]

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

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Home Care Packages Data

1061. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of home care packages being provided, by county, in tabular form; if he is satisfied that the current provision of home care packages is sufficient; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1609/18]

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

1062. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited. [1617/18]

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.

Home Care Packages Provision

1063. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of a home support package for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1634/18]

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 Services

1064. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 777 of 7 November 2017, if the repair works on the operating theatres at Merlin Park hospital have been completed; if so, the date on which the works were completed; if not, the reason therefor; the date on which it is expected that the works will be completed; if the operating theatres are operational; if so, the date on which they opened; if not, the reason therefor; when it is expected that they will be operational; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1639/18]

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.

Hospital Services

1065. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 777 of 7 November 2017, the number of appointments that have been postponed, cancelled or transferred to another location due to the closure of the theatres in Merlin Park University Hospital, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1640/18]

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.

Hospital Services

1066. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 777 of 7 November 2017, if all persons whose appointments have been postponed or cancelled or transferred to another location have been contacted by the hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1641/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In response to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Services for People with Disabilities

1067. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the amount that has been spent on moving persons from congregated settings in County Kerry since the beginning of this model; the number of persons who have now been placed in decongregated settings in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1642/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The HSE's report "*Time to Move on from Congregated Settings – A Strategy for Community Inclusion*", (2011) proposes a new model of support in the community by moving people from institutional settings to the community. The plan is being rolled out at a regional and local level and involves full consultation with stakeholders.

The Programme for Government contains a commitment to continue to move people with disabilities out of congregated settings, to enable them to live independently and to be included in the community. In May 2016, 2725 people lived in congregated settings and our objective is to reduce this figure by one-third by 2021 and ultimately, to eliminate all congregated settings. A congregated setting is defined as a residential setting where people live with ten or more people.

The HSE has established a subgroup, under '*Transforming Lives*', the Programme to implement the recommendations of the Value for Money and Policy Review of Disability Services, which is developing an implementation plan for moving people from institutions. I welcome the fact that the needs of people moving from congregated settings will be fully taken into account during this process as the model of care for individuals will be based on a person centred plan.

At the end of December 2017, less than 2,500 people with a disability were living in congregated settings. The HSE's 2018 National Service Plan has set a target of 170 people to move from institutions to community living this year. I want to emphasise that the appropriate supports and resources are being put in place to ensure that people are supported as they move out of residential centres.

As the HSE is responsible for leading out on the recommendations on “*Time to Move on from Congregated Settings - A Strategy for Community Inclusion*”, I have arranged for the Deputy’s question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy with specific regard to the information sought by the Deputy in relation to Kerry.

Primary Care Centres

1068. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the expected opening date for the primary care centre in Coolock, Dublin 5; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1647/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): It is expected that Coolock primary care centre will become operational in March 2018.

Hospital Accommodation Provision

1069. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health his plans to open the closed wards in University Hospital Kerry and provide extra nurses and front-line staff to run these wards (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1652/18]

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 Accommodation Provision

1070. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health his plans to fully open all the beds in Kenmare Community Hospital and to provide adequate short-stay, long-stay and respite beds for this geographical area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1653/18]

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 Accommodation Provision

1071. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health his plans to fully open Dingle Community Hospital and to provide adequate cover for the Dingle peninsula; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1654/18]

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

1072. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive a date for surgery. [1676/18]

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

1073. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons involved, and fee arrangements that apply, in respect of a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1684/18]

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.

Dental Services Provision

1074. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) has not received a primary school dental appointment; if the appointment will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1692/18]

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

Medical Card Applications

1075. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when medical cards will issue in the case of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1695/18]

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

1076. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1731/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Question No. 1077 answered with Question No. 746.

Hospitals Building Programme

1078. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the status of construction of the patient modular unit at South Tipperary General Hospital; when it will commence operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1752/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Increasing bed capacity in public acute hospitals has been and continues to be a priority in terms of addressing the causes and challenges of Emergency Department overcrowding.

I can confirm that funding has been allocated for the modular build programme to deliver capacity at South Tipperary General Hospital, which is targeted for completion in the latter quarter of 2018.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

1079. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if a free breast pump is provided to women who give birth to premature babies and who are recommended or required to breastfeed; if not, the reason therefor; if his attention has been drawn to the financial cost and strain this places on mothers at a time of distress and anxiety; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1753/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Accommodation Provision

1080. **Deputy Hildegard Naughton** asked the Minister for Health the inpatient capacity

of University Hospital Galway; and the inpatient capacity at 1 December 2016, by the wards on which the beds are located. [1763/18]

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.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

1081. **Deputy Hildegard Naughton** asked the Minister for Health the number of outpatients on all forms of waiting lists for University Hospital Galway who have been waiting for 0 to six months, six to 12 months, 12 to 24 months, 24 to 36 months and more than 36 months respectively, by specialty. [1764/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The NTPF publishes the Inpatient Daycase and Outpatient waiting list figures for each hospital each month. This information is available on the website www.NTPF.ie.

The most recent waiting list figures for December 2017 indicate that there is a total of 38,404 people on the Outpatient Waiting List for Galway University Hospital, of which:

- 19,192 people waiting 0-6 months;
- 9,088 people waiting 6-12 months;
- 8,131 people waiting 12-24 months;
- 1,745 people waiting 24-36 months; and
- 248 people waiting more than 36 months.

Hospital Staff

1082. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health his views on the notice issued by management to interns at Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown, that they would not be paid for the care they provide as overtime between the hours of 5 p.m. and 8 a.m.; his further views on whether this is fair, in view of the fact that interns are regularly asked to work during these hours; his views on this arrangement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1767/18]

1083. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health if he has discussed with management the decision not to pay interns at Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown, for overtime work at the hospital; the steps he is taking to address this matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1768/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1082 and 1083 together.

Where interns are required by their employer to work additional hours beyond the standard working week to deliver essential patient care they should be paid in respect of those additional hours. The HSE recently reaffirmed this in respect of Connolly Hospital and other sites.

As part of the overall policy of reducing the hours that NCHDs work and attaining compliance with the maximum 48-hours average working week specified in the European Working Time Directive, there is a focus on ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Directive

in respect of interns. However where interns or other NCHDs are required to work additional hours they are entitled to be paid in respect of such attendances.

Hospitals Funding

1084. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health if all hospitals, including Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown, have adequate budgets to meet all overtime worked by all staff as appropriate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1769/18]

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.

Question No. 1085 answered with Question No. 963.

Hospital Waiting Lists

1086. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be scheduled. [1786/18]

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.

Vaccination Programme

1087. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Health his plans to provide the seasonal influenza vaccine to persons employed in schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1797/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The decision to provide seasonal flu vaccine to persons employed in schools would be a matter for the Department of Education and Skills to make. The primary focus of giving the flu vaccine is to increase vaccination rates among healthcare workers and among at risk groups (i.e. long stay residents, 65+ years, pregnant women) so as to reduce and control the incidence of flu and outbreaks in the community and healthcare settings. I encourage all those in at risk groups to get the vaccine now (if they have not already done so) as it can take up to 2 weeks to work. The vaccine will help to reduce the risk of flu, reduce hospitalisation and reduce mortality rates.

Departmental Staff Data

1088. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the proportion of employees in his Department, or in organisations under its remit, who are registered as disabled. [1859/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005 sets a legal obligation on public service bodies to meet a statutory minimum target of 3% of employees with disabilities.

The definition of a disability to be used in relation to the statutory minimum target is set out in the Disability Act 2005:

“Disability in relation to a person, means a substantial restriction in the capability of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment”

At the end of December 2016 3.75% of staff in my Department had voluntarily declared a disability in accordance with the provisions of Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005.

General Practitioner Services

1089. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Health if it is within the remit of the medical board to prevent people from changing their general practitioner, or to place a freeze on transfers to or from a general practitioner surgery. [1903/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to a service matter, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Mental Health Services Data

1090. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the number of children on the waiting list for CAMHS in County Meath; the average waiting time; and the length of time the person longest waiting on the list is waiting. [1916/18]

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 Staff Data

1091. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of advance nurse practitioners, ANPs, employed at Letterkenny University Hospital in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018; the number of ANP posts that are vacant at the hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1917/18]

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.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Administration

1092. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the reason nursing homes support scheme payments are not backdated to the date of completion of assessment; his plans to backdate them; if so, the date on which this change will come into effect; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1928/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Nursing Homes Support Scheme is a system of financial support for those in need of long-term nursing home care. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their means while the State pays the balance of the cost. The Scheme aims to ensure that long-term nursing home care is accessible and affordable for everyone and that people are cared for in the most appropriate settings. Anyone who is assessed as requiring long-term residential care can avail of the Scheme, regardless of age, as long as the person's care needs can be appropriately met in a nursing home that participates in the Scheme. The applicant can choose any public, voluntary or approved private nursing home. The home must have availability and be able to cater for the applicant's particular needs.

The Department of Health agree a set level of funding for the NHSS with the HSE each year having regard for the demand for the Scheme and the overall fiscal position. In 2017 the funding was set at €940m and provided long term residential care for over 23,000 people. In order to manage the demand for the Scheme over a 12 month period, the HSE has a target of maintaining the wait time for funding approval at no more than 4 weeks. This target has consistently been achieved since April 2015 and it is a significant reduction from the October 2014 wait time of 15 weeks. The target of 4 weeks for approval of funding remains a commitment in the Programme for Partnership Government. The budget for NHSS in 2018 has been set at €962m.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Data

1093. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons availing of the nursing homes support scheme who were required to make up the difference themselves between the date of completion of assessment and actual date of payment for 2016 and 2017; the amount involved in these years; if there are variations by geographic region as to the time involved; if so, the variations; the differences depending on the time of year for the length of time waiting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1929/18]

1094. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the way in which funding for the nursing homes support scheme is released; if those who apply early in the financial year get funded differently from those who apply at the end of the year; the way in which it is decided that a person must wait for funding following the completion of assessment; the waiting time by county in 2016 and 2017, in tabular form; if an assessment has been carried out as to the cost involved in persons waiting in acute hospitals against a more speedy process; if the ability to pay for those that must make up the shortfall is considered; if so, the way in which this is done; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1931/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1093 and 1094 together.

As these are service matters I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Protected Disclosures

1095. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to correspondence (details supplied) that was circulated to Ministers and Members of Dáil Éireann; his plans to raise the issue with the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1933/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): A key principle of the Protected Disclosure Act 2014 is that the identity of the person making such a disclosure should be protected as far as possible. On that basis, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on this case. I can confirm, however, that all protected disclosures are dealt with in accordance with agreed Departmental guidelines and every effort is made to maintain the person's anonymity.

Health Services

1096. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if the arrangement of a HSE psychology appointment for a person (details supplied) in County Wexford will be prioritised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1937/18]

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 Services

1097. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the extra resources and supports being put into hospitals to deal with the latest outbreak of influenza; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1945/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As part of Winter planning this year, all Acute Hospitals and Community Health Organisations (CHOs) were required to develop integrated Winter Plans setting out the set of measures to be put in place at each hospital to ensure they are prepared for the increased demand for services, including from the spread of influenza, that the Winter months bring.

In addition as part of the Budget 2018 announcements, an additional €40 million was provided in 2017 for additional measures to alleviate pressure on our Acute Hospitals this winter. An element of this funding was provided to support a public health campaign aimed at improving uptake of the influenza vaccination this winter.

In response to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly.

Hospital Waiting Lists

1098. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if surgery for a person (details supplied) will be scheduled. [1946/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Question No. 1099 answered with Question No. 963.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

1100. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive a replacement hearing aid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1960/18]

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

Health Services Data

1101. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the duration a blood sample is retained that had been taken for the newborn bloodspot screening; the reasons it is retained after it has been tested for its original purposes; the location at which it is stored; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1961/18]

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 for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Waiting Lists

1102. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health when an appointment for an operation will be issued to a person (details supplied). [1970/18]

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

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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.

Medicinal Products Availability

1103. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health if persons using Respreeza will continue to have this medication made available to them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1971/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the community drug schemes, in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

Question No. 1104 answered with Question No. 919.

Health Services

1105. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Health if he will request the HSE to investigate the case of a person (details supplied). [1979/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Drug and Alcohol Task Forces

1106. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the amount of funding now allocated to community drug and alcohol support programmes operated by the north east regional drug and alcohol task force in view of the Health Service Executive national service plan for 2018. [2006/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): With effect from 1 January 2014, operational and financial responsibility for the North East Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force was transferred to the Health Service Executive. Therefore, this service matter has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Drug and Alcohol Task Forces

1107. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 338 of 14 November 2017, the additional resources that will be allocated to develop a new programme to mobilise community action on alcohol in line with action No. 1.1.1 of Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery; the proposed out working of this scheme; and if it will complement existing community drug and alcohol support programmes in the north east region. [2007/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): In recognition of the key role Drug and Alcohol Task Forces play in providing a targeted response to the drug problem in local communities, I will shortly be announcing details of a range of new funding initiatives to strengthen the capacity of Task Forces to support the implementation of *Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery* during 2018.

Health Services

1108. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) was not provided with person-specific treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2010/18]

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

Cannabis for Medicinal Use

1109. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health his plans to make medicinal cannabis available under the current medical card scheme or under the long-term illness scheme; his views on whether it is time to make it available on an equitable basis to all persons, irrespective of income, in view of the fact that medicinal cannabis is now available by licence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2011/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the pricing and reimbursement of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

National Treatment Purchase Fund Eligibility

1110. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) can avail of the National Treatment Purchase Fund for dental treatment. [2019/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Reducing waiting times for the longest waiting patients is one of this Government's key priorities. Consequently, Budget 2018 allocated €55 million for the National Treatment Purchase Fund in 2018. This significant increase in funding more than doubles their 2017 total allocation which was €20m.

The HSE and NTPF are working together to develop coherent and synergistic Waiting List Action Plans in 2018 for inpatient/daycase and outpatient which will continue to arrange the provision of treatment for patients across a range of specialties and procedures. These initia-

tives will continue to focus on long-waiting patients and overall waiting list numbers.

The NTPF advise that they do have provision to send people for dental treatment if they are on a hospital waiting list. 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.

Nursing Home Subventions

1111. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if the wording used as part of a Government statement concerning the programme of investment in public nursing home facilities, HSE capital plan 2016 to 2021, in respect of a facility (details supplied) remains the position; if not, the future of services at the facility; the planned changes to service provision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2021/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Deputy will be aware that since the announcement of the 5 year Capital Investment Programme for Community Nursing Units and following discussions with public representatives, Health Forum members and local community groups, local HSE management in Donegal agreed to review overall requirements for the area. This included an assessment of the adequacy of existing facilities in St Joseph's Hospital Stranorlar, Ramelton and Lifford, taking account of amended legislation governing residential care standards 2016. I understand that a report has been submitted to the HSE National Social Care Division and the HSE National Capital Property Steering Group. The report will be considered by the HSE National Capital Property Steering Group in due course. Any proposals for changes to the approved Capital Investment Programme will be considered in the context of capital funding available to Health, potential revenue implications and compliance with the agreed capital approval process.

Nursing Home Beds Data

1112. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health the number of public nursing homes beds available in each of the years 2005 to 2017, in tabular form. [2022/18]

1113. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health the number of private nursing homes beds available in each of the years 2005 to 2017, in tabular form. [2023/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1112 and 1113 together.

Between 1997 and 2013 the Department of Health carried out a survey of long-stay units each year. Each long-stay unit (public, private and voluntary) was sent a questionnaire and the responses were collated by the Department. The aim of the survey is to provide statistics on the number of beds available for long-term care, how these beds are used and the types of residents who occupy these beds.

The results of the surveys were used to prepare the Long-Stay Activity Statistics Reports

which are published on the Department's website and can be accessed at www.doh.ie. Each report provides a breakdown of the data by Local Health Office and Category of Unit. The Deputy should be mindful however that these are self-reported survey results and have variable response rates.

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is an independent statutory authority established to drive high quality and safe care for people using health and social care services in Ireland. Since 2009 HIQA have maintained a register of all nursing homes whether public or private. The register can be accessed at www.hiqa.ie. HIQA has provided the Department with the following breakdown of the number of beds registered with the Authority between 2013 and 2017.

DCOP Registered Beds by Classification	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Private: A Nursing Home as per Health (Nursing Homes) Act 1990	21332	21713	22809	23084	23440
Public: The Health Service Executive	6151	6046	6178	6140	6094
Health Act 2004 Section 38 Arrangement / Section 39 Assistance	1302	1301	1119	1172	1198
Total	28785	28705	30106	30396	30732

I will arrange to have details of the beds registered with HIQA between 2009 to 2012 forwarded to the Deputy when they become available.

Hospital Services

1114. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health when additional capacity will be approved for a hospital (details supplied) in the delivery of a service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2028/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): A National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services is being undertaken. It will incorporate rigorous reviews of evidence and data, international peer review and stakeholder consultation. Any proposal for additional capacity in hospitals would need to be made in context of the findings of this review.

In relation to the specific query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly.

Orthodontic Services Provision

1115. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for orthodontic work for a person (details supplied) will be expedited. [2032/18]

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

Question No. 1116 answered with Question No. 919.

Health Services Data

1117. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons who have availed of the provision of ambulatory blood pressure measurement for the diagnosis and assessment of hypertension; if an analysis has been carried out of the impact of the provision of same; his plans to monitor and evaluate the provision of this service in view of its importance and given that the Institute of Public Health in Ireland has predicted a 40% increase in hypertension; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2068/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this relates to the numbers of patients with a diagnosis of hypertension by ambulatory monitoring, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Obesity Strategy

1118. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if terms of reference for the subgroups of the obesity policy implementation oversight group have been agreed; if so, if they will be made available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2071/18]

1119. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 236 of 24 October 2017, the status of the work of the reformulation subgroup of the obesity policy implementation oversight group; the work being carried out to put in place an effective methodology to monitor and evaluate the impact of the sugar sweetened drinks tax in advance of its commencement on 1 April 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2072/18]

1120. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 235 of 24 October 2017, when the subgroup on reformulation will make recommendations on addressing reduction of portion sizes and on monitoring and validation procedures; the resources required for independent testing of foods, including by external laboratories; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2073/18]

1121. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if minutes of meetings of the obesity policy implementation oversight group will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2074/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1118 to 1121, inclusive, together.

The sub-groups of the Obesity Policy Implementation Oversight Group (OPIOG) have agreed to meet and agree their draft Terms of Reference, which in the interim, remain under active consideration in the Department. The work of the Reformulation sub-group - including

work that feeds into a methodology for measuring the efficacy of the Sugar Sweetened Drinks (SSD) Tax - is therefore at an early stage. The roadmap for its reformulation work is likely to involve a framework for monitoring and evaluating reformulation targets and engagement with the food industry in this regard. I expect that the elaboration of methodologies will evolve over the course of this work while keeping in mind the proposed date for the introduction of the SSD Tax. The OPIOG also agreed to establish a sub-group for Healthy Eating. Its work is at an early stage and it is expected to meet shortly and agree its draft Terms of Reference.

My Department liaises with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) on a regular basis. The FSAI has been validating food industry salt reduction work for many years. It has carried out this work by sampling foods from the market and having them analysed in the HSE Public Analysts Laboratory in Galway. This data is published annually and is available on the FSAI website. The FSAI is exploring the validation of FDI sugar and fat reduction work. In the first instance, it has been developing baseline data on specific foods based on food labelled data and a report on this work is expected in the coming weeks.

The Deputy may wish to note that the FSAI has also advised my Department that this year, it is funding the analysis of breakfast cereal and yoghurts for sugar, fat and salt by an external laboratory as part of its reformulation validation work.

Finally, the draft minutes of the first OPIOG meeting held at the end of October last will be submitted for approval at the next meeting of the OPIOG after which they will be available. Its next meeting is expected to take place in February.

HSE Reports

1122. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the number of hours that went into producing the report in the HSE, entitled Development of an Action Plan For a New Model of Clinical Service Delivery in the Dublin Midlands Hospital Group, which was submitted to his Department on 5 December 2016 and was revised and submitted on 8 December 2017; the number of hours spent by the HSE staff in drawing up this action plan; the number of hours spent by his Department's officials in reviewing and discussing the matter; the number of hours spent by others outside of the HSE and his Department who contributed to this process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2077/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): 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 over the course of a number of months. Significant additional work was also undertaken by the HSE on foot of this engagement resulting in a revised draft plan that was submitted to my Department in September 2017.

It remains the case, as outlined at my meeting with you and the other Laois Oireachtas members in December 2017, that no decision has been made yet on the draft Action Plan for Portlaoise Hospital.

I have asked my Department to conduct a consultation process in this regard early this year involving local clinicians and the community.

Departmental Communications

1123. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if his Department uses anti-profanity software on its email systems and online contact forms; if so, the level of human oversight that is applied to the monitoring of this software and its effectiveness; his views on whether persons' legitimate right to petition Government may be blocked unintentionally by errors in the use of such software in determining that which qualifies as profanity being communicated in email and-or online contact forms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2088/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department uses automatic content filters on its email system to check incoming and outgoing mail. It does not use any software in online contact forms. If an email is deemed to be inappropriate, it is quarantined and both the sender and intended recipient are notified. This notification message provides the reason for quarantining and provides details on how the message may be delivered if it was stopped incorrectly or is business related. Releasing of appropriate messages is managed by Help Desk staff. I am satisfied that these measures provide a balance between allowing legitimate contact while protecting against inappropriate messages.

Hospital Services

1124. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Health if his Department and the HSE have reached an agreed position on the future of Portlaoise hospital; and the timeframe for the promised public consultation. [2100/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): It remains the case, as outlined at my meeting with you and the other Laois Oireachtas members in December 2017, that no decision has been made yet on the draft Action Plan for Portlaoise Hospital.

I have asked my Department to conduct a consultation process in this regard early this year involving local clinicians and the community.

Departmental Strategies

1125. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health the Government's initiatives in his Department in 2017 that promoted State services or welfare payments, public awareness of regulatory changes and public consultations that involved advertising and promotion on television, radio, newspapers and online, in tabular form; and the level of expenditure for each such initiative. [2264/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Full information requested by the Deputy is not immediately available; I will collate this information and provide a comprehensive response to the Deputy in due course.

Details in relation to newspaper advertising expenditure on public consultations held during 2017 are presented as follows:

Date	Campaign	Cost (ex VAT)
October 2017	Public Consultation Task Force on Personalised Budgets for People with Disabilities.	€5,013.56
September 2017	Public Consultation Human Tissue Legislation, Newspaper Ads	€5,013.57
July 2017	Public Consultation Home care, Newspaper Ads	€5,517.59

Fishery Harbour Centres

1126. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the discussions Enterprise Ireland has had with his Department to enhance commercial activity at the State's fishing ports, including Dunmore East, County Waterford, as recommended by a report by the Committee of Public Accounts in 2015. [54607/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The six State owned Fishery Harbour Centres at Killybegs, Ros an Mhíl, Dingle, Castletownbere, Dunmore East and Howth are managed and operated by my Department under Statute.

Following publication of the Public Accounts Committee Report on the Fishery Harbour Centres in June 2015 my Department began an engagement with Enterprise Ireland to explore the possibility of making suitable Fishery Harbour Centre properties available to potential clients of the agency to facilitate the delivery of appropriate Enterprise Ireland projects.

There has been regular contact with Enterprise Ireland in the interim, most recently in December 2017.

Fishing Licences

1127. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the recent Supreme Court decision (details supplied) in which the procedure to impose points on a fishing licence was deemed contrary to fair procedures; if he will withdraw the new statutory instrument he plans to publish regarding fishing points in order to reflect on this court decision; and his plans to consult with fishing representative bodies to decide on the best course forward. [2659/18]

1148. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the recent Supreme Court ruling (details supplied) in which the procedure to impose points on a fishing licence was deemed unfair; if the new statutory instrument he plans to publish regarding fishing points will be withdrawn in order to reflect this decision; and if fishing representative bodies will be consulted to decide on the best course forward. [54702/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1127 and 1148 together.

The Supreme Court judgments were delivered on 12th December 2017 in relation to the 2014 SI implementing a points system for licence holders. My Department is currently examin-

ing the implications of the judgments on an urgent basis.

I expect this process to be completed shortly and thereafter I intend to sign a new Statutory instrument to revoke the European Union (Common Fisheries Policy) (Point System) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 125 of 2016), which 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.

In relation to stakeholder consultation, I discussed with industry representatives my plans to bring forward a new SI at the Sea Fisheries Liaison Group meeting on 20 October 2017 and explained some key amendments I am planning and the justification for these amendments.

GLAS Payments

1128. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an application for a GLAS payment by a person (details supplied). [54317/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2016.

The applicant subsequently requested to withdraw from GLAS 1 and be included in GLAS 3. The Department has been in direct contact with the applicant and has confirmed acceptance of this request. The Department has also outlined to the applicant the financial implications of the change. The case will be finalised shortly and processed for payment of the 2017 advance.

Sheep Census

1129. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a sheep census appeal by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54359/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): In my reply to the previous PQ on this matter (46356/17) I confirmed that the applicant's initial appeal to the Department was unsuccessful and that the applicant was advised that he had the option to seek a review of this decision to a higher officer of the Department and also a subsequent right of appeal to the Agriculture Appeals Office.

Since then the applicant has submitted an appeal to the Agriculture Appeals Office who have been in contact with the applicant to arrange an Oral hearing at the end of January 2018.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

1130. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a disadvantaged area payment will be sanctioned for a person (details supplied) following their successful appeal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54407/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): An application under the 2017 Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme was received by my Department from the person named on 9th May 2017. This application has been fully processed and payment has issued to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Food Industry Development

1131. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 960 of 7 November 2017, his plans to develop satellite food innovation hubs throughout the State to work in conjunction with the national food innovation hub in Fermoy; if so, if consideration has been given to Naas, County Kildare, as a suitable location for such a satellite food innovation hub; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54426/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The primary objective of the National Food Innovation Hub is to create a business innovation network at Moorepark involving dairy companies, Moorepark Technology Ltd (MTL), incubator companies and public-private partnership-based R&D programmes. It will be directly linked to both the Teagasc Food Research Centre and MTL to engender close collaboration between the research centres and the companies located on the Moorepark campus.

My Department is providing €8.8m to support the development of this strategically important project for Ireland's agri-food sector. When realised it will be a national centre of excellence for the whole agri-food sector involving food companies and research organisations with a focus on food, health and nutrition.

Whilst my Department has no plans to fund similar projects at other locations, a major package of measures was announced in Budget 2018 to help the food industry navigate the current challenges arising from Brexit and to advance the growth objectives of Food Wise 2025.

In the areas of innovation, research and new product development, an investment of €5m is proposed to fund research and innovation in the Prepared Consumer Foods Sector. This critically important sector, which is responsible for exports valued at more than €2 billion, is particularly challenged by Brexit. My Department, working with the sector and with State Agencies, will use this funding to invest in capital equipment to support innovation in the sector.

Transfer of Entitlements

1132. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the progress to date on finalising a case (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54439/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As outlined to the Deputy in my response to Parliamentary Question number 880 in November 2017, the case has been prioritised by my Department. This is a complex case involving a number of interested parties and a number of legal issues which are being progressed with the Chief State Solicitor's Office who have been in correspondence with the solicitors for the persons referred to by the Deputy.

Scéimeanna Talmhaíochta

1133. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara cén uair a dhéanfar íocaíocht faoin scéim buníocaíochtaí agus faoi scéim na limistéar faoi shrianta nádúrtha le duine (sonraí tugtha) i gContae na Gaillimhe; cén fáth a bhfuil moill leis an íocaíocht; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [54446/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Chuir an té atá ainmnithe iarratais isteach faoi Scéim na hÍocaíochta Bunúsaí 2017 (BPS) agus faoi Scéim na Limistéar faoi Shrianta Nádúrtha (ANC) an 16 Márta 2017.

Léiríodh i litir dar dáta an 6 Nollaig 2017 a seoladh chuig an té atá ainmnithe gur lasadh píosaí talún a bhí fógartha aige ar a iarratas BPS agus dá bhrí sin nach raibh sé i dteideal íocaíochta faoin BPS. Léiríodh sa litir chomh maith na roghanna a bhí aige ina dhiaidh sin lena n-áirítear go raibh sé de cheart aige athbhreithniú a lorg. Má lorgaíonn an té atá ainmnithe athbhreithniú, ba chóir dó a chinntiú go gcuireann sé aon cháipéisí tacaíochta a mheasann sé a bheith tábhachtach isteach. Déanfaidh mo Roinnse na cáipéisí sin a athbhreithniú dá réir sin.

Tá Iarratais 2017 i leith na nÍocaíochtaí atá i gceist próiseáilte ag mo Roinnse, faoi na scéimeanna BPS agus ANC, gan na píosaí talún atá neamhcháilithe san áireamh, agus rinneadh na hÍocaíochtaí sin a íoc isteach sa chuntas bainc a bhí ainmnithe ag an duine ainmnithe dá réir sin an 14 agus an 19 Nollaig faoi seach.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Appeals

1134. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a decision will be made on an appeal in respect of the 2015 and 2016 areas of natural constraint scheme payments lodged on behalf of a person (details supplied) in County Galway; the reason for the delay in making a decision on this appeal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54447/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Applications under the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme for 2015 and 2016 were received from the above named person on 28th May 2015 and 28th April 2016 respectively. At the time of processing the applicant failed to meet the required stocking density which resulted in non payment. Following an appeal and receipt of supporting documentation, the case has now been reviewed and I am pleased to say payment will issue for both years in the coming weeks to the nominated bank account of the person name.

Scéimeanna Talmhaíochta

1135. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara cén uair a dhéanfar íocaíocht faoin scéim buníocaíochtaí agus faoi scéim na limistéar faoi shrianta nádúrtha le duine (sonraí tugtha) i gContae na Gaillimhe; cén fáth a bhfuil moill leis an íocaíocht; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [54448/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Chuir an té atá ainmnithe iarratais isteach faoi Scéim na hÍocaíochta Bunúsaí 2017 (BPS) agus faoi Scéim na Limistéar faoi Shrianta Nádúrtha (ANC) an 10 Bealtaine 2017.

Léiríodh i litir dar dáta an 5 Nollaig 2017 a seoladh chuig an té atá ainmnithe gur lasadh píosaí talún a bhí fógartha aige ar a iarratas BPS agus dá bhrí sin nach raibh sé i dteideal íocaíochta faoin BPS. Léiríodh sa litir chomh maith na roghanna a bhí aige ina dhiaidh sin lena n-áirítear go raibh sé de cheart aige athbhreithniú a lorg. Má lorgaíonn an té atá ainmnithe athbhreithniú, ba chóir dó a chinntiú go gcuireann sé aon cháipéisí tacaíochta a mheasann sé a bheith tábhachtach isteach. Déanfaidh mo Roinnse na cáipéisí sin a athbhreithniú dá réir sin.

Tá Iarratais 2017 i leith na nÍocaíochtaí atá i gceist próiseáilte ag mo Roinnse, faoi na scé-

imeanna BPS agus ANC, gan na píosáí talún atá neamhcháilithe san áireamh, agus rinneadh na híocaíochtaí sin a íoc isteach sa chuntas bainc a bhí ainmnithe ag an duine ainmnithe dá réir sin an 14 agus an 19 Nollaig faoi seach.

TAMS Applications

1136. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a decision will be made on an application under TAMS 2 that has been lodged by a person (details supplied) in County Galway; the reason for the delay in issuing this payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54449/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The applicant in question submitted a payment claim under the Young Farmer Capital Investment Scheme of TAMS II in September 2017. There were a number of issues with the claim which were resolved through direct contact with the applicant.

The issues arising have now been resolved and it is anticipated that the claim will be finalised for payment in a matter of days.

Veterinary Laboratory Funding

1137. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the funding provided to the regional veterinary laboratory structure in each of the years 2008 to 2017. [54473/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Funding provided to the Regional Veterinary Laboratory (RVL) structure in each of the years 2008 to 2017:

Year	Funding provided*€m
2008	€4.612
2009	€4.576
2010	€4.368
2011	€3.969
2012	€4.310
2013	€4.445
2014	€4.263
2015	€4.330
2016	€4.689
2017	€4.736

*Figures are attributed to expenditure specific to the veterinary research budget (inclusive of laboratory consumables) and payroll costs (inclusive of ancillary costs) for the RVLs

Bovine Disease Controls

1138. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the funding provided to the BVD eradication scheme in each of the years 2012 to 2017. [54474/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The National

Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) Eradication Programme is an industry- led programme delivered by Animal Health Ireland (AHI). A BVD Implementation Group (BVD IG) was formed in 2011 to take forward the planning and delivery of this programme. This group is comprised of Animal Health Ireland personnel, Veterinary Ireland nominees, farmer representatives and representatives of my Department.

My Department provides financial supports to farmers for the early removal of PI (persistently infected) calves within agreed timeframes under the national (BVD) Eradication Programme. The programme commenced with a voluntary year in 2012 and became compulsory on 1 January 2013. The total amount paid to farmers from 2012 to date amounted to €698,112, payments are generally made in respect of animals born and disposed of in the previous year. Payments issued in 2016 were in respect of animals born in both 2014 and 2015. The breakdown of payments by calendar year is as follows:

BVD Financial Supports 2012 - €11,400.00

BVD Financial Supports 2013 - €32,097.00

BVD Financial Supports 2014 - €84,047.00

BVD Financial Supports 2015 - €500.00

BVD Financial Supports 2016 - €344,888.00

BVD Financial Supports 2017 - €225,180.00

In addition, during the initial voluntary phase of the BVD Eradication Programme my Department also provided a direct payment to animal collectors towards the cost of disposal of P.I. calves at €15 per animal which amounted to €65,988.00.

Teagasc Funding

1139. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the funding provided to Teagasc for the purpose of training farmers in each of the years 2008 to 2017. [54475/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Teagasc has statutory responsibility for the provision of training, research and advisory services to the agri-food sector. Programmes and activities are developed in conjunction with clients and partners overseen by an Authority that is representative of the main stakeholder groups in the sector.

Teagasc training of farmers encompasses a wide variety of activities in terms of formal education courses, on-farm training and the provision of advice through its advisory services. It engages with 60,000 farmers annually, of which approximately 40,000 are contracted clients.

My Department provides Teagasc with a yearly block Grant in Aid subvention to support the delivery of its training, research and advisory services. The distribution of funding between services is an operational matter for Teagasc to determine.

The following table details Grant in Aid allocations from 2008 to 2017.

Year	Funding provided
2008	€139.964m
2009	€131.927m

Year	Funding provided
2010	€126.165m
2011	€132.156m
2012	€128.460m
2013	€121.838m
2014	€119.210m
2015	€121.639m
2016	€126.780m
2017	€128.130m

Teagasc also earn own generated operational income from competitive research programmes, client fees for the provision of research, advisory and training services, EU research funding, farm operations etc.

Its overall operating budget for 2018 is an estimated €203m. Typically, some 40% of the yearly budget is devoted to research with the remainder split half and half between advisory and training services.

Hen Harriers Compensation Package

1140. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the compensation package for persons whose lands have been affected by the hen harrier issue (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54507/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): At the outset, I would like to clarify that my Department has no role in the designation of lands. That function is exercised through the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The question of compensation does not arise, therefore, in the context of any schemes or measures introduced by my Department.

As regards the new Hen Harrier Programme, to which I presume the Deputy is referring, I should stress that this is a locally-led pilot project under the European Innovation Partnerships measure, which is not directly administered by my Department. The design and management of the programme are primarily matters for the local project team, who have consulted widely with farmers in designated areas in the development of the measures to be undertaken on the ground and associated payments.

I have provided a budget of €25 million for this new innovative agri-environment approach. This is in addition to the significant framework of support for farmers with hen-harrier designated land already in place through my Department's agri-environment scheme GLAS. Under GLAS, farmers with hen harrier habitat qualify for a payment of €370 per hectare and can earn up to €7,000 per annum through a combination of GLAS and GLAS Plus payments. The GLAS Hen Harrier action has proved hugely successful, with some 2,678 farmers now signed up. This accounts for almost 70% of all farmers with hen harrier habitat.

Response to the new locally-led programme has been similarly positive with nearly seven hundred applications received already. This programme targets in particular farmers managing large tracts of hen harrier habitat, and these can earn up to €5,000 a year or more depending on the actions undertaken and results achieved. For those already in GLAS, this can be in addition to payments currently drawn down under that scheme.

I regard both these interventions, fostered by my Department, as highly significant develop-

ments which will further the conservation of the bird as well as providing an important additional income stream for farmers in designated areas.

Question No. 1141 withdrawn.

Ceadúnas Imill Trá agus Dobharshaothraithe

1142. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pearse Doherty** den Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara an bhfuarthas comhfhreagras a seoladh chuig an Bhord Achomhairc um Cheadúnais Dobharshaothraithe agus ina gcuirtear in iúl don Bhord an imní agus an díomá atá ar choiste faoi cheadúnas a ceadaíodh i gContae Dún na nGall (sonraí tugtha); cathain a eiseofar freagra scríofa; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [54572/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I gcomhréir leis an ngnáthchleachtas, chuir an Bord Achomhairc um Cheadúnais Dobharshaothraithe (BACD) in iúl don Roinn go bhfuair sé achomhairc i gcoinne an chinnidh ceadúnas do bharshaothraithe a cheadú chun oisrí a shaothrú ag láithreán ar Thrá na Brád, Co. Dhún na nGall, dá dtagraítear ag an Teachta Dála.

Comhlacht neamhspleách reachtúil is ea an BACD ar cuireadh ar bun é chun cinntí a dhéanamh maidir le hachomhairc i gcoinne cinntí um cheadúnú do bharshaothraithe. Tá meas á dhéanamh ag an Bhord faoi láthair ar na hachomhairc dá dtagraítear ag an Teachta Dála mar chuid de phróiseas reachtúil agus, mar sin, bheadh sé míchuí focal eile a rá faoin ábhar sin sula gcuirfeadh an próiseas i gcrích.

Scéimeanna Talmhaíochta

1143. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara an bhfuil sé ar intinn scéim GLAS a athoscailt le haghaidh iarratais nua ag féachaint do na daoine a bheidh ag críochnú i scéim AEOS i mbliana agus don easpa caiteachais ar an bplean forbartha tuaithe go dtí seo; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [54573/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Comhlíonadh cheana féin an sprioc chun 50,000 rannpháirtí GLAS a fhaomhadh faoi dheireadh na bliana 2018, atá leagtha amach sa Chlár um Fhorbairt Tuaithe (CFT) 2014 - 2020. Is éacht suntasach é do na feirmeoirí agus don Roinn seo gur comhlíonadh sprioc an CFT beagnach dhá bhliain roimh an spriocdháta, agus léiríonn sé go bhfuil feirmeoirí na hÉireann tiomanta d'fhás inbhuanaithe earnáil agraibhia na tíre amach anseo.

Níl sé beartaithe againn an scéim a oscailt arís. Táim ag díriú anois ar phróiseáil na n-focaíochtaí leis na rannpháirtithe sin, agus tá gach éinne sa Roinn ag obair go dian ar na réamh-focaíochtaí sin ó 2017 a dhéanamh sna seachtainí seo chugainn. Tá an scéim GLAS ar cheann de líon mór scéimeanna CFT agus ní féidir breithniú ar aon scéim a oscailt arís ach mar chuid de bhuiséad foriomlán CFT, ar buiséad é atá tiomanta go hiomlán faoi láthair.

Feicim go hiomlán roimh ré, bunaithe ar an roghnú agus ar na réamh-mheastacháin reatha, go ndéanfar leithdháileadh iomlán buiséid an Chláir um Fhorbairt Tuaithe, sin timpeall €4 bhilliún, a chaitheamh, agus go dtarraingeofar anuas an cómhaoiniú AE iomlán de €2.19 billiún.

Exports Growth

1144. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the progress made on developing new agri-export markets in south-east Asia, including increased Bord Bia representation in the region, as recommended in a 2015 report of the Committee of Public Accounts. [54610/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I am very pleased that in 2017 Irish agri-food exports recorded their 8th consecutive year of growth to reach an estimated €13.5 billion. One of my key priorities is to further increase the market opportunity for Irish food and drinks internationally, particularly in South East Asia, a region with favourable demographics and rising incomes. This principle of market development is already a key component of Food Wise 2025, but is particularly important now in the context of Brexit.

In February 2017, I met with Ambassadors and diplomats from the ten South East Asia member countries of the ASEAN Economic Community. I highlighted the fact that the value and volume of trade in agri products to ASEAN countries is already significant, and that there is considerable potential for further growth in the future. I reiterated Ireland's commitment to furthering these important trading relationships. The ambassadors were interested to hear of Ireland's plans under Food Wise 2025 to grow its agri-food exports to €19 billion by 2025.

In November 2017 I led a week-long Government of Ireland agri food trade mission to Japan and South Korea, accompanied by Department officials, Bord Bia and representatives of industry. Over five days I met with four Senior Ministers in two major economies, was in the boardrooms of five multi-billion euro companies, and attended thirteen separate promotional events attended by over 400 Japanese and Korean buyers.

Currently Ireland has access to export beef & pigmeat to Japan and work is underway in relation to removing the certificate condition which allows only beef from cattle under 30 months of age to be exported to Japan. Market access for sheepmeat is also being sought. In the case of South Korea, Ireland has already access for pigmeat and continues the process of pursuing market access for beef, where we are one of the most advanced Member States.

While questions relating to Bord Bia staffing and representation abroad are a matter for Bord Bia, I am pleased that in 2016 Bord Bia recruited a market manager for South East Asia. While co-located with the Irish Embassy in Singapore, he has a broad remit for a number of South East Asian countries and had a key role in relation to the aforementioned Trade Mission. My Department continues to work closely with Bord Bia in relation to developing new export markets.

Industrial Development

1145. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the grants and supports, including marketing, available to assist indigenous craft beer brewers and distilleries. [54611/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Food Wise 2025 recognises the huge growth potential of craft and micro-brewing and spirit drink production and there has been remarkable development in this sector in the last few years. In this regard, there are a number of sources of grant aid and other supports provided by Government to indigenous craft beer brewers and distilleries.

Marketing and promotional support for indigenous for brewers and distillers are available from Bord Bia including the Thinking House initiative which offers Research & Development facilities to new business startups in the food and drinks industry.

Grant assistance is available from Enterprise Ireland (EI) for the development of new breweries and distilleries through the Job Expansion Fund and the Capital Investment Funding schemes.

In addition, the Government has provided support for craft and microbreweries through the tax system. As part of Budget 2017, the excise duty relief for microbreweries was increased to 40,000 hectolitres per annum while the previous Budget allowed this tax relief upfront instead of as a tax rebate, as was previously the case.

Funding may also be available to craft brewers and distillers through the LEADER programme.

National Dairy Forum

1146. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of the work of the national dairy forum set up following the abolition of EU milk quotas. [54612/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As the Deputy knows, the Dairy Forum was established in 2015 to act as a vehicle for constructive engagement on issues of strategic importance to the dairy sector. This Forum has met five times to date, and has provided a useful platform for discussion on issues such as market developments, sustainability, animal health, milk quality, price volatility, cashflow and access to finance, labour, and CAP policy.

The prospects for and ongoing development of the dairy sector are of course affected by economic, demographic, climate, currency and other factors which are outside the control of participants in the forum. However, I regard it as critically important that the policy responses to these challenges are informed by positive collaborative engagement among stakeholders, and I very much look forward to continued cooperation through the forum in the future. The next Forum will be scheduled to address issues as they arise. My Department and I are committed to working with all players in the sector to ensure that we have a sustainable dairy sector going forward.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

1147. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payments will issue to a person (details supplied) for GLAS and BPS; the reason the payments are delayed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54678/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Where the Department is served with court orders, including Orders of Garnishee and orders for the appointment of receivers by way of equitable execution, the Department takes all necessary steps to comply with the specific terms of such orders.

My Department is aware of an agreement in place through the courts between the plaintiff and person named and I can confirm that the 2017 payment due to the court order from the Basic Payment Scheme was issued on 15 November, 2017. All other scheme payments which fell

due during 2017 have been paid to the person named.

The balance of his 2017 BPS payment only became payable on 3 January, 2018. The application of the terms of the agreement supplied to my Department are unclear and it is now necessary to seek clarification from the Solicitors for the Plaintiff in this regard.

Question No. 1148 answered with Question No. 1127.

GLAS Payments

1149. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person (details supplied) has not received a 2016 GLAS payment; the reason for non-payment; the reason for the delay in issuing payment; when payment will be made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54744/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 2 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2016.

A Department inspection took place on this case during which an issue was identified. All issues have now been resolved and the case has been cleared for payment. GLAS payments are now issuing on a weekly basis.

Departmental Funding

1150. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the name and number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from his Department 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 amount of money they have spent on this particular campaign during that time; the number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from his Department that have expended resources seeking the retention of the eighth amendment; the amount of funding these organisations have received from the State in the past five years; and the amount of money they have spent on this particular campaign during that time. [54758/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I wish to inform the Deputy that my Department has not provided funding to any organisation that has expended resources seeking either the repeal or the retention of the Eight Amendment.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

1151. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his Department is seeking affidavits from persons who have had their single farm payments held up due to mountain fires; his plans to ensure all persons are paid in view of the fact that this method is both unworkable and unthinkable; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54976/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Where land has been burned between the period of 1 March and 31 August of any given year, it is not eligible for payment under the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS). My Department actively investigates incidents of illegal burning using satellite imagery.

Applicants who do not remove ineligible features, such as land burned during the period 1 March to 31 August, from their BPS applications, may have an over claim(s). Such over claims have occurred in relation to a number of 2017 BPS applicants who have declared burnt land.

These BPS applicants have been written to detailing the current position in relation to their applications and the options available to them, including the right to seek a review. Those seeking a review have been advised to submit any documentation that they deem relevant which will then be reviewed by my Department.

My Department is not specifically seeking affidavits from the BPS applicants that have been written to. However, should an affidavit be submitted, it will be considered accordingly.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

1152. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a basic payment scheme payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55005/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted a 2017 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Schemes application on 4 April 2017. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases Remote Sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue. The application of the person named was selected for a Remote Sensing inspection.

The inspection process identified an over-declaration in area and a letter detailing the initial inspection findings issued to the person named on 20th September 2017. Comments were received from the person named and a field visit was undertaken to determine the position on the ground. The outcome of this process increased the area of the over-declaration and a letter detailing the revised inspection findings issued to the person named on 5th December 2017.

Further comments on the revised inspection findings were received from the person named and were examined by officials in my Department. The outcome was that the revised inspection findings remain unchanged. The person named was notified of this outcome by letter dated 9th January 2018. In the event that the person named is dissatisfied with this outcome a review can be sought from the Remote Sensing Section of my Department.

Payment due under the Basic Payment Scheme, taking account of the over-declaration in area, issued to the nominated bank account of the person named on 11th January 2018.

Foreshore Issues

1153. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the dumping of silt off Doonsheane Head, Dingle, County Kerry, will be urgently investigated (details supplied); if the silt will be disposed of 2 km out to sea; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55027/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Dingle Fishery Harbour Centre is one of the six designated Fishery Harbour Centres which are owned, managed and maintained by my Department under Statute. The disposal at sea referred to is associated with Capital Dredging Works being carried out by the Department at Dingle Fishery Harbour Centre, to improve navigation channel access to the pier and to improve vessel ma-

noeuvrability within the harbour area.

The disposal of dredged materials at sea has been subject of a licence application and subsequent approval by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which is the appropriate statutory authority for approval of disposal at sea operations. The licensing process included a statutory public consultation period for observations to be submitted to the EPA. Notice of the application was published in the Kerryman newspaper on 29 March 2017 and details of the application, including details of studies, investigations and reports associated with the application are available on the EPA website at [www.http://epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie).

The licence was granted by the EPA on 30 November 2017.

The disposal at sea will be confined to the limits of a dumpsite specified in the licence, the exact co-ordinates of which are detailed in the licence, as issued. The co-ordinates and a map of the dump site are available at [www.http://epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie).

The Department has been made aware of some concern regarding the dumpsite and has been in contact with the concerned parties and is keeping them informed.

Severe Weather Events Response

1154. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if an appeal by a person (details supplied) to the weather-related crop loss scheme will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55076/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): An application under the Weather Related Crop Loss Measure was received from the person named on 23 August 2017. Following processing of the application and initial direct contact with the applicant, the application was deemed not eligible as no proof of off-farm sales was submitted.

Accordingly, a letter was issued to the applicant outlining this and an official from my Department was in further direct contact to outline the details required to progress this application. My Department will continue to process this application with a view to an early resolution.

Departmental Schemes

1155. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons waiting for their 2016 applications for all relevant schemes to be processed; the monetary value of the applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55110/17]

1156. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons waiting for their 2017 applications for all relevant schemes to be processed; the monetary value of the applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55111/17]

1158. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the schemes in his Department that were behind schedule on expenditure at the end of November 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55113/17]

1160. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount that has been recovered from persons in all relevant schemes in each of the years 2014 to 2017 and to date in 2018; the areas to which this money is then allocated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55115/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1155, 1156, 1158 and 1160 together.

The information requested in questions 55110/17; 55111/17; 55113/17 and 55115/17 is not readily available. The information is being collated and will be forwarded directly to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Sheep Welfare Scheme Expenditure

1157. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount of the 2017 sheep welfare budget allocation that was not required; his plans for this unused allocation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55112/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): In December 2016 I introduced the Sheep Welfare Scheme to contribute to the continuing viability and sustainability of the sheep sector in Ireland. The Scheme is funded through the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014 - 2020 and it complements the range of other RDP supports available to sheep farmers under schemes such as GLAS, TAMS, Knowledge Transfer and the Areas of Natural Constraint scheme.

Advance payments in the amount of €16 million under the first year of the Sheep Welfare Scheme have already issued. Balancing payments issue in respect of these applications will issue in 2018, which will bring the total for Year 1 of the Scheme to approximately €19m.

The details of the Sheep Welfare Scheme, including the amount of payment to participants, were approved by the European Commission in 2016. The payment rates are based on the agreed costings underlying the actions to be undertaken in the scheme, and an increase in the funding allocated to existing actions would thus require changes to the actions currently being undertaken by farmers, or the addition of new actions. Any such changes to the details of the scheme would require the agreement of the European Commission via the formal Rural Development Programme amendment process.

Year 2 of the Scheme has now been opened and new entrants to the sheep sector can apply for the Scheme at this stage should they wish to do so.

Question No. 1158 answered with Question No. 1155.

Land Parcel Identification System

1159. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to establish a communication channel for agricultural planners and advisors in order that they can contact the company that digitises maps for his Department in view of the fact that this could help to speed up the correction of issues with digitised maps in applications for agricultural schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55114/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is the body with responsibility for administering direct payments to farmers via a number of different area based schemes, such as the Basic Payment Scheme. Arising from this, the Department maintains the Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) which fulfils two primary functions:

- the identification and positioning of agricultural and forestry parcels, and

- the determination of the eligible area of land parcels

Some of this LPIS work is contracted out to an external company but the Department remains responsible for the maintenance of the LPIS. On this basis, there is no plans to establish a communication channel between agricultural planners and advisors and the company that carries out the maintenance and updating of the LPIS.

With a view to resolving issues that may arise in processing applications received by the Department as quickly as possible, my Department does maintain a number of avenues for communication with agricultural planners and agents, as well as the applicants themselves.

For example, the Department maintains a dedicated advisor e-mail service, which has received very positive feedback from advisors as well as telephone helpdesks and an on-line response facility for queries.

My Department is continuously reviewing these communications channels with a view to making ongoing improvements to the service that it provides.

Question No. 1160 answered with Question No. 1155.

Basic Payment Scheme

1161. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to retain the current definition of an active farmer from 2018 onwards after the approval of the omnibus rules by the European Parliament; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55116/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The recently approved Omnibus Regulation allows Member States the flexibility of retaining the current administrative checks under the Basic Payment Scheme in relation to active farmers on an optional basis from 2018. I have decided to retain the current approach in 2018, with the possibility of reviewing this approach in future years.

Drainage Schemes

1162. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to introduce grant aid for land drainage for farmers due to severe wet weather; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55117/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): At this juncture, the budget for the Targeted Agriculture Modernisation scheme (TAMS) is already fully committed to current eligible items included in the scheme under our Rural Development programme. Support for land drainage is not therefore included in programme.

It must also be recognised that any such measure would require full compliance with environmental requirements including the need for a full national Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessments for any potentially affected Natura Areas. Such requirements in any potential measure should not be considered insignificant as would the challenge of securing European Commission approval.

Nitrates Action Programme Review

1163. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the conditions attached to the recent renewal of Ireland's nitrates derogation 2018 to 2021; the measures he plans to implement to mitigate the negative impact of the conditions on the sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55130/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The process of reviewing Ireland's Nitrates Action Programme took place over much of 2017 under the remit of the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government. The review took place against the backdrop of an expanding national dairy herd and a slight disimprovement in water quality over the previous monitoring period.

From the outset the ambition was to ensure a balanced Nitrates Action Programme supporting efficient farming and also protecting and improving water quality. The successful negotiation of the continuation of Ireland's derogation was also a key priority for this Department.

In December 2017 Ireland secured a positive vote on the renewal of our nitrates derogation for the period 2018-2021 on the basis of a strengthened set of water protection measures. This contrasts with other EU Member States which have had severe difficulties in negotiating a successful renewal of their derogations.

The derogation allows herdowners farm at a more intensive stocking rate than normally allowed, subject to complying with specific conditions. The derogation is highly important in order to facilitate continued expansion of the dairy sector and for achievement of the targets set out in FoodWise 2025. There are additional conditions for derogation farmers to comply with which will improve on farm efficiency and contribute to the continued international recognition of the environmental sustainability of Irish agriculture which is vital in the context of significant agricultural exports in a competitive world market.

In order to be eligible to apply for a derogation farmers must have sufficient livestock manure storage. Storage requirements have been mandatory since the introduction of the Nitrates regulations a decade ago.

Half of all slurry produced on a derogation farm must be applied by 15 June annually. After this date slurry may only be applied using low emission equipment. Farmers are increasingly utilising their manures to greatest effect applying a greater percentage in the spring time. The condition further supports that move but also takes account of the fact that agriculture is responsible for 98% of ammonia emissions and that the nitrogen loss from slurry to the atmosphere through ammonia volatilisation in the summer is almost twice that of slurry applied in the spring time. Slurry application by Low Emission Slurry Spreading (LESS) equipment reduces losses by 30% compared to application by splash-plate and reducing ammonia losses results in increased nitrogen uptake by grass. These measures will play an important role in improving efficiency, and reducing nutrient losses to air and water on the more intensively stocked derogation farms, against a backdrop of increase numbers of such farms.

Farmers can also apply for grant assistance for the purchase of LESS equipment under the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme (TAMS) and secure funding of 40% of the cost-rising to 60% for young trained farmers. Applications to date for this scheme have been very strong and have exceeded expectation indicating that farmers are embracing this technology.

It is critically important that we achieve the objective of improved water quality in a balanced and proportionate manner securing the long term development ambitions for the industry and avoiding the challenges that are now being faced in some other Member States. The current

programme and derogation conditions aims to achieve these twin objectives.

Hen Harriers Threat Response Plan

1164. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount of money to be allocated to the hen harrier scheme; the scoring criteria to be used to define a person's qualification for the scheme; the maximum amount that a person can qualify for in one application; when it is planned to open applications; when the process will reach the payment stage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55131/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): At the outset, I should stress that this is a locally-led pilot project under the European Innovation Partnerships measure, and is not directly administered by my Department. The design and management of the programme are primarily matters for the local project team, who have consulted widely with farmers in designated areas in the development of the measures to be undertaken on the ground and associated payments.

Funding for the Programme is provided through Ireland's Rural Development Plan and I have allocated a budget of €25 million for the Hen Harrier Programme.

The Programme has been open for applications since the 8th December 2017 and all information regarding the selection criteria and payments available to farmers can be found in the Terms and Conditions for the Programme. The Terms & Conditions and all other information can be obtained from the Hen Harrier project team and are also available on their website www.henharrierproject.ie.

As stated above, the management of the programme is undertaken by the locally-led Hen Harrier project team and all decisions on issues with regard to payment dates and payable amounts are matters for them. I understand, however, that first payments to participating farmers will issue in 2018.

Tillage Sector

1165. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of applications received under the tillage compensation payment scheme; the number of approved applicants; the number of successful applicants that have been paid; and the amount paid out under the scheme to date. [55173/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The crop loss support measure was launched in July 2017 to assist farmers most affected by the wet weather harvest conditions of September 2016. A total of 167 applications were received under the measure.

To date 63 applicants have received payments of €288,845.30. In a large number of cases, further information or clarification is required in order to fully process applications. In all of these cases, the applicants have been contacted directly by an official from my Department. As the further information requested is received, these cases will be examined again and subsequent pay runs will be put in place as more cases are cleared for payment.

Departmental Properties

1166. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the vacant properties and land not in use that are owned, rented or leased by his Department or by bodies and agencies under the aegis of his Department, by square footage for buildings and acres for land, in tabular form; the address and location of these properties; and the last date of occupancy or use of these properties. [55204/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The six State-owned Fishery Harbour Centres at Killybegs, Ros an Mhíl, Dingle, Castletownbere, Dunmore East and Howth are managed and operated by my Department under Statute. The property portfolio at the six Fishery Harbour Centres consists of 215 properties, the income from which supports the running of the Harbours. With two exceptions, these properties are not residential.

The table following lists 19 properties, buildings and land under the remit of the Fishery Harbour Centres which are currently vacant. The majority of these are industrial properties.

Apart from five properties, most of the properties are subject to legal, operational or planning considerations before they can be considered for tender. The remaining properties are unsuitable for occupation.

Vacant properties and land not in use, owned, rented or leased by State Agencies is an operational matter for the Agencies themselves. Agencies under the remit of my Department have been asked to reply directly to the Deputy.

Location	Address	Building or Land	Measurement *	Last Date of Occupancy or use
Castletownbere Fishery harbour Centre (FHC)	Site 12, Dinish Island	Land		Undeveloped Land being prepared for Department use as part of major new development on Dinish Island
Castletownbere FHC	Site 15 Dinish Island	Land		Undeveloped land being prepared for Department use as part of major new development on Dinish Island
Castletownbere FHC	Site 16, Dinish Island	Land	Total area of sites 12, 15 & 16 – 13,700sq.m	Undeveloped land being prepared for Department use as part of major new development on Dinish Island

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Location	Address	Building or Land	Measurement *	Last Date of Occupancy or use
Dunmore East FHC	Site 25	Building	1712.5 sq.m	2017
Dunmore East FHC	Site 18	Building	1134 sq.m	2017
Dunmore East FHC	Site 22	Building	1205 sq.m	2017
Howth FHC	37-4 (A) Claremont Industrial Estate	Land	376 sq.m	2013
Howth FHC	Store 22 East Pier	Building	16.64 sq.m	Unsuitable for occupation
Howth FHC	Store 25 East Pier	Building	64.13 sq.m	Unsuitable for occupation
Howth FHC	Store 27 East Pier	Building	59 sq.m	2013 Unsuitable for occupation
Howth FHC	Mariners Hall, West Pier	Both	950.5 sq.m	2012
Killybegs FHC	Island House	Building	159 sq.m	2017
Killybegs FHC	Old Coastguard Station	Building	890 sq.m	2013
Killybegs FHC	Site 2	Land	1.6 acres	New Development site
Killybegs FHC	Auction Hall	Building	1171.2 sq.m	Partly occupied
Ros an Mhil FHC	Ferry Ticket Office No.2	Building	21.5 sq.m	2016
Ros an Mhil FHC	Cafe, Ferry Ticket Office building	Building	21.5 sq.m	2007
Co Galway	Harbour Master House, Derroe, Ballinahown, Rossaveel, Co Galway	Building	Site 0.25 Acres House 195 Sq.m	2008
Co. Donegal	Harbour Master House, Ballyloughan, Brucklass, Killybegs, Co. Donegal	Building	Not available	Circa 2005

*Measurements are approximate.

Fodder Crisis

1167. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to ease the fodder crisis in counties Cavan and Monaghan and across the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55228/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Weather conditions for much of last autumn and early winter were challenging for farmers, particularly in parts of the West/North West. This resulted in the earlier housing of stock and challenges for some farmers in terms of fodder conservation. On foot of these challenges, I prioritised the payment of farm supports to assist farmers with cash flow. The European Commission agreed to my request, informed in part by the poor weather conditions of last autumn, for an advance payment of the 2017 Basic Payment Scheme and agri-environment schemes. These payments commenced after the earliest date possible which was 15 October, and balancing payments issued in early December.

These payments together with those issued under the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme, injected over €1.3 billion into the Irish rural economy by the end of last year and are providing a very welcome boost for Irish farm families and will help to finance fodder purchase where necessary.

Last autumn as poor weather conditions continued, I then asked Teagasc to work locally in areas with fodder difficulties, supporting good budgeting for fodder supplies on farms over the winter ahead.

Furthermore, in order to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the issue of fodder availability in affected areas, I convened a fodder group chaired by Teagasc and comprising of all the main stakeholders including feed merchants and co-ops, banking, farm bodies etc. The group held its first meeting in December and met again on Monday, 15 January. The group's objective is to actively monitor the situation and to ensure co-ordinated expertise and guidance is available to affected farmers regarding their options. These may include sourcing alternative feed, reducing non-breeding stock numbers and ensuring they continue to carry out fodder budgeting.

As outlined at the weekend, my Department is engaging with stakeholders, including through Fodder task force, with a view to providing a targeted contribution towards long-distance transport of fodder to those areas most impacted by the adverse weather. As the deputy can appreciate, fodder sale and purchase is a normal and significant trade between farms on an annual basis and it is important that any prudent measure brought forward is appropriately targeted to those most impacted whilst not impacting negatively on this trade.

I would also stress that if a situation arises where the welfare of livestock is at risk, herd-owners should contact the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Animal Welfare helpline or Regional Veterinary Office for support.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

1168. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person (details supplied) in County Cork has not received payment under the basic payment scheme. [55232/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): An application in respect of the 2017 Basic Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 9 May 2017. Processing of this application has now been finalised and payment will issue to the nominated bank account of the person named in the coming days.

Livestock Issues

1169. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to support the suckler herd in the future (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55264/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I am very conscious of the importance of the suckler sector to Ireland's rural economy and the wider agri-food industry.

My Department provides a number of supports to the suckler herd. A range of direct payments and grant schemes provide vital income and investment support to the suckler sector, including BPS, ANC, GLAS and TAMS.

The Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP) is the main support specifically targeted for the suckler sector, which will provide Irish beef farmers with some €300 million in funding over the current Rural Development Programme period. In response to significant demand, last year I reopened the BDGP programme for new entrants, reflecting the success of this programme, which targets both the environmental footprint and the profitability of the suckler herd through improving the genetic merit in participating herds.

There are a number of challenges facing the suckler sector in the short and medium term, particularly exchange rate volatility and Brexit. One of my priorities now is to further increase market access and market opportunities for Irish food and drink internationally. We are an exporting nation, with 90% of our food produce leaving the island. By further increasing our footprint internationally we can make a contribution to mitigating the effects of Brexit and develop our agri-food sector to realise its full potential.

Live exports also play a vital role in providing an alternative market outlet for Irish farmers, including weanlings from the suckler herd at this time of year. It is an area that I have paid particular attention to since taking up office. It is notable that live exports for 2017 were up by 47,000 head, or 33% compared to 2016.

Furthermore, provisional figures from the Central Statistics Office covering the year to October show a positive trend for Irish beef exports when compared to the same period in 2016.

Basic Payment Scheme Appeals

1170. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a farm payment appeal by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1000/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Under the Terms and Conditions of the Basic Payment Scheme, an applicant, as well as meeting the scheme criteria, must comply with EU regulatory requirements relating to Cross Compliance. The penalty applied under the 2017 Basic Payment Scheme relates to a breach of Cross Compliance requirements.

The Department's records indicate that in 2016, the amount of nitrogen from livestock manure applied to land on the holding of the person named, (including that deposited by animals), was 192 kgs per hectare, which exceeded the limit of 170 kgs per hectare set down in the Nitrates Regulations for farmers without an approved derogation.

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As similar breaches under the Nitrates Regulations had been identified within the previous three years, the regulatory provisions required that the rules on reoccurrence be applied and this resulted in a final penalty of 9% being applied against the 2017 Direct Schemes payments.

The person named was notified of this decision on 24th November 2017 and has sought a review of this decision. The matter is currently being examined by officials in my Department and the person named will be notified of the outcome on completion of this process.

In the event that the person named is dissatisfied with the outcome of this review, the decision can be appealed to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office, within 3 months.

GLAS Payments

1171. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a GLAS payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1002/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 3 with a contract commencement date of 1st January 2017.

The Department is aware of an issue with this case that is preventing the 2017 advance payment being made to the applicant. The identification of a solution to this issue has been prioritised and it is expected that the payment will be made in the coming weeks.

GLAS Payments

1172. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a GLAS payment for a person (details supplied) [1020/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 1 with a contract commencement date of 1 October 2015 and has received full entitlements in respect of the 2015 and 2016 scheme years.

The Department is aware of an issue with this case that is preventing the 2017 advance payment being made. The identification of a solution to this issue has been prioritised and it is expected that the payment will be made in the coming weeks.

GLAS Payments

1173. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a GLAS payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1022/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 1 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2016.

All payments due to the applicant have been made. The 2017 advance payment issued on 22 December.

Forestry Data

1174. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of hectares of afforested land in County Leitrim; the percentage of this land that is agricultural; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1026/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Forestry is one of the many land use options available to farmers and land owners and the Afforestation Grant and Premium Scheme is one of a wide range of supports provided by my Department. In 2016, 433 hectares of new forestry was planted in Leitrim all of which was private planting, largely by farmers living in Co. Leitrim.

According to Ireland's National Forest Inventory 2012, 26,500ha of land was under forestry in Leitrim, this represents approx 17% of the total land area. It should be noted that of that, 27% is planted with broadleaf species. This land is, by its nature, agricultural.

Animal Welfare

1175. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the use of poisons for the killing of cats; if he will take measures to prevent this practice (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1039/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013 provides that where poison is to be used, it may not be used to poison a protected animal and when used, there are strict controls on the manner of its application, so as to ensure protection of protected animals in particular.

Section 12 of the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013 sets out the principles which seek to protect all animals from cruelty - requiring the avoidance of any unnecessary suffering and the minimisation of suffering.

It is understood that operators dealing with the removal of feral cats generally seek to capture and use humane injection where such a course of action is deemed necessary, taking account of the particular circumstances and the age and condition of the animals. This approach accords with the principles set out in section 12.

The practice of trap/neuter and release (TNR) is a well recognised way of dealing with feral cat problems. It is also noteworthy that certain animal rescues take in feral kittens, from operators following their removal, for re-homing where domestication is feasible.

I welcome the interest and involvement of animal welfare groups in seeking to resolve this situation as they can bring an important and valuable range of experience.

GLAS Payments

1176. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an agricultural scheme payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1049/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 1 with a contract commencement date of 1 October 2015 and has received full payments in respect of the 2015 and 2016 Scheme years.

Regarding the 2017 advance payment, the Department has been in direct contact with the applicant in relation to an outstanding requirement in relation to the eligibility of an action. The applicant has been advised to consult with his Advisor in relation to this issue. Once the issue is resolved the payment will issue. GLAS payments are issuing on a weekly basis.

GLAS Payments

1177. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding GLAS payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1055/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): To date the Department has issued 2017 GLAS advance payments to 39,000 farmers totalling €140m. GLAS pay-runs are continuing on a weekly basis with further payments scheduled to issue this week as cases are cleared for payment.

However, between 3-4,000 GLAS applicants remain ineligible for a payment for a number of reasons including participants with outstanding annual Low Emission Slurry Spreading (LESS) forms. The majority of applicants who correctly submitted their LESS form on time have now been paid their 2017 GLAS advance. The Department has made great efforts to bring this issue to the attention of farmers and advisors. Multiple reminders have issued. Participants with outstanding LESS forms are urged to submit them immediately.

Rare Breeds Forms are outstanding or requiring amendment in almost half of the cases qualifying for this action. Nutrient Management Plans remain outstanding in respect of some GLAS I and II participants and applicants should contact their advisors directly to have these submitted urgently. The Commonage Management Plan (CMP) requirements have not been met by some participant's Commonage Advisor. Non-Submission of a 2017 BPS application – participants who fall into this category are being advised on the steps required to rectify the situation.

The remaining cases continue to be processed by the Department. As part of the processing of GLAS payments the Department is required to verify all of the data on which the claim is made. Where cases, correctly and accurately, do not pass the validation process they must be further examined and the issue arising resolved. Once these cases pass all validations they are included in future payment runs. Where action is needed by the participant concerned the Department is in direct contact with them.

Beef Data and Genomics Programme

1178. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons that participated in the beef data and genomics programme in each year since its inception; the number of persons that withdrew each year; the financial drawdown each year; the amount spent on the scheme since its inception; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1060/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The suckler sector is a vital component of Ireland's rural economy and the provision of support for the suckler sector is critically important. The Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP) is the current primary support for the Irish suckler sector and makes provision for some €300 million of funding over the next six years to beef farmers.

The Beef Data and Genomics Programme provides for six years of payments to farmers for completion of actions which deliver accelerated genetic improvement in the Irish national herd and improvement of its environmental sustainability.

The Beef Data and Genomics Programme was announced in May 2015 and 29,890 participants initially applied. A second tranche of BDGP launched in April 2017 and 1,896 applications were received. The number of herds paid and withdrawals per year in the Programme are set out in the following table. Payments for the 2017 Programme year will continue as herds achieve compliance.

Year	-	Herds eligible for payment	Withdrawals
2015	BDGP 2015 - 2020	24,137	3,247
2016	BDGP 2015 - 2020	22,858	1,933
2017	BDGP 2015 - 2020	20,837	248
2017	BDGP 2017 - 2022	458	146
		Total	5,574

The payments made in each calendar year are:

Year	-	Payments made
2015	BDGP farmer payments	€29,095,680.02
2016	BDGP farmer payments	€50,880,805.77
	Training	€6,237,481.00
	Carbon Navigator	€2,520,320.00
2017	BDGP farmer payments	€44,655,801.05
	Training	€232,394.00
	Carbon Navigator	€1,379,980.00
	Total	€135,002,461.84

GLAS Data

1179. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons in receipt of GLAS payments 1, 2 and 3; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1118/18]

1180. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the average payment in GLAS 1, 2 and 3 combined in monetary terms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1119/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1179 and 1180 together.

As of 12th January 2018 the average annual GLAS payment is €4,155. In total 49,700 applicants are currently active in the scheme.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Data

1181. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons that have moved from AEOS to GLAS that had not finished their full

term in AEOS; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1120/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The position is that 3,778 AEOS1 participants transformed to GLAS for the final three months of AEOS1 which was scheduled to finish at the end of 2015. At the same time 321 AEOS 2 and 443 AEOS 3 participants also transformed.

661 AEOS 2 participants transformed with effect from 1 January 2016. 804 AEOS 3 participants also transformed from this date.

A further 2,152 AEOS 3 participants transformed to GLAS with effect from the 1 January 2017.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme

1182. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount of money saved when persons moved from AEOS to GLAS without finishing the full term in AEOS; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1121/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Generally there are no savings in payments when a farmer moved from AEOS to GLAS due to the fact that, on average, payments under GLAS are higher than the payments under AEOS. In addition, payments under the non-productive capital investment action under AEOS continue to be made when a farmer transforms to GLAS.

Beef Data and Genomics Programme

1183. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of animals and average herd size in the beef data and genomics scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1122/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The suckler sector is a vital component of Ireland's rural economy and the provision of support for the suckler sector is critically important. The Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP) is the current primary support for the Irish suckler sector and makes provision for some €300 million of funding over the next six years to beef farmers.

The Beef Data and Genomics Programme provides for six years of payments to farmers for completion of actions which deliver accelerated genetic improvement in the Irish national herd and improvement of its environmental sustainability.

24,923 farmers are currently participating in the Beef Data and Genomics Programme across both tranches (23,395 in I and 1, 528 in II) with a total of 533,446 reference animals (504,272 & 29,174). The average herd size is 21.4 animals.

Beef Data and Genomics Programme

1184. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the yearly spend in each year of the beef data and genomics programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1123/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Beef Data and Genomics Programme provides for six years of payments to farmers for completion of actions which deliver accelerated genetic improvement in the Irish national herd and improvement of its environmental sustainability.

Payments made in the calendar years 2015 to 2017 are set out in the following table.

Year	Amount paid €m
2015 scheme payments	29.1
2016 scheme payments	50.9
2016 training and carbon navigator payments	8.7
2017 scheme payments	44.6
2017 training and carbon navigator payments	1.6
Total	134.9

Sheep Welfare Scheme Data

1185. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons that have applied for the sheep welfare scheme; the number of sheep which this scheme includes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1124/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): In December 2016 I introduced the Sheep Welfare Scheme to contribute to the continuing viability and sustainability of the sheep sector in Ireland. A total of 20,734 eligible applications were received under the Scheme. The number of breeding ewes included in these applications is 1.9 million.

Teagasc Data

1186. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount of funding provided to Teagasc each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1125/18]

1187. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the details of the types of funding administered by Teagasc; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1126/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1186 and 1187 together.

Teagasc develops its programmes and activities in research, advisory and education in conjunction with clients and partners overseen by an Authority that is representative of the main stakeholder groups in the agri-food sector. My Department provides Teagasc with a yearly block Grant in Aid subvention to support the delivery of its services to the agriculture and food sector. The 2018 allocation was increased by just over €4m to €132.6m. Funding is provided for pay, pension, capital and non-pay purposes. It receives additional exchequer income from competitive research programmes (FIRM, Stimulus etc.) and for supporting the delivery of Department Schemes (GLAS, KT Programme, Carbon Navigator training etc.). Teagasc also earns own generated operational income from a number of sources including client fees for the provision of advisory and education services, EU research funding, farm operations, publica-

tions etc. Its overall operating budget for 2018 is an estimated €203m. The distribution of that funding is an operational matter for Teagasc to determine. Teagasc's Financial Accounts are audited annually by the Comptroller and Auditor General and published on its website.

TAMS Administration

1188. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to implement a scheme for mats for slats under TAMS in accordance with the programme for Government; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1127/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The TAMS II Schemes have been very successful in terms of uptake with the number of applications to date exceeding 15,500 and approvals issued exceeding 12,400. All of these approvals represent committed expenditure under the TAMS II measure of the Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020.

Until such time as these approvals are acted upon or expire the budget for TAMS must include provision for the potential expenditure involved. The inclusion of slat mats under the TAMS II schemes can only be considered in the context of the overall budgetary provision.

Herd Data

1189. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of suckler cows here on 31 December 2017 by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1128/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Figures taken from my Department's Animal Identification and Movement (AIM) system on 31/12/17 give the following breakdown of the national suckler herd:

COUNTY	SUCKLER COWS
Carlow	13,652
Cavan	39,234
Clare	61,528
Cork	62,919
Donegal	33,088
Dublin	3,196
Galway	87,654
Kerry	37,583
Kildare	16,067
Kilkenny	29,083
Laois	29,337
Leitrim	22,188
Limerick	30,033
Longford	22,154
Louth	10,083
Mayo	64,479
Meath	28,850

COUNTY	SUCKLER COWS
Monaghan	27,515
Offaly	26,991
Roscommon	45,259
Sligo	26,068
Tipperary	50,618
Waterford	18,240
Westmeath	30,637
Wexford	28,478
Wicklow	19,583
Total	864,517

A suckler cow is defined as beef/beef cross female that was over 18 months on 31 December 2017 and is registered as the Dam of a calf.

My Department provides a number of supports to the suckler herd. A range of direct payments and grant schemes provide vital income and investment support to the suckler sector, including BPS, ANC, GLAS and TAMS. The Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP) is the main support specifically targeted for the suckler sector, which will provide Irish beef farmers with some €300 million in funding over the current Rural Development Programme period. Last year I reopened the BDGP programme for new entrants, reflecting the success of this programme, which targets both the environmental footprint and the profitability of suckler farming through improving the genetic merit in participating herds.

Crop Losses

1190. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons that applied for the aid for grain producers affected in 2016 by the wet conditions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1129/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The crop loss support measure was launched in July 2017 to assist farmers most affected by the wet weather harvest conditions of September 2016. A total of 167 applications were received under the measure. Processing of payments is ongoing.

In a large number of cases, further information or clarification is required in order to fully process applications. In all of these cases, the applicants have been contacted directly by an official from my Department. As the information requested is received, these cases will be examined again and further pay runs will be put in place as more case are cleared for payment.

Crop Losses

1191. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons that were paid under the aid for farmers that lost grain crops in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1130/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The crop loss support measure was launched in July 2017 to assist farmers most affected by the wet weather harvest conditions of September 2016. A total of 167 applications were received under the measure.

To date 63 applicants have received payments of €288,845.30. In a large number of cases, further information or clarification is required in order to fully process applications. In all of these cases, the applicants have been contacted directly by an official from my Department. As the further information requested is received, these cases will be examined again and subsequent pay runs will be put in place as cases are cleared for payment.

Common Agricultural Policy Reform

1192. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to front load the first twenty hectares in the new Common Agricultural Policy pillar 1 document that will start in 2020 and is being negotiated this year in order to protect small family farms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1131/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The European Commission published its CAP Communication titled “The Future of Food and Farming” on 29 November 2017.

The Communication proposes a simpler CAP, with a sharper focus on objectives and results, particularly in the environmental area. I welcome the commitment that Direct Payments should remain an essential part of CAP, as they provide an important safety net for family farms and ensure there is agricultural activity in all parts of the EU.

The Communication outlines a number of possibilities that should be explored to improve the targeting of direct payments. These include compulsory capping of payments, degressive payments and redistributive payments to small or medium size farms. It also suggests that support should be targeted at genuine farmers, focussing on those who are actively farming in order to earn their living.

My Department is currently reviewing the Communication but of course detailed proposals will only emerge in the context of legislative provisions to be presented by the Commission in mid 2018.

TAMS Expenditure

1193. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount of money paid out in TAMS each year from the announcement of the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1132/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The TAMS II Scheme with a suite of six measures was launched during the course of 2015, with a seventh measure the Tillage Capital Investment Scheme launched in March 2017.

The expenditure to date is as follows:

2016 - €3.971 m

2017 - €31.256 m

Over 12,400 farmers have been given approval to proceed with investment works under the seven TAMS Measures. To date 3,361 of these applicants or 27% have submitted a payment claim. Payment claims in respect of approved works submitted via the online payment system will continue to be paid as they are received.

GLAS Expenditure

1194. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount of money paid to private planners and Teagasc respectively for the delivery of the one-day training course, not including the funds paid to farmers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1133/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Payments for GLAS training providers have not yet commenced but are scheduled to begin very soon. However, payments have issued for courses that have been finalised for the scheme participant element of the payment.

Of approximately 1,800 courses created to date on the Department's GLAS Training System just under 29% were created by Teagasc advisers while approximately 71% were created by private advisers.

Knowledge Transfer Programme

1195. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount of money paid to Teagasc and private planners respectively to provide courses in knowledge transfer, excluding what was paid to farmers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1134/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Knowledge Transfer is one of a suite of measures included under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 and involves the formation of knowledge transfer groups across the beef, dairy, equine, sheep, tillage and poultry sectors. To date, in excess of €3.7 million has been paid to approved Knowledge Transfer facilitators in respect of Year 1 of the measure.

Knowledge Transfer Programme

1196. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the spend administered to persons for knowledge transfer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1135/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Knowledge Transfer is one of a suite of measures included under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 and involves the formation of knowledge transfer groups across the beef, dairy, equine, sheep, tillage and poultry sectors.

Approximately 19,100 farmers have actively participated in Year One of the Programme attending a range of Knowledge Transfer Group Meetings, Knowledge Transfer approved National Events and completing Farm Improvement Plans and Animal Health Measures.

To date, in excess of €10 million has been paid to over 13,500 participants across the six sectors. In addition, in excess of €3.7 million has been paid to date to approved Knowledge Transfer facilitators across six sectors. Further pay runs will take place as more cases are processed for payment.

GLAS Issues

1197. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he is reopening the GLAS scheme in early 2018 in view of the underspend in the overall GLAS budget; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1136/18]

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 continue 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.

I fully anticipate that based on current up-take and projections, the entire budget allocation of some €4 billion for the Rural Development Programme will be spent and that the entire €2.19 billion of EU co-funding will be drawn down.

Agriculture Schemes

1198. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to implement a suckler cow scheme of €200 per cow in view of the apparent decline in numbers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1137/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I am keenly aware of the importance of the suckler sector to Ireland's rural economy and the wider agri-food industry.

My Department provides a number of supports to the suckler herd. A range of direct payments and grant schemes provide vital income and investment support to the suckler sector, including BPS, ANC, GLAS and TAMS.

The Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP) is the main support specifically targeted for the suckler sector, which will provide Irish beef farmers with some €300 million in funding over the current Rural Development Programme period. In response to significant demand, last year I reopened the BDGP programme for new entrants, reflecting the success of this programme, which targets both the environmental footprint and the profitability of the suckler herd through improving the genetic merit in participating herds. Currently there are approximately 25,000 herds covered between the two schemes.

The suckler sector is a vital component of Ireland's rural economy and the provision of support for the suckler sector is critically important. The range of supports as currently configured represents a balance between direct income support for the sector and rural development measures designed to improve its competitiveness and sustainability. Considering the supports that already exist, I do not have plans to introduce any additional schemes to support the suckler herd, including the proposed scheme mentioned by the Deputy.

Fodder Crisis

1199. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will implement a fodder crisis scheme in view of the serious shortage of fodder in parts of the west; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1138/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Weather conditions for much of last autumn and early winter were challenging for farmers, particularly in parts of the West/North West. This resulted in the earlier housing of stock and challenges for some farmers in terms of Fodder conservation. On foot of these challenges, I prioritised the payment of farm supports to assist farmers with cash flow. The European Commission agreed to my request, informed in part by the poor weather conditions of last autumn, for an advance payment of the 2017 Basic Payment Scheme and Agri-environment schemes. These payments commenced after the earliest date possible which was 15th October, and balancing payments issued in early December.

These payments together with those issued under the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme, injected over €1.3 billion into the Irish rural economy by the end of last year and are providing a very welcome boost for Irish farm families and will help to finance fodder purchase where necessary.

Last autumn as poor weather conditions continued, I then asked Teagasc to work locally in areas with fodder difficulties, supporting good budgeting for fodder supplies on farms over the winter ahead.

Furthermore, in order to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the issue of fodder availability in affected areas, I convened a fodder group chaired by Teagasc and comprising of all the main stakeholders including feed merchants and co-ops, banking, farm bodies etc. The group held its first meeting in December and again on Monday 15th of this week. The group's objective is to actively monitor the situation and to ensure co-ordinated expertise and guidance is available to affected farmers regarding their options. These may include sourcing alternative feed, reducing non-breeding stock numbers and ensuring they continue to carry out fodder budgeting.

As outlined at the weekend, my Department is engaging with stakeholders, including through Fodder task force, with a view to providing a targeted contribution towards long-distance transport of fodder to those areas most impacted by the adverse weather. As the deputy can appreciate, fodder sale and purchase is a normal and significant trade between farms on an annual basis and it is important that any prudent measure brought forward is appropriately targeted to those most impacted whilst not impacting negatively on this trade.

I would also stress that if a situation arises where the welfare of livestock is at risk, herd-owners should contact the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Animal Welfare helpline or Regional Veterinary Office for support.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme

1200. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the way in which the €25 million fund for ANC will be distributed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1139/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Budget 2018 included an additional allocation of €25 million for the scheme in 2018. This is in keeping

with provisions of the Programme for a Partnership Government. There are a number of options in relation to how any additional funding could be allocated under the ANC scheme. These options range from allocating the funds as a flat increase across the current payable rates, to various forms of targeting higher payment rates for particular categories of farmers. The options in this regard are currently being examined. Any changes to the Scheme on foot of this will require agreement with the EU Commission via a formal amendment of Ireland's Rural Development Programme, 2014 - 2020.

Forestry Grants

1201. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason the State is taking carbon credits from forestry sown privately and in private ownership in view of the fact the grant application terms and conditions do not refer to the State being able to use credits; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1140/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): At present, removals of greenhouse gases by forests in Ireland cannot contribute to our emissions reduction targets up to 2020. In addition, greenhouse gas removals from Irish forests are not included in the Emissions Trading Scheme.

Under the recently agreed Effort Sharing and LULUCF regulations, EU Member States must account emissions and removals of greenhouse gases from the land-use, land use change and forestry sector during the 2021 to 2030 period. Where this sector results in a net reduction of greenhouse gases, a limited amount of removals may be accounted against Ireland's overall emissions reduction target. On the other hand, if this sector results in a net emission or production of greenhouse gases, this too must be accounted by the State.

These regulations specifically avoid creating an accounting obligation for private individuals or companies. The regulations set out targets and an accounting framework for EU Member States and do not create a private market for forest carbon credits or debits.

Question No. 1202 withdrawn.

Farms Data

1203. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on new data showing that the number of farmers in the west of Ireland has decreased by 41% since 1997; his plans regarding this situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1142/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Data on the number of farms is published in the CSO Census of Agriculture and the CSO Farm Structures Survey. The Census of Agriculture takes place every ten years, most recently in 2010, while the most recent Farm Structures Survey data is from 2013. This data suggest little change in the total number of farms since 2000, and a drop of just 2% in farm numbers in the West in that time.

Agriculture Cashflow Support Loan Scheme

1204. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Ma-

rine his plans to implement a scheme to help persons in danger of losing their farms who cannot access credit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1143/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): One of my priorities is to support the provision of lower-cost, more flexible finance for farmers. The Agriculture Cashflow Support Loan Scheme was developed by my Department in co-operation with the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) to address the impact of the change in the sterling exchange rate arising from Brexit and lower commodity prices in some agriculture sectors during 2016. It made €150 million of flexible working capital funding available at low-cost interest rate of 2.95%. I launched the Scheme on 31 January 2017 and by the beginning of March, all of the participating banks had reported that their funds were committed.

I was pleased at the very positive reaction by farmers to the Scheme, which has proved that significant demand exists for low-cost flexible finance. I have met with the Chief Executives of the participating banks to discuss this and other access to finance issues relating to the agri-food sector. I have asked the banks to respond positively to the demand that has been demonstrated by reducing interest rates and providing more flexible terms for cash flow loans in the future. At a Departmental level, there is a close liaison with the banks on lending into the agriculture sector. I meet regularly with the CEOs of the main banks. Access to finance is discussed at both the Dairy and Beef Forums, with an exchange of views with the main banks now a part of the agenda at each meeting. Access to finance for the sector is also an issue identified by the Food Wise 2025 strategy and it is monitored at the High Level Implementation Committee.

The Government has committed to assisting all viable small and medium enterprises operating in Ireland to support growth and employment in the economy. Primary responsibility for banking policy lies with the Department of Finance, which liaises with the Central Bank and the Financial Services Ombudsman with regard to consumer protection in the area of personal banking, the purchase of financial products and financial issues generally. It should be noted that in the context of recent high profile loan sales, the Minister for Finance has stated that the sale of loans from one entity to another does not change the terms of the contract or the borrower's rights and obligations under the original contract. Where difficulties occur, active engagement by indebted borrowers with their lender is the key to achieving sustainable resolutions. The next step is engagement with MABS (the Money Advice and Budgeting Service, which the Government has recently strengthened) for an independent assessment of their situation and advice on available resolution options.

My Department, in cooperation with all the other relevant State bodies, will continue to explore additional funding mechanisms for farmers, the agri-food sector and for SMEs generally. I will launch a new Brexit Loan Scheme with the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation shortly, which will provide affordable, flexible financing to Irish businesses that are either currently impacted by Brexit or who will be in the future. The Scheme will make up to €300 million of working capital finance available to SMEs and mid-cap businesses. Given their unique exposure to the UK market, funding from my Department ensures that at least 40% of the fund will be available to food businesses (providing €9 million out of the total €23 million in public funding). The successful Agriculture Cashflow Loan Scheme has provided a template for such Schemes, including this one for businesses. I have also announced that I have secured funding of €25 million for my Department to facilitate the development of potential Brexit response loan schemes during 2018 for farmers, fishermen and for longer-term capital financing for food businesses. I will announce more details as they become available.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

1205. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of farm payments for persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1193/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 2 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2016. The Department is aware of an issue with one of the actions in this case, a solution to the issue has been developed. Payment is expected to issue shortly. GLAS payments are continuing to issue on a weekly basis.

The TAMS application is being progressed this week and is also expected to be finalised shortly.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

1206. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a farm payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1212/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The entitlements of the person named were definitively established on 31 May 2016, based on 82.80 eligible hectares declared under the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme.

The Department has since reduced the eligible hectares for the person named under the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme and the person named was notified of this change.

Based on the revised eligible hectares for 2015 Basic Payment Scheme, the number of entitlements has been amended to 77.36 entitlements.

Payment in full under the 2017 Basic Payment Scheme will issue in the coming days.

Fishing Industry

1207. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to increase the amount of whitefish capacity that can be added to pelagic tonnage from 10% to 30%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1273/18]

1208. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans for policy changes to ensure there is more capacity in tonnage and kilowatts available on the open market at affordable prices; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1274/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1207 and 1208 together.

Under the Fisheries (Amendment) Act 2003, the functions of sea-fishing boat licensing were transferred from the Minister to the Licensing Authority for Sea-fishing Boats, which operates on an independent basis subject to criteria set out in that Act and Ministerial Policy Directives.

As Minister I have responsibility for policy in relation to sea-fishing boat licensing under Section 3(3) of the Fisheries (Amendment) Act 2003, as amended by Section 99 of the Sea Fish-

eries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006. In this context, as a referred to above, Section 3 of the Act makes provision for Ministerial Policy Directives to issue to the independent Licensing Authority for Sea-fishing boats. I am, however, precluded from exercising any power or control in relation to individual cases, or a group of cases, with which the Licensing Authority is or may be concerned under Section 3(5) of the 2003 Act.

As the Deputy may be aware I recently carried out a review of the replacement capacity rules for fishing vessels. I received proposals from a Producer Organisation (PO) which, in summary, related to the possibility of reducing the requirement to provide 100% replacement capacity with the relevant track record to 80% (the balance being sourced from capacity without track record). I undertook a full public consultation process on these proposals between 9 September 2016 and 28 February 2017, during which 26 submissions were received.

Following this full consideration of the submissions made and this issues arising I issued Ministerial Policy Directive 1 of 2017 to the Registrar General of Fishing Boats under Section 3 of the Fisheries (Amendment) Act 2003, as amended by Section 99 of the Sea Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006, to amend the requirements for the provision of replacement capacity for vessels in the Tiered (mackerel) and Ring-fenced (herring) portions of the Poly-valent segment to provide that up to a maximum of 10% of the required replacement capacity may be sourced from non-Tiered/non-Ring-fenced vessels in the same sub-segment at a ratio of 1.5:1. The application of a ratio will help to ensure that any increases in capacity are necessary, sustainable and managed in a manner consistent with the requirement that Ireland continues to meet its obligations with respect to its fleet capacity ceiling at EU level.

As this review was carried out following a full and open public consultation I do not see any basis for reopening this matter.

Agriculture Scheme Penalties

1209. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the penalty imposed under the GLAS scheme in cases in which a person has applied under the rare breeds category and in which they cannot prove membership of the relevant society for the relevant years; the number of persons who have been penalised under this rule; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1281/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The requirement to be a registered member of the relevant society for specified years prior to commencing a GLAS contract and the years during a GLAS contract is clearly outlined in the Specifications for each of the three GLAS schemes.

In the event that this documentation establishing membership cannot be provided, the applicant loses the action from their application. If the applicant does not have another priority action, the Terms and Conditions state that the applicant will be rejected from the scheme.

As the rare breed action is payable for the first time this year, the data requested in relation to applicants not providing satisfactory proof of membership is not available at this time.

GLAS Payments

1210. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a GLAS payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement

on the matter. [1295/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person referred to by the Deputy was approved into GLAS 3 with a contract commencement date of January 1st 2017.

Administrative checks involving a number of sections within the Department take place on all GLAS claims. All cases must clear validation checks before payment can issue. Department officials are working proactively to complete the checks to minimise delays in payments. Once this case clears validations the 2017 advance payment will be made. GLAS payments are being made on a weekly basis.

Legislative Programme

1211. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the timeframe for publishing primary and secondary legislation for a fishing penalty point system in view of the fact that the December 2017 deadline for the previous commitment to introduce legislation has now passed; his plans to bring the legislation for same before the Joint Oireachtas Committee of Agriculture, Food and the Marine for scrutiny beforehand; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1310/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As the Deputy may be aware, the Supreme Court judgments were delivered on 12th December 2017 in relation to the 2014 SI implementing a points system for licence holders. My Department is currently examining the implications of the judgments on an urgent basis.

I expect this process to be completed shortly and thereafter I intend to sign a new Statutory instrument to revoke the European Union (Common Fisheries Policy) (Point System) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 125 of 2016), which 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.

GLAS Payments

1212. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a farm payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1312/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person to whom the Deputy refers was approved into GLAS 2 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2016. Both the 2016 advance payment and balancing payment have issued.

The 2017 advance payment has been delayed due to outstanding documentation required from the applicant in respect of the Rare Breeds action. The documentation has recently been received. This will enable the further processing of this case. Once all validation checks are cleared the payment will be made. GLAS payments are issuing on a weekly basis.

Animal Welfare

1213. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the po-

sition regarding an incident that occurred on St. Stephen's Day at a location (details supplied) in which a pack of hunt dogs entered an estate and killed a fox in a person's garden; and the action he plans to take to prevent this happening again in view of the fact that children play in and around this area. [1326/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I am aware of and concerned at the reported incident in Macroom.

The Hunting Association of Ireland has a detailed Code of Conduct in place in respect of the hunting of foxes. I am disappointed that despite the existence of this Code, this event occurred. I have asked my officials to engage with the Hunting Association to determine whether, in light of this event, the Code needs updating.

My Department is fully committed to promoting good practices that respect the welfare of all animals. Evidence of breaches can be reported to the Animal Welfare Hotline operated by my Department.

Animal Welfare

1214. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to the recent case of animal neglect at a location (details supplied); if his Department is investigating this matter; if so, the status of the investigation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1342/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I am aware of and concerned at the reported incident referred to.

Officials of my Department were made aware of alleged mistreatment of equines at the site and collaborated with local stakeholders to address immediate welfare concerns and the investigation into the matter is on-going.

Under the Control of Horses Act 1996, Local Authorities and authorised officers under that Act may seize abandoned horses that are straying where animals are located on any site without the land owner's permission. In this instance, the Gardaí assisted Tipperary County Council with the seizure of animals which were present on a number of neighbouring sites without the land owner's approval. The horses concerned have subsequently been re-homed.

The Control of Horses Act 1996 was introduced to address the issues caused by stray and wandering horses. My Department provides financial assistance to Local Authorities for the implementation of the Act. Separately, my Department offers assistance to Local Authorities towards the development of new structures to provide shelter for the urban / traveller horse population with the aim of encouraging young people in the care and welfare of horses.

Animal Welfare

1215. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the measures he is taking to address current regulations for fox hunting in the area of Macroom, County Cork (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1344/18]

1216. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the actions being taken by his Department in respect of the fox hunting incident in Macroom, County Cork, on 26 December 2017 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement

on the matter. [1345/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1215 and 1216 together.

I am aware of and concerned at the reported incident in Macroom.

The Hunting Association of Ireland has a detailed Code of Conduct in place in respect of the hunting of foxes. I am disappointed that despite the existence of this Code, this event occurred. I have asked my officials to engage with the Hunting Association to determine whether, in light of this event, the Code needs updating.

My Department is fully committed to promoting good practices that respect the welfare of all animals. Evidence of breaches can be reported to the Animal Welfare Hotline operated by my Department.

GLAS Payments

1217. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the nature of the information technology problem that is causing the delay in a GLAS payment to a person (details supplied); when the issue will be resolved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1352/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person referred to by the Deputy was approved into GLAS 3 with a contract commencement date of January 1st 2017.

All GLAS claims must clear validation checks before payment can be made. Department officials are working proactively to complete the checks to minimise delays to payments. Once this case clears the validations the 2017 advance payment will be made. GLAS payments are issuing on a weekly basis.

GLAS Payments

1218. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a GLAS payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1354/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person referred to by the Deputy was approved into GLAS 1 with a contract commencement date of 1 October 2015. Payments in respect of 2015 and 2016 have been made.

An issue presented with the commonage associated with this participant. Department officials identified the issue and the Advisor should now be able to submit the Commonage Management Plan (CMP). Once the case clears all validations the 2017 advance payment will issue. GLAS payments are currently issuing on a weekly basis.

Live Exports

1219. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of spaces for trucks that have been secured with the ferry companies for live exports

for spring 2018; the way in which these numbers compare with the previous three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1366/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I am very conscious of the vital role live exports play in stimulating live competition for domestic cattle and providing an alternative market outlet for farmers. I, along with my Department officials, have been strongly supportive of live trade from Ireland and my decision in February 2017 to reduce the veterinary inspection fee payable on live exports of calves under three months of age to €1.20 per animal from €4.80 gave an important boost to the overall trade including trade in young calves and brought greater equity in the fees payable per consignment in respect of calves, weanlings and adult cattle.

Shipping companies engaged in roll-on roll-off transport endeavour to assist all Irish export businesses including livestock exporters. The number of berths maintained by shipping companies is a commercial matter for the companies themselves. Officials of my Department have been working closely with the shipping companies in recent months to ensure that the greatest facilitation possible is afforded to livestock exporters in the important Spring period. One of the roll-on roll-off ferry companies is currently actively engaged in the process of securing an alternative vessel to replace its existing vessel which is scheduled for maintenance. I look forward to further update in coming days.

Dairy Sector

1220. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of the fixed price regime for skimmed milk powder; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1368/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As the Deputy is aware, the Irish dairy market, following on from broader EU and International trends, is currently in a much improved position compared to the relatively recent past. Whilst the overall dairy sector is now in a much better place, particularly at the farm gate, there has been significant recourse to intervention for skimmed milk powder (SMP) across the EU since September 2015.

The Deputy will be aware that between mid 2014 and the end of 2016 dairy markets experienced significant difficulties. This was due to a combination of factors including increased global supply, the effects of the Russian ban on the import of EU agri-food products and reduced global demand, notably for dairy products in China.

During that phase of volatility, the EU Commission, both prompted and supported by Ireland, among other Member States, responded to these difficulties through the deployment of support measures, including intervention provided for under the CAP. Ireland welcomed the measures adopted by the Commission during this period. Key among these measures was the buying of skimmed milk powder (SMP) into intervention. Ireland's industry placed some 37,000 tonnes of product into intervention between September 2015 and the end of 2016.

There are now approximately 376,000 tonnes of SMP in public intervention stocks, effectively overhanging the EU SMP market. My Department engaged with the Commission on recent proposals to limit further piling up of SMP in 2018 without due justification, including requesting that the Commission's proposal to reduce the fixed price ceiling to zero be specified as for 2018 only, to avoid setting a precedent for the longer term. I have previously stated that 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.

In common with the vast majority of EU Member States where dairy production is of significance within the broader agri-food sector, Ireland recognises that the current situation in respect of existing stocks cannot 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.

It is critically important that the release of these stocks is managed in a way that does not de-stabilise the market. I am satisfied to date that the Commission has managed these stocks in a prudent manner.

My Department has and will continue to engage with the Commission, with other Member States, and with national stakeholders on these important issues.

Legislative Programme

1221. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the projects undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation, including the cost, the duration, the number of staff required and if this process was carried out by his Department or outsourced in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [1557/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department's legislation regulates a diverse range of areas such as food safety (including animal health and welfare), agriculture (including payments) and seafood (including State fisheries). In the period in question, my Department made more than 700 separate pieces of legislation.

Our membership of the European Union means that there are substantial and ongoing changes in legislation at EU level and my Department updates its legislation regularly to reflect these changes. As a result, there has been little requirement to consolidate the Department's legislative codes.

In addition, because of the constant updating of the Department's legislation, the skills developed within the Department to draft legislation mean that there is no requirement to out-source this task.

There were no consolidation projects completed within the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in the relevant time period.

Illegal Dumping

1222. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the deterrents in place to prevent illegal dumping in Coillte forests and lakes in counties Cavan and Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1594/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Bye-laws were introduced under Section 37 of the Forestry Act 1988, at the request of Coillte, to regulate illegal or unauthorised activities by members of the public on its property. Illegal dumping is one of the unauthorised activities encompassed by those Bye-Laws.

The matter was also raised with Coillte who advise that, due to the vast and isolated nature

of the Coillte estate, illegal dumping is a significant issue for the company. Illegal dumping poses a serious risk to the natural environment, as it can pollute rivers, drinking water sources, damage biodiversity, and is a threat to the health and safety of both recreational users and the people who live nearby.

The company advise that it is committed to ensuring that visitors can enjoy visiting its forest parks and trails without the sight of illegally-dumped rubbish and has spent approximately €2 million since 2013 in clean-up operations alone. Coillte further advise that each of Coillte's six Business Area Units has its own dedicated Estates team responsible for the management of important estate issues like dumping with those teams supported by a large number of caretakers spread across the country.

To specifically deter illegal dumping, Coillte advise that it installs signs, barriers and CCTV at illegal dumping hotspots and is also currently trialling a 'confidential line' which will be displayed on the company website and signage and that the information gathered will be filtered back to the relevant Coillte staff to look into. Coillte adds that it actively investigate all reports of dumping and where evidence is found of those responsible, it is passed on to local authority litter wardens who are responsible for issuing fines and pursuing prosecutions. Coillte advise that it has good working relations with all local authorities to manage and remove dumped material.

Coillte also advise that, to strengthen these measures, there is also the legal deterrent as Coillte may also apply bye-laws to specific sites. These bye-laws, which I mentioned, prohibit littering, dumping and other antisocial activities. I would remind the Deputy that any person who commits an offence under these bye-laws is liable to a fine and/or imprisonment and these bye-laws may be enforced by a member of the Garda Síochána.

Animal Welfare

1223. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the funding provided to local authorities for horse wardens, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1603/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Control of Horses Act 1996 details powers available to local authorities for the control and welfare of horses. Section 15 of the Act provides that the Minister for Agriculture, with the consent of the Minister for Finance, may make grants towards the expenses of a local authority incurred under the Act. In this regard my Department provided funding of €533,839 to local authorities in 2017 to assist with their work in control of stray and abandoned horses. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government have clarified that currently, a horse warden grade is not included in its structure.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

1224. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a farm payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1610/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): A 2017 Transfer of Entitlements application was received by my Department requesting the Transfer of Entitlements from the second person named to the first person named. My Department has been in

contact with the persons named and is currently resolving issues pertaining to a 2016 Transfer of Entitlements application which will allow the 2017 Transfer to be processed. This will enable payment to issue under the 2017 Basic Payment Scheme as soon as possible.

The first person named also submitted an application under the 2017 Young Farmers Scheme. My Department is awaiting the return of requested documentation to finalise this application.

Herd Number Applications

1225. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an application for a herd number by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1612/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As per my previous response to Questions Nos. 428 of 21 November 2017 and 196 of 12 December 2017, the original application for a herd number was received on 10th November 2017 and a farm inspection carried out on 13th November 2017; additional documentation was requested at that time. Once the applicant supplies the Regional Veterinary Office with the additional documentation required the application process will proceed. To date the Regional Veterinary Office has not received any further documentation.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Applications

1226. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 476 of 28 November 2017, the status of an application for an AEOS payment submitted by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1660/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As outlined in my reply of 28 November 2017 to a previous question in relation to this case, a decision on payments under AEOS was issued by letter to the person named on 24 August 2016. The person named did not avail of the review procedure outlined at the time.

However, I did undertake to have the correspondence submitted by you with that question reviewed by my Department and that a response would issue to the person named shortly thereafter.

A review of the file was undertaken and a response upholding the original decision was issued to the person named on 30 November 2017. That decision was that all payments made under the Non-productive Capital Investment actions should be recouped and that the person named should be excluded from the scheme for 2 years.

The person named was also offered the opportunity to appeal this decision to the Agricultural Appeals Office within three months of the date of the letter. This period will expire at the end of February 2018.

Commonage Management Plans

1227. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 174 of 16 November 2017, if his Department

has appointed planners to an area (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1674/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Approved Commonage Advisors have been assigned to both parcels referred to and the shareholders concerned were notified in writing by my Department on 13 December 2017.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

1228. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will address a matter regarding farm payments in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1679/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted a 2017 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Schemes application on 2 May 2017. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases remote sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a remote sensing eligibility inspection. This inspection has now been processed and a minor over-declaration in area has been identified. The person named is being notified of the inspection findings today, 16th January 2018, and of the options available to them namely to accept the findings or to submit comments to the Remote Sensing Section of my Department for examination. On completion of this process, any payments due will issue to the nominated bank account of the person named.

In relation to the over-claim identified on the forestry land, which is only part of the land declared on the 2017 BPS application, this was determined during the remote sensing inspection process. The person named was notified, by the Forest Service of my Department, of both the specific area of the over-claim and the amount due to be recovered on 11th December 2017. The person named was also advised of their right to seek a review of this decision within 21 days of the date of that letter.

The delay between the notification of the outcome of the remote sensing inspection and the notification of the over-declaration on the forestry land is as a result of outstanding issues on other land declared which were required to be resolved in order to finalise the inspection.

Basic Payment Scheme Applications

1229. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a payment to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1703/18]

1230. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a farm payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1707/18]

1231. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a farm payment for persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1711/18]

1233. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine

if he will address a matter regarding farm payments in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1718/18]

1234. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1719/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1229 to 1231, inclusive, and 1233 and 1234 together.

These questions relate to the illegal burning of land that was determined by my Department to have taken place during the period 1st March to 31st August 2017.

As outlined in a previous reply to the Deputy, my Department actively investigated incidents of illegal burning as the lands affected are deemed ineligible for the purposes of the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS).

The persons named, who were notified by my Department about the burned land parcel(s) in question, have now submitted appeals. These appeals will be examined with a view to an early resolution. Should additional information be required, my Department will contact the persons named directly.

Basic Payment Scheme Applications

1232. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will address a matter regarding farm payments in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1716/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): This case relates to the illegal burning of land that was determined by my Department to have taken place during the period 1st March to 31st August 2017.

As outlined in a previous reply to the Deputy, my Department actively investigated incidents of illegal burning as the lands affected are deemed ineligible for the purposes of the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS).

The person named was notified by my Department on 4 December 2017 of the burned land parcels declared on his BPS application and the options available to him including the right to seek a review. To date the person named has not requested a review in relation to this matter.

Questions Nos. 1233 and 1234 answered with Question No. 1229.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Appeals

1235. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an appeal of a decision by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1741/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): A letter was issued to the person named on 28 August 2017 stating that, following a review, the decision to terminate the AEOS contract was upheld. The person named was offered the opportunity to appeal this decision to the Agricultural Appeals Office.

An appeal was received by the Agricultural Appeals Office on 6 October 2017. An Oral Hearing was requested had been scheduled for 31 January 2018 but the appellant subsequently cancelled this hearing and has indicated that they are unavailable to attend an Oral Hearing until February 2018. When the appeal process is concluded a decision will issue to the person named in writing.

GLAS Payments

1236. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a GLAS payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1745/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The above named was approved into GLAS 2 with a contract commencement date of 1 October 2016. Payments for the 2016 scheme year have been made for this case.

GLAS claims must clear the full set of validations before payment can issue. Department officials are working proactively to complete the checks to minimise delays in payments. Once this case clears validations the 2017 advance payment will be made. GLAS payments are being made on a weekly basis.

Regional Development Initiatives

1237. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the progress made to date on the new Atlantic economic corridor, in particular the proposals relating to County Donegal; the proposals his Department is examining; the budgets earmarked for same; the timeframe for the delivery of the overall project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1758/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Atlantic Economic Corridor task force was established in March 2017 and will report to my colleague Minister Ring in the Department of Rural and Community Development. The taskforce is chaired by the Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development, Sean Kyne T.D., and includes senior representatives from the business sector, Government Departments, other public bodies and third level institutions.

With regard to the agri-food sector for the country as a whole, the Food Wise 2025 strategy includes more than 400 specific recommendations, spread across the cross-cutting themes of sustainability, innovation, human capital, market development and competitiveness as well as specific sectoral recommendations.

The Government is strongly committed to the implementation of the Food Wise strategy. I will chair the ninth meeting of the Food Wise High Level Implementation Committee, including senior officials from relevant Departments and State agencies, next week on the 24th January 2018.

TAMS Eligibility

1238. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to devise a mechanism whereby the purchase of a low emission slurry applicator machine

is incorporated into future rollout of the TAMS scheme, with special emphasis placed on agricultural contractors who have not qualified for previous TAMS schemes but are now required under legislation to have this specialised machinery to undertake their work. [1775/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): A condition of the EU co-funded TAMS II Measures is that recipients of grant aid are farmers. I have no plans to extend the Scheme to include agricultural contractors and am precluded by legislation from doing so.

Ministerial Meetings

1239. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when he last met the chief executive officer of an organisation (details supplied); when he will next meet the chief executive officer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1799/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My colleague, the Minister of State, Deputy Andrew Doyle, who has responsibility for the greyhound sector, has met Mr. Dollard, most recently at an information meeting given by Mr Dollard to members of the Oireachtas on the 29th November 2017. Senior officials within my Department have also met Mr Dollard on a number of occasions.

Fodder Crisis

1240. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to introduce a fodder aid scheme in view of the serious difficulties facing many persons in areas such as counties Cavan and Monaghan in which there are fodder shortages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1804/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Weather conditions for much of last autumn and early winter were challenging for farmers, particularly in parts of the West/North West. This resulted in the earlier housing of stock and challenges for some farmers in terms of Fodder conservation. On foot of these challenges, I prioritised the payment of farm supports to assist farmers with cash flow. The European Commission agreed to my request, informed in part by the poor weather conditions of last autumn, for an advance payment of the 2017 Basic Payment Scheme and Agri-environment schemes. These payments commenced after the earliest date possible which was 15th October, and balancing payments issued in early December.

These payments together with those issued under the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme, injected over €1.3 billion into the Irish rural economy by the end of last year and are providing a very welcome boost for Irish farm families and will help to finance fodder purchase where necessary.

Last autumn as poor weather conditions continued, I then asked Teagasc to work locally in areas with fodder difficulties, supporting good budgeting for fodder supplies on farms over the winter ahead.

Furthermore, in order to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the issue of fodder availability in affected areas, I convened a fodder group chaired by Teagasc and comprising of all the main stakeholders including feed merchants and co-ops, banking, farm bodies etc. The group held

its first meeting in December and again on Monday of this week. The group's objective is to actively monitor the situation and to ensure co-ordinated expertise and guidance is available to affected farmers regarding their options. These may include sourcing alternative feed, reducing non-breeding stock numbers and ensuring they continue to carry out fodder budgeting.

As outlined at the weekend, my Department is engaging with stakeholders, including through Fodder task force, with a view to providing a targeted contribution towards long-distance transport of fodder to those areas most impacted by the adverse weather. As the deputy can appreciate, fodder sale and purchase is a normal and significant trade between farms on an annual basis and it is important that any prudent measure brought forward is appropriately targeted to those most impacted whilst not impacting negatively on this trade.

I would also stress that if a situation arises where the welfare of livestock is at risk, herd-owners should contact the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Animal Welfare helpline or Regional Veterinary Office for support.

Basic Payment Scheme Data

1241. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the percentage of applicants under the basic payment scheme 2017 and areas of natural constraints scheme 2017 paid to date in County Cavan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1805/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Payments under the 2017 Basic Payment Scheme commenced on 16th October 2017 in respect of all clear applications. To date in excess of €1.153 bn has been paid to 122,229 applicants. This represents 98.9% of all eligible applications received.

In County Cavan under the Basic Payment Scheme, 4,671 applicants have been paid out of a total 4,725 eligible applicants. This represents 98.8% of applications received.

Payments under the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme commenced in September 2017. To date in excess of €198m has been paid to almost 93,000 applicants.

Under the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme 4,504 applicants out of a total of 4,761 eligible applications have been paid in County Cavan. This represents 94.6% of eligible applications received.

Basic Payment Scheme Data

1242. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the percentage of applicants under the basic payment scheme 2017 and areas of natural constraints scheme 2017 paid to date in County Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1806/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Payments under the 2017 Basic Payment Scheme commenced on 16th October 2017 in respect of all clear applications. To date in excess of €1.153 bn has been paid to 122,229 applicants. This represents 98.9% of all eligible applications received.

In County Monaghan under the Basic Payment Scheme, 3,952 applicants have been paid out of a total 3,968 eligible applicants. This represents 99.6% of eligible applications received.

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Payments under the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme commenced in September 2017. To date in excess of €198m has been paid to almost 93,000 applicants.

Under the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme 3,769 applicants out of a total of 4,012 eligible applications have been paid in County Monaghan. This represents 93.9% of eligible applications received.

Applications under both Schemes continue to be processed with payment runs taking place twice weekly.

GLAS Data

1243. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the percentage of applicants under GLAS schemes due for payment in 2017 paid to date in County Cavan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1807/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As of 11 January 2018, 80% of the eligible applicants from County Cavan have received a 2017 scheme year payment.

GLAS Data

1244. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the percentage of applicants under GLAS schemes due for payment in 2017 paid to date in County Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1808/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As of 11th January 2018, 83% of the eligible applicants from County Monaghan have received a 2017 scheme year payment.

Disability Act Employment Targets

1245. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the proportion of employees in his Department or in organisations under its remit who are registered as disabled. [1849/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department is committed to providing the supports necessary to enable staff with disabilities to participate fully in the workplace.

4.3 % of DAFM employees have declared a disability. Therefore my Department is in compliance with the Government target of 3% for the employment of people with a disability.

Fodder Crisis

1246. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the efforts made by his Department to help distressed suckler and commonage farmers in the north west with financing the sourcing, transport and obtaining ownership of fodder and meal for their animals; his views on whether there is now a crisis on this issue; and if he will make a

statement on the matter. [1927/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Weather conditions for much of last autumn and early winter were challenging for farmers, particularly in parts of the West/North West. This resulted in the earlier housing of stock and challenges for some farmers in terms of Fodder conservation. On foot of these challenges, I prioritised the payment of farm supports to assist farmers with cash flow. The European Commission agreed to my request, informed in part by the poor weather conditions of last autumn, for an advance payment of the 2017 Basic Payment Scheme and Agri-environment schemes. These payments commenced after the earliest date possible which was 15th October, and balancing payments issued in early December.

These payments together with those issued under the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme, injected over €1.3 billion into the Irish rural economy by the end of last year and are providing a very welcome boost for Irish farm families and will help to finance fodder purchase where necessary.

Last autumn as poor weather conditions continued, I then asked Teagasc to work locally in areas with fodder difficulties, supporting good budgeting for fodder supplies on farms over the winter ahead.

Furthermore, in order to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the issue of fodder availability in affected areas, I convened a fodder group chaired by Teagasc and comprising of all the main stakeholders including feed merchants and co-ops, banking, farm bodies etc. The group held its first meeting in December and again on Monday of this week. The group's objective is to actively monitor the situation and to ensure co-ordinated expertise and guidance is available to affected farmers regarding their options. These may include sourcing alternative feed, reducing non-breeding stock numbers and ensuring they continue to carry out fodder budgeting.

As outlined at the weekend, my Department is engaging with stakeholders, including through Fodder task force, with a view to providing a targeted contribution towards long-distance transport of fodder to those areas most impacted by the adverse weather. As the deputy can appreciate, fodder sale and purchase is a normal and significant trade between farms on an annual basis and it is important that any prudent measure brought forward is appropriately targeted to those most impacted whilst not impacting negatively on this trade.

I would also stress that if a situation arises where the welfare of livestock is at risk, herd-owners should contact the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Animal Welfare helpline or Regional Veterinary Office for support.

Transfer of Entitlements Application

1247. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a transfer of entitlements application by a person (details supplied) will be finalised in order that the person can receive BPS payments for the past three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1934/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted a 2015 Transfer of Entitlement Allocation Right and Reference Value application to my Department seeking the transfer of entitlements by inheritance as a transferee. This transfer has now been finalised following the receipt of outstanding testamentary documentation. Payment under the Basic Payment Scheme will issue shortly in respect of the 2015, 2016 and 2017 scheme years.

GLAS Payments

1248. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for the delay in a GLAS payment being issued to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1939/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 2 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2016 and has received full payments in respect of the 2016 scheme year.

The Department is aware of an issue with this case that resulted in the 2017 advance payment not being made. A solution has been identified and is scheduled for implementation this week. It is expected that the payment will issue shortly. GLAS 2017 advance payments began in November 2017 and are continuing to issue on a weekly basis.

GLAS Payments

1249. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a GLAS payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1958/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The named person was approved into GLAS 1 with a contract commencement date of 1 October 2015. The applicant has received all payments in respect of scheme years 2015 and 2016

Administrative checks involving a number of sections within the Department take place on all GLAS claims. All cases must clear these checks before payment can issue. Department officials are working proactively to complete the checks to minimise delays in payments. Once this case clears validations the 2017 advance payment will be made. GLAS payments commenced in November 2017 and are issuing on a weekly basis.

Bord Bia

1250. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if Bord Bia plans to open a new office in Australia; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1995/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Bord Bia currently has its head office in Dublin, and 13 offices worldwide in Amsterdam, Dubai, Dusseldorf, London, Madrid, Milan, Moscow, New York, Paris, Shanghai, Singapore, Stockholm and Warsaw.

The inquiry regarding the possibility of an office in Australia is an operational matter for Bord Bia. Should the Deputy require further information on the subject he should contact Bord Bia directly at info@bordbia.ie.

Beef Exports

1251. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when it is expected to have final approval secured for the export of beef to China; and if he will

make a statement on the matter. [2013/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Securing beef market access to China is a very high priority for my Department. My Department has made significant progress in moving towards agreed access in recent years. Important steps include the lifting of the BSE ban in respect of Irish beef in early 2015, and the systems audit carried out by the Chinese General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) in January 2016. The report for that visit was received following my Trade Mission to China in September 2016. In April 2017, together with the AQSIQ Minister Zhi Shuping, I signed a Protocol on the requirements for Frozen Beef to be exported from Ireland to China.

A plant inspection visit by the Chinese Certification and Accreditation Administration (CNCA) took place in August/September of last year. CNCA have recently provided us a draft report on their visit, which is now under consideration by staff in my Department as a matter of priority. My Department met with the industry last week to discuss the next steps, and will continue to work closely with industry to ensure that the requirements outlined in the Protocol are met.

My officials continue to liaise closely with their Chinese counterparts to provide every assurance in relation to the quality and safety of Irish beef. We hope that Ireland is now in the final stages of the market access process with China. However, despite this significant progress, the pace of market access will be largely determined by the Chinese authorities and not by my Department.

Agriculture Scheme Administration

1252. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to provide funding in 2018 to reopen the national reserve and provide for priority access to the categories of young farmer and new entrant to farming; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2065/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The position on the amount of available funding for a 2018 National Reserve is currently being finalised. This involves assessment of the funding that remains in the National Reserve fund following allocations to successful applicants under the 2017 National Reserve and also the proceeds from clawback on the sale of entitlements without land and the value of unused entitlements that revert to the National Reserve fund. It is expected that the position on funding will be finalised shortly and a decision on a National Reserve for 2018 will be taken at that stage.

Departmental Communications

1253. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his Department uses anti-profanity software on its email systems and online contact forms; if so, the level of human oversight that is applied to the monitoring of this software and its effectiveness; his views on whether persons' legitimate right to petition Government may be blocked unintentionally by errors in the use of such software in determining that which qualifies as profanity being communicated in email and-or online contact forms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2078/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As a large public sector organisation this Department receives circa 170,000 external emails per week and

therefore uses filtering software to block dangerous and malicious emails. As part of and in line with the Department's ISO 27001 Information Security certification procedures, the Department uses dictionaries of profanity terms provided by our email gateway software vendor to quarantine emails containing certain terms. These emails will be kept in quarantine for 90 days and can be released to the intended recipient on request. No profanity filtering is in place on the "Contact Us" page on the Department's website *www.agriculture.gov.ie*.

Fodder Crisis

1254. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he will take to alleviate the fodder crisis, particularly in the west; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2101/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Weather conditions for much of last autumn and early winter were challenging for farmers, particularly in parts of the West/North West. This resulted in the earlier housing of stock and challenges for some farmers in terms of Fodder conservation. On foot of these challenges, I prioritised the payment of farm supports to assist farmers with cash flow. The European Commission agreed to my request, informed in part by the poor weather conditions of last autumn, for an advance payment of the 2017 Basic Payment Scheme and Agri-environment schemes. These payments commenced after the earliest date possible which was 15th October, and balancing payments issued in early December.

These payments together with those issued under the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme, injected over €1.3 billion into the Irish rural economy by the end of last year and are providing a very welcome boost for Irish farm families and will help to finance fodder purchase where necessary.

Last autumn as poor weather conditions continued, I then asked Teagasc to work locally in areas with fodder difficulties, supporting good budgeting for fodder supplies on farms over the winter ahead.

Furthermore, in order to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the issue of fodder availability in affected areas, I convened a fodder group chaired by Teagasc and comprising of all the main stakeholders including feed merchants and co-ops, banking, farm bodies etc. The group held its first meeting in December and again on Monday 15 of this week. The group's objective is to actively monitor the situation and to ensure co-ordinated expertise and guidance is available to affected farmers regarding their options. These may include sourcing alternative feed, reducing non-breeding stock numbers and ensuring they continue to carry out fodder budgeting.

As outlined at the weekend, my Department is engaging with stakeholders, including through Fodder task force, with a view to providing a targeted contribution towards long-distance transport of fodder to those areas most impacted by the adverse weather. As the deputy can appreciate, fodder sale and purchase is a normal and significant trade between farms on an annual basis and it is important that any prudent measure brought forward is appropriately targeted to those most impacted whilst not impacting negatively on this trade.

I would also stress that if a situation arises where the welfare of livestock is at risk, herd-owners should contact the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Animal Welfare helpline or Regional Veterinary Office for support.

Departmental Strategies

1255. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the Government's initiatives in his Department in 2017 that promoted State services or welfare payments, public awareness of regulatory changes and public consultations that involved advertising and promotion on television, radio, newspapers and online, in tabular form; and the level of expenditure for each such initiative. [2255/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): In 2017, my Department ran 2 radio advertising campaigns, 1 for the Green Low-carbon Agri-environment Scheme (GLAS) encouraging farmers to submit their Nutrient Management Plans and the other campaign encouraging Backyard Poultry Owners to register with the Department. All other advertisements in 2017 were either in print format or online.

In the main, my Department advertised through MediaVest, who held the central Government contract for the provision of advertising services, but occasionally dealt with the service provider directly. The expenditure with regard to promoting the Department's schemes and services, regulatory changes and public consultations is set out in the following table.

Advertising & Publicity 2017

Event/Campaign	Company	Total €	Media Type
Backyard Poultry campaign in response to Avian Influenza Outbreak	Agriland	923	Online
	MediaVest*	25,722	
Basic Payment Scheme Campaign encouraging farmers to use the Departments online application system, www.agfood.ie, to apply for their Basic Payment.	Agriland	2,460	Online
	Ear to the Ground	1,875	Quarterly Magazine
	ICMSA Dairy Digest	2,500	Annual Publication
	ICSA Magazine	1,000	Quarterly Magazine
	Irish Farmers Journal	19,188	Newspaper
	Irish Farmers Monthly	13,068	Monthly Magazine
	MediaVest	6,795	Newspaper
	MOB Media	799	Annual Publication
Farm Hazardous Waste Campaign	Agriland	7,380	Online
	Irish Farmers Monthly	1,538	Monthly Magazine

Event/Campaign	Company	Total €	Media Type
Dog Purchase Radio Campaign – Campaign giving advice to people intending to purchase a puppy or a dog. – Ran in December 2016, paid for in January 2017	MediaVest	19,265	Radio
Green Low-Carbon Agri-Environment (GLAS) Scheme radio advert encouraging Farmers to submit their Nutrient Management Plan in order for their payment to issue.	MediaVest	30,350	Newspaper
New Tree Felling Requirements – Campaign informing of updated legislation with regard to Tree-Felling.	Irish Farmers Monthly	2,614	Monthly Magazine
Poultry Registration Radio Advert – Campaign to encourage Backyard Poultry Owners to register with the Department	MediaVest	22,592	Radio
Advertisement of Statutory Instruments	MediaVest	12,504	Newspaper
Public Consultations	Mediavest	9,813	Newspaper
Adverts about different Scheme Funding available from the Department	Mediavest	12,489	Newspaper

*Mediavest held the central Government contract for the provision of the majority of advertising needs. They are currently a framework member on the Framework Agreement for the Media Planning Strategy & Buying in Lots 2 & 3. Adverts typically included under this contract are afforestation notifications, aquaculture license applications, Department schemes and services, Recruitment and Public Notices.

Energy Schemes

1256. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to extend grant aid from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland to cover energy efficient re-equipment in poultry, pigs and horticulture not already covered by the

targeted agriculture modernisation scheme. [54472/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): A Dairy Sector Pilot Project run by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) in collaboration with Teagasc, and funded by my Department, was conducted in 2017. It targeted areas of high energy use and supported installation of variable speed drives on vacuum pumps and milk pumps in milking parlours which can reduce energy consumption considerably on a farm.

Separately, my Department undertook a consultation on energy efficiency with the wider commercial sector in late 2017. The objective was to outline the benefits energy efficiency delivers for businesses, supports currently available to improve energy efficiency, and to provide an opportunity for businesses to have their voices heard on how they could be better supported to improve their energy efficiency.

The impact and learnings from the 2017 dairy sector pilot project together with findings from the consultation will inform development of any further specific support measures for implementation in 2018. SEAI will also need to have regard to the considerable range of supports available from Department of Agriculture Food and Marine under the TAMS II Programme so as to optimise complementarity and avoid duplication.

I would point out that the Government, through SEAI and others, currently provide a range of energy efficiency support measures which may be of interest to agricultural businesses including farms. These include:-

- structured energy management training for large business and small business training for SMEs;
- free information, including best practice guides and online energy management strategies tailored to different sectors and online self-assessment energy “map” training;
- The EXEED (excellence in energy efficiency and design) scheme which can provide advice and grant support for businesses to establish a systematic approach to design, construction and commissioning processes for new investments and upgrades to existing assets;
- Project assistance grants to help businesses developing energy performance contract (EPC) solutions to finance the delivery of energy efficiency projects.

The SEAI also produces the “Triple E” Register of products approved as being energy efficient. Coupled with the Accelerated Capital Allowance (ACA) scheme operated by Government through the Revenue Commissioners this allows businesses to identify and buy the most energy efficient equipment and write down the cost of such equipment in the year of purchase rather than over 8 years. More detail of qualifying products can be found on the SEAI website at www.seai.ie.

My Department is also working, through the EPA, with key stakeholders, including the SEAI, on the IFA led Smart Farming initiative which helps farmers improve their energy and resource management and reduces emissions. More information can be found in the Smart Farming progress report published in October last.

Public Service Obligation Levy

1257. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and

Environment the value for money reports that exist for the return from investment in energy projects supported by the public service obligation levy. [1555/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The increased use of renewable energy is necessary to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In Ireland, renewable energy projects are supported under the Public Service Obligation (PSO) Levy through a charge on all electricity customers as determined by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU). The legal basis for the PSO and its method of calculation by the CRU are set out in Regulations made under the Electricity Regulation Act 1999 (S.I. 217 of 2002). Typically the CRU publishes, for consultation, a draft of its proposed calculation of the Levy for the subsequent year in early summer with a view to finalisation before the Autumn.

The levy has been in place since 2001, and consists of a set of support schemes designed to facilitate national electricity policy objectives for renewables, indigenous fuels and security of supply. Ireland has a target of increasing renewable electricity penetration to 40% by 2020 and to date the PSO has supported the connection of over 3,000 MW of renewable energy to the electricity grid and will continue to support the development of renewable energy so that we can meet our target.

In terms of the value for money achieved, international studies have shown that Ireland has had one of the lowest per unit supports for renewable energy in the European Union. The PSO currently represents around 10% of the average household final electricity bill, or approximately €7.69 on a monthly basis for domestic customers from October 2017.

All schemes funded through the PSO were notified to the European Commission for state aid approval supported by economic assessment of the amount of aid required.

Waste Disposal Charges

1258. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Question No. 422 of 5 December 2017, the position regarding the issue; his views on whether the proposed €75 annual support will be sufficient to support the households in question; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1675/18]

1274. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the way in which the figure of €75 was determined in respect of the grant allocated to qualifying families under the pay-by-weight scheme; if this is the maximum grant figure; the consultation process undertaken or to be undertaken with relevant stakeholders; the procedures in place for the application process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55069/17]

1302. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the specific terms of a scheme (details supplied); when it will be fully introduced; the number of persons who have received payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1534/18]

1343. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when he will finalise and issue the criteria and application process for the annual support scheme for persons who have lifelong or long-term medical incontinence in the context of a move to pay-by-weight bin charges (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2099/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1258, 1274, 1302 and 1343 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 announced in mid-2017, mandatory per kilogramme ‘pay by weight’ charging is not being introduced. Allowing for a range of charging options, which encourage householders to reduce and separate their waste, provides flexibility to waste collectors to develop various service-price offerings that suit different household circumstances. Consequently, a pure kilogramme charge for waste collection may not be selected by some households. Instead, some households may use a ‘per lift’ type charge or a ‘weight allowance’ collection service.

An annual support of €75 will be introduced as soon as possible this year and made available for persons with lifelong or long-term medical incontinence. This will help people meet the average annual cost of disposal of medical incontinence products. My Department is in discussion with the Department of Health and the Health Service Executive with a view to finalising the details and arrangements of the support as soon as possible, following further consultation with stakeholder groups.

Mobile Telephony Services

1259. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the extent to which his Department has compared the quality of mobile telephony here with that in other jurisdictions and, arising from the scope of the mobile telephone and broadband task force, the action anticipated; the likely interventions needed to improve quality, scale and efficacy of the services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2041/18]

1260. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the degree to which his Department identified deficiencies in broadband and mobile telephone technology throughout the country affecting the services available to the public; if he anticipates an early intervention in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2042/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1259 and 1260 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 and make specific investments in 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. This includes ComReg, who attend as both an action owner, and in an observer capacity in their role as the independent Regulator. Three meetings of the Implementation Group were held in 2017 on 8 March, 5 July and 22 November.

I published the third Taskforce Quarterly Progress Report in November 2017, which demonstrates that good progress has been made in delivering the actions. I plan to publish an Annual Report shortly. These reports show continuing progress and also the sustained level of engagement between actions owners and industry. The Annual Report will also contain a work programme for 2018, with new actions identified that will lead to improvements for consumers across Ireland.

The positive engagement between action owners and industry was clear in October 2017 at the 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.

In terms of tackling broadband deficiencies, the Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to 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 today over 67% of the 2.3m premises in Ireland have access to high speed broadband and this is set to increase to 77% (1.8m premises) by the end of 2018 and to 90% (2.1m premises) by the end of 2020.

In April 2017, 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 a Commitment Agreement signed with me in April 2017.

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

Inland Fisheries Stocks

1261. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment Inland Fisheries Ireland's contingency plan for the management of pike introductions into waters which they do not currently inhabit, for example, Lough Lein, County Kerry, Lough Melvin, County Fermanagh, and so on; the person or body that will be tasked with the removal of these pike; the way in which the removal of illegally introduced pike will be funded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54323/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) has in place a standard operating procedure for stock management operations, including pike management, where such management activities are deemed necessary.

The standard operating procedure outlines methods, equipment, health and safety requirements among other issues. The procedure would be followed in the event of any IFI stock management operation being required to attempt to address any recent introduction of species accidentally or deliberately introduced to waters.

IFI has collated, over many years, baseline fish survey data for a significant number of lakes and rivers and also follow up on sightings of unusual fish records when reported. Funding and resource requirements for stock management in public waters are currently provided by IFI on a prioritised basis.

Inland Fisheries Stocks

1262. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the sanctions in place to deter those who may be contemplating introducing invasive fish species into waters they currently do not inhabit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54324/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht is the statutory authority for the legislation governing Invasive Alien Species (IAS) including aquatic species.

Renewable Heat Incentive

1263. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Question No. 534 of 21 September 2017, the status of the introduction of a renewable heat incentive scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54366/17]

1273. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when the renewal heating scheme will be implemented; the timeframe for the process of applications and deadlines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54953/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1263 and 1273 together.

The development of the Support Scheme for Renewable Heat has involved detailed economic analysis, extensive engagement with industry and two public consultations. The scheme was approved by Government last month and €7 million has been allocated to the scheme this year.

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland will administer the Scheme and will be responsible for its operation, including evaluating and processing applications. The SEAI will develop the Terms & Conditions for the Scheme which will set out the application and project approval process. My Department is engaging with the European Commission regarding the State Aid process; the scheme will commence operation this year once State Aid approval has been secured.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

1264. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the timeframe for the roll-out of fibre connections in Donegal town; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54388/17]

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 via a combination of commercial investment and State Intervention. The NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecommunications sector so that to date over 1.5m or 67% of the 2.3m premises in Ireland can get high speed broadband. By 2020 it is expected that 90% of premises in Ireland will have access to high speed broadband.

In April 2017, 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 represents 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 a Commitment Agreement signed with me in April.

The map shows that the provision of high speed broadband in County Donegal will be realised through mix of commercial investment and through the State Intervention under the NBP. There are over 101,000 premises in County Donegal, over 67,000 of which fall within a BLUE area and will be covered by commercial operators. Of the 67,000 premises that fall to be covered commercially, almost 12,000 premises form part of eir's planned rural deployment. 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.

I note that the townland of Donegal town, as identified in the High Speed Broadband Map, includes approximately 514 premises, located in the BLUE area. Therefore commercial operators are either currently delivering or have plans to deliver high speed broadband services to this townland.

Delivering connectivity to the 542,000 premises (including more than 33,000 premises in County Donegal) that fall within the State led intervention under the NBP remains a Government priority. In the public procurement process, the NBP specialist team is continuing its evaluation of the two bidders' Detailed Solutions' received in September last. This is the last stage of the procurement process before moving to the final tender stage early this year, and subsequently the appointment of a preferred bidder or bidders. My Department will engage with the winning bidder(s) to ensure the most efficient deployment as part of the NBP 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.

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.

Broadband Service Speeds

1265. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when a location (details supplied) will receive an improvement in broadband

speed. [54441/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to 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 today over 67% of the 2.3m premises in Ireland have access to high speed broadband and this is set to increase to 77% (1.8m premises) by the end of 2018 and to 90% (2.1m premises) by the end of 2020.

In April 2017 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. A copy of the Commitment Agreement is available on my Department's website www.dccae.gov.ie. The Eircode referenced by the Deputy forms part of this deployment.

While the full programme of work is due to be completed by the end of 2018, more precise 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.

Post Office Network

1266. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the measures his Department is taking to ensure the viability of the rural post office network; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54555/17]

1267. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of discussions that are taking place between his Department and postmasters with regard to ensuring the post office network is protected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54556/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1266 and 1267 together.

In response to the challenges facing An Post, the Board has overseen the preparation of a comprehensive strategic plan, the objective of which is to secure the long term viability of both the post office and mails businesses and return the company to a sound financial footing. Government is fully supportive of An Post in its endeavours. Reflecting its commitment to sustaining a nationwide post office network and daily mails service, the Government has made €30m available in State funding to An Post to support the renewal of the post office network and the continued fulfilment of a 5 day per week mails delivery service.

The strategic plan harnesses the company's existing strengths such as its nationwide reach, trusted brand and the relationship of postmasters with communities, both rural and urban. At the same time, An Post has recognised that it must embrace the digital agenda and this is reflected in the plan, especially in the emphasis on growing the parcels business. Enhanced banking services are becoming available through the post office network with the smart bank account. It is expected that further such opportunities will be available across the network, especially as high-speed broadband becomes widely available through the roll-out of the national broadband plan. The Government has also committed to exploring the potential for extra Government business, including motor tax, to be channelled through the network and my Department is engaging with other relevant Government Departments in this regard.

Discussions on the future of the post office network are a matter for An Post and the Irish Postmasters Union. I understand discussions are ongoing between both parties and I continue to encourage the parties to work closely to find an agreed solution to the renewal of the network.

Renewable Energy Exports

1268. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his Department has an updated position subsequent to April 2014 regarding the proposed renewable energy export policy and development framework; if he has had further discussions with his UK counterpart regarding same in the interim period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54659/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): As the Deputy may be aware, following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Energy Co-operation with the UK Government in January 2013, a joint programme of work was undertaken to consider how Irish renewable energy resources, onshore and offshore, might be developed to the mutual benefit of both Ireland and the UK. Economic analysis conducted by the Department at the time clearly indicated that, under agreed policy and regulatory conditions, renewable energy trading could deliver significant economic benefits to Ireland and the UK, as well as being attractive to developers. However, subsequent to this, given the economic, policy and regulatory complexities involved, and some key decisions that were not taken by the UK to progress energy trading, delivery of renewable energy trading with the UK by 2020 is not considered a realistic proposition and the matter has not progressed any further since then.

Broadband Service Speeds

1269. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding broadband speed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54693/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to 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 today over 67% of the 2.3m premises in Ireland have access to high speed broadband and this is set to increase to 77% (1.8m premises) by the end of 2018 and to more than 90% (2.1m premises) by the end of 2020. In April 2017, 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 a Commitment Agreement

signed with me in April.

The premises referred to by the Deputy falls within an AMBER area and will be able to access a high speed broadband connection via the planned State led intervention under the NBP. I note that the premises is close to eir's ongoing rural deployment of high speed broadband to 300,000 premises. However, decisions made 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 and are not decisions in which I have a statutory role.

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 last September are being evaluated by the NBP specialist team. This is the last stage of the procurement process before moving to the final tender stage and subsequently the appointment of a preferred bidder or bidders. My Department will engage with the winning bidder(s) to ensure the most efficient deployment as part of the contract.

The NBP State led intervention will play an integral role in revitalising businesses across provincial towns and rural Ireland. It will allow rural businesses, such as small enterprises and family farms, to operate and do business on-line as required. 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.

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.

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.

Departmental Funding

1270. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the name and number of organisations in receipt of funding from his Department 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 amount of money they have spent on this particular campaign during that time; the number of organisations in receipt of funding from his Department that have expended resources seeking the retention of the eighth amendment; the amount of funding these organisations have received from the State in the past five years; and the amount of money they have spent on this particular campaign during that time. [54761/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): My Department has not made any payments during the period concerned to the organisations set out in the list provided by the Deputy to my officials on 12th January 2018.

Broadband Service Provision

1271. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when a company (details supplied) in County Meath can expect to have good quality and reliable broadband; and his views on whether existing poor broadband is severely affecting the ability of businesses to achieve their targets. [54899/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to 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 today over 67% of the 2.3m premises in Ireland have access to high speed broadband and this is set to increase to 77% (1.8m premises) by the end of 2018 and to 90% (2.1m premises) by the end of 2020. 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).

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- 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 a Commitment Agreement signed with me last April.

The premises of the company referred to by the Deputy is in an AMBER 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 last 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.

My Department will engage with the winning bidder(s) to ensure the most efficient deployment as part of the contract.

I recognise the importance of availability of high speed connectivity for all businesses in Ireland and the frustration for those that do not currently have access to this level of connectivity. The NBP state led intervention will play an integral role in revitalising businesses across provincial towns and rural Ireland. It will allow rural businesses, such as small enterprises and family farms, to operate and do business on-line as required. Delivering connectivity to the 542,000 premises that fall within the State led intervention under the NBP remains a Government priority.

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.

Under this Taskforce, engagement between telecommunications operators and local author-

ities 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.

RTÉ Expenditure

1272. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the possible dissolution of an RTÉ concert orchestra would have to be sanctioned by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54912/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Under Section 114 of the Broadcasting Act 2009, RTÉ is obliged to establish and maintain orchestras, choirs and other cultural performing groups. It is a matter for the board of RTÉ to decide the manner in which it ensures its statutory obligations are met and performed efficiently and effectively. The BAI undertakes an annual assessment of RTÉ's performance against its performance commitments in the year under review. In this context, the BAI may take a view on the achievement of the broadcaster's statutory objects and its performance against its commitments. However, the BAI does not have a decision-making role in relation to the RTE orchestras.

Question No. 1273 answered with Question No. 1263.

Question No. 1274 answered with Question No. 1258.

Fisheries Protection

1275. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the conditions eel fishermen must meet to qualify for compensation will be clarified. [55089/17]

1276. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the number of fishermen who are involved in the eel fishing compensation scheme will be clarified. [55090/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1275 and 1276 together.

I recognise fully the difficulty faced by eel fishermen. However, there is no property right attaching to public eel licences and, consequently, the issue of compensation does not arise. Notwithstanding this, criteria for a potential support measure for former licenced eel fishermen are being examined.

Ireland's Eel Management Plan (EMP), including the closure of commercial fishing, was originally approved by the European Commission under EU Regulation 1100/2007. In that regard, consultation and discussion with the European Commission is required before the terms and conditions for, or the prospective number of participants in, any potential support measure can be elaborated on. It is also likely that consultation with the Revenue Commissioners will be required.

Electricity Transmission Network

1277. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on the construction of a project (details supplied) being carried out in a particular area; his further views on whether this will impact the area in question; and the status of this project. [55095/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Celtic Interconnector is an estimated €1 billion electricity interconnector jointly proposed by EirGrid and their French counterparts, the French transmission system operator, RTE (Reseau de Transporte d’Electricite). It is proposed as a 500km long (subsea), 700MW high voltage direct current line that would run from the north-west coast of France to Ireland’s south coast. At this scale it would be able to provide electricity for some 450,000 homes. The Celtic Interconnector has the potential to provide a reliable high-capacity electricity link between Ireland and France that would have significant benefits for the people of Ireland. The project would provide access to the European electricity market, leading to expected increased competition and lower prices in Ireland. It would also improve security of electricity supply and facilitate increased capacity for renewable energy here via export access to the mainland European markets.

Assessment by EirGrid via independent consultants has comprehensively examined two potential landing points, east Cork and west Wexford. The analysis suggested that an east Cork connection point may be more efficient and EirGrid have shared the findings of the assessment via public consultation.

There remain a number of potential landing sites being considered under the current phase of the project and convertor stations would need to be built at either end of the line. I understand that EirGrid’s consultants have carried out a variety of land studies considering environmental, technical and planning constraints in their consideration of landing and connection points. In addition, whilst a full marine study of the potential route has already been undertaken, further marine studies near the shore are planned. EirGrid has also carried out a social impact assessment screening process that has led to a formal social impact assessment of the project. Naturally, EirGrid as project promoter would have to meet all environmental and planning requirements in progressing the project.

The project is currently in the initial design and pre-consultation phase and there are a variety of approvals required including regulatory and planning consents, before construction could commence. The interconnector is currently planned to be operational in 2025-26.

Electricity Transmission Network

1278. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will address a matter (details supplied); if a meeting will be facilitated on the matter; if so, the date for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55172/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): In 2017 I met with colleagues from across the political spectrum on two occasions on this project - 8th February and 16th May. These engagements were important in my decision to commission two independent studies into the project. The first is examining the technical feasibility and cost of undergrounding the interconnector and the second is focused on the compensation provided to land and property owners in proximity to high-voltage transmission lines in a European context.

I will of course be happy to meet with colleagues again on this issue and my office will make the arrangements for a meeting in the coming weeks.

Departmental Properties

1279. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the vacant properties and land not in use, owned, rented or leased by his Department or by bodies and agencies under the aegis of his Department by square footage for buildings and acres for land, in tabular form; the address and location of these properties; and the last date of occupancy or use of these properties. [55207/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): All property occupied by my Department is either leased or owned by the Office of Public Works and my Department has no vacant property or land holdings.

The information sought by the Deputy regarding the bodies under the aegis of my Department is an operational matter for each organisation. I will request the relevant bodies to reply directly to the Deputy in the matter.

Broadband Service Provision

1280. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if a proposal (details supplied) by Monaghan County Council will be considered. [55255/17]

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 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 this year as part of a Commitment Agreement signed with me in April.

There are approximately 33,000 premises in Monaghan. Just over 15,600 (47%) fall within the AMBER area and will be covered under the State led Intervention. Nearly 14,000 (42%) of premises are in a BLUE area and are, or will be, covered by commercial providers, while approximately 3,500 (11%) are LIGHT BLUE and fall to be covered by eir's planned rural deployment.

Under this rural deployment, eir is bound to provide access to the premises included in the LIGHT BLUE areas of the Map, including the 3,500 premises in Co Monaghan. My Department is in regular contact with eir in relation this work and will continue this engagement with the aim of ensuring the requirements of the Commitment Agreement are met. According to in-

formation submitted to the Department as of September 2017, eir has already passed over 1,200 premises in Monaghan as part of their rural deployment of high speed broadband.

Energy Prices

1281. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his Department's estimate of the percentage and number of households and the corresponding number of persons living in energy poverty here; the basis on which these figures have been calculated; and the way in which this compares with previous estimates and with rates in comparable countries. [1033/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Government's first energy poverty strategy -the Affordable Energy Strategy used the expenditure method of calculating energy poverty. This looks at the proportion of household income (net of housing costs) that is devoted to meeting energy needs. If a household needs to spend more than 10% of their income on energy they are considered to be in energy poverty, with the severity of energy poverty increasing as the proportion of income spent on energy increases. It was calculated in that strategy that slightly over 20% of all households in the State were potentially in energy poverty in 2009. There are limitations to the expenditure method of calculating energy poverty. In particular, analysing what people actually spend on energy may deliver an inadequate picture of energy poverty since many of those in energy poverty may be living in homes that are inadequately heated. The Government's second, and current Strategy to Combat Energy Poverty 2016-2019, was accompanied by the publication of an assessment of the level, and extent, of energy poverty in Ireland using an objective methodology. This methodology looked at modelled fuel expenditure as a proportion of income using Household Budget Survey data adjusted for inflation, data from the BER register and a residential building stock model developed by Element Energy on behalf of SEAI. This was used to estimate the percentage of households in particular categories (e.g. living in detached houses) whose required energy spend (required to keep their home adequately heated) exceeds certain thresholds (10%, 15%, 20%). This analysis which is available at <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/energy/topics/Energy-Efficiency/energy-costs/Pages/Energy-Poverty-Strategy.aspx> found that 28% of households in Ireland could be in energy poverty, and that social housing and homes heated via oil and solid fuels are more likely to be in energy poverty.

In terms of comparable countries the EU-wide Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) asks respondents whether they were unable to keep their household adequately warm. The latest data from the SILC finds that 5.8% of people surveyed in Ireland reported in 2016 that they were unable to afford to keep the home adequately warm, a decrease on the 2015 figure of 9%. This is below the EU average of 8.7% and slightly below the UK figure of 6.1%. One advantage of using a subjective measure of energy poverty like this question in the SILC is that it is undertaken annually and is conducted EU-wide. This facilitates comparisons across EU states, providing a benchmark for Government efforts in addressing energy poverty. However, self-reported energy poverty may give misleading impressions to policy makers on the extent of energy poverty. The findings of the SILC, and the study for the current Strategy referenced above yield very different results and points to the need for further work to increase our understanding of the extent of energy poverty in Ireland. My Department is planning to undertake this work in 2018.

The EU's clean energy legislation package, currently under negotiation, will form the basis for energy policy in the EU post 2020. The package includes related proposals on energy poverty, including a requirement on Member States to measure and report on national objectives

with regard to energy poverty, as well as the number of households affected by energy poverty. Ireland has been supportive of this proposal. If it is accepted it will mean that there will be more robust measurement of levels of energy poverty. This will facilitate better comparisons across Member States as well as sharing of best practice in how to alleviate it.

Recycling Policy

1282. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has satisfied himself with the amount of waste material that is recycled here in view of recent announcements that certain types of materials that are widely recycled elsewhere, such as soft plastic bags and film packaging, will not be accepted. [1041/18]

1283. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to introduce additional measures or investment to increase the types of material that Ireland's recycling system can process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1042/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1282 and 1283 together.

Under the EU Packaging Directive, at least 60% of Ireland's packaging waste must be recovered and 55% must be recycled. Ireland has met and exceeded the overall packaging waste recovery rate and the recycling rate targets since they came into force. The most recent Waste Packaging Statistics for Ireland, published by the EPA in May 2016, show that Ireland's recovery rate has gone from 70% in 2009 to 88% in 2013; and Ireland's recycling rate has gone from 65% in 2009 to 70% in 2013.

My role as Minister is to provide a comprehensive legislative and waste policy framework to ensure that, *inter alia*, waste is managed in line with the waste hierarchy, whereby the prevention, preparing for reuse, recycling and recovery of waste are prioritised over the landfill of waste.

The collection and processing of waste, including recyclable waste, is largely undertaken by the private sector. Up until last year, different collectors accepted different items for recycling, which lead to some confusion on which items go in which bin. Now however, following co-operation between my Department, the regulatory authorities, the waste industry, Repak and environmental NGOs, we have a single, standard national list of items and materials that can be placed in the recycle bin. Removing confusion will play a huge role in improving the quality of the material presented for recycling. This will help to ensure that these items are actually recycled, as opposed to being contaminated accidentally by householders and sent to landfill.

Supporting householders to 'do the right thing' in terms of recycling is important. In addition to simplifying the household recycle bin, this is also being achieved through awareness and education initiatives such as the *Recycling Ambassadors Programme* and *recyclinglistireland.ie*. These measures will reduce contamination rates and ensure higher quality recycling, reduce our impact on the environment and leave Ireland in a more competitive position in terms of securing markets for our recyclate.

Notwithstanding the above, recycling in Ireland and indeed across the world is evolving. The finalisation of the Circular Economy package and the Strategy on Plastics at EU level in the coming weeks, as well as our ambitious national waste policy which aims to prevent and recycle more waste, means that all matters recycling related, including the 'recycling list', will be kept under review in conjunction with the key stakeholders.

Renewable Energy Incentives

1284. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the grants and support schemes that are available to new companies in the renewable energy sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1044/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): There are a number of grants and support schemes which enable companies to choose renewable energy options. In addition to benefiting the companies availing of these programmes and schemes, the resulting increased demand for renewable energy and energy efficient technologies also benefits the companies which supply these products and services. The Accelerated Capacity Allowances scheme is a tax incentive whereby businesses can offset the cost of investment in qualifying energy technologies against their tax liabilities in year one rather than over eight years, thus aiding their cash flow. The scheme currently covers 10 different equipment categories and 52 associated technologies. This includes renewable energy technologies such as wind turbines, photovoltaic systems, biomass boilers and solar thermal collectors.

The Excellence in Energy Efficient Design programme provides advice and support leading to certification for businesses to establish a systematic approach to design, construction, and commissioning processes for new investments and upgrades to existing assets. This scheme has delivered impressive efficiency improvements in recent years. Results achieved over the 2016-17 period show average energy efficiencies of 28% being achieved.

The Better Energy Communities programme is open to applications that include businesses. Under this scheme, community based partnerships can apply for funding to upgrade the energy performance of a range of homes, community facilities and businesses in a local community. As well as energy efficiency measures, renewable technologies such as solar panels are supported under this scheme. The scheme has supported more than 300 community energy projects over the last five years throughout the country. There is €28 million available in grant supports for community energy projects under the 2018 scheme. The closing date for applications is 26 January 2018.

Budget 2018 contained a package of measures to support the increased deployment of electric vehicles. One of those measures aimed specifically at businesses is the new Benefit-in-Kind 0% rate to incentivise EVs without mileage conditions with the stated intention of continuing the incentive for a minimum of three years. The rules will also ensure that there is no Benefit-in-Kind liability associated with recharging electric vehicles in workplaces. In addition, the Electric Vehicle Public Engagement Programme currently being developed by the SEAI will include commercial fleet trials as well as an awareness campaign to highlight the benefits of electric vehicles and the supports that are available.

My Department is developing a new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme 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 PV, Anaerobic Digestion, Wind Energy at various scales including small and 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 also included analysis of the optimum financial support mechanisms for renewable technologies, in line with the 2014 EU State Aid Guidelines.

I recently announced the planned introduction of a Support Scheme for Renewable Heat.

The scheme is designed to financially support the replacement of fossil fuel heating systems with renewable energy for commercial, industrial, agricultural, district heating, public sector and other non-domestic businesses. The scheme will consist of two types of support mechanism – an operational support (paid for up to 15 years) for biomass heating systems or anaerobic digestion heating systems; and a grant to support investment in renewable heating systems that use heat pumps. The scheme will contribute to meeting Ireland’s renewable energy and emission reduction targets. In addition, by providing a market for crops such as biomass and waste products from forestry, agriculture and food production, the Support Scheme for Renewable Heat presents a key opportunity for the domestic bioenergy sector. This will have significant benefits for farmers, foresters and rural communities.

Broadband Service Provision

1285. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the date by which high-speed broadband will be provided to a location (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1081/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Government’s National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to 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 today over 67% of the 2.3m premises in Ireland have access to high speed broadband and this is set to increase to 77% (1.8m premises) by the end of 2018 and to 90% (2.1m premises) by the end of 2020. 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).

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- 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 a Commitment Agreement signed with me in April.

The premises referred to by the Deputy is in an AMBER 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 last 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.

My Department will engage with the winning bidder(s) 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.

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.

Electric Vehicle Grants

1286. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the estimated cost of extending the SEAI electric vehicle grant in each of the years 2020 to 2022. [1145/18]

1287. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the annual expenditure on the SEAI grant scheme for PEV and HBEV vehicles in each year since its introduction; the amount that was spent each year on BEVs and PHEVs, respectively; and the average grant amount for each of PHEVs and BEVs. [1146/18]

1306. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount his Department has earmarked for the installation of home charge points for electric vehicles in 2018; the amount spent on same in 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1619/18]

1307. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount his Department has earmarked for public awareness campaigns on electric vehicles in 2018, the amount his Department spent on same in 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1621/18]

1308. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount his Department has earmarked for the expansion of the public electric vehicle charger network; the amount his Department has spent on same in each of the years from 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018, by year and expenditure on regular versus rapid chargers, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1622/18]

1309. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his department is considering initiatives or measures to make it more convenient for residents in apartment blocks to install electric vehicle chargers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1623/18]

1310. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the ownership status of the State's electric vehicle infrastructure. [1624/18]

1337. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on whether the recent decision by the Commission for the Regulation of Utilities (details supplied) to prevent ESB networks from using DUoS charges to fund electric vehicle charging infrastructure will result in user charges for electric vehicle users; and, if so, his plans to introduce financial supports to minimise or eliminate user charges. [1999/18]

1338. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on the future ownership of the electric vehicle charging infrastructure; and his plans to expand or upgrade the infrastructure, with particular regard to fast chargers. [2000/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1286, 1287, 1306 to 1310, inclusive, 1337 and 1338 together.

The Electric Vehicle Purchase Grant, introduced in April 2011, provides grant aid of up to €5,000 towards the purchase of a new Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV) or new Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV). From the introduction of the scheme to the end of 2017, grant support has been provided for the purchase of a total of 2,636 new vehicles at a cost of €12.36 million in grant support. Almost €4.3 million was provided in 2017 to support the purchase of 908 new electric vehicles. The table shows details of the number of electric vehicles supported each year, the cost in that year, the breakdown between BEVs and PHEVs, and the average grant amount per vehicle.

Year	No of Grants	Amount (Euro)	% BEVs	% PHEVs	Average grant amount per vehicle (Euro)
2011	42	198,000	100%	0%	4,714
2012	183	767,400	100%	0%	4,193
2013	53	242,200	98%	2%	4,570
2014	257	1,203,400	86%	14%	4,682
2015	555	2,647,800	85%	15%	4,771
2016	638	3,038,800	61%	39%	4,763
2017	908	4,262,000	68%	32%	4,694

The grant scheme will continue with €6 million allocated in my Department's budget this year. This provides a 40% increase on the level of expenditure in 2017. The scheme will be kept under review in relation to funding and grant amounts for future years. As the purchase grant scheme is demand-led it is not possible to accurately predict how many vehicles will be supported in future years.

Budget 2018 also contained a number of new measures to encourage the take-up of electric vehicles.

The new Electric Vehicle Home Charger Grant scheme, which came into operation on 1 January 2018, supports the cost of installing a home charger up to a maximum of €600. Up to the end of 2017, the ESB, through its eCars programme, had provided home charge points to purchasers of new electric vehicles. The new grant scheme applies to both new and second hand BEVs and PHEVs.

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland are currently developing an Electric Vehicle Public Engagement Programme which will include an awareness campaign; a driver experience roadshow which will give people the opportunity to drive an electric vehicle and experience the benefits for themselves; and public sector and commercial fleet trials. This programme will be rolled out throughout 2018.

Funding has also been allocated to support the provision of public charging, with a particular focus on increasing the number of rapid chargers.

The allocations provided for these three measures in 2018 are listed in the table. As these measures are new initiatives, no budget allocations were provided in previous years.

2018 allocations	Current (€m)	Capital (€m)	Total (€m)
Electric Vehicle Home Charger Grant	0.1	1.0	1.1
Electric Vehicle Public Charging Support	0.3	1.5	1.8
Electric Vehicle Public Awareness Programme	0.3	0.5	0.8

The ESB, through its eCars programme, has rolled out both publicly accessible charging infrastructure and domestic charge points for electric vehicles. There are approximately 900 EV charge points in Ireland of which circa 70 are rapid chargers.

In March 2014, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities approved an application from ESB Networks to recover the costs of a pilot project to a maximum of €25 million from use of system charges to cover the rollout of this infrastructure. Following a public consultation process, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities published its independent regulatory decision in relation to the ownership of this infrastructure in October 2017. 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 set out by the European Commission in the Clean Energy for All Europeans package which was published in 2016.

The Commission for Regulation of Utilities also envisages the future sale of the infrastructure by ESB Networks. However, the continued ownership of the charging network by ESB Networks for a transitional period of up to ten years is provided for. This ensures no short to medium term impact on the electric vehicle charging infrastructure and allows the ESB to continue to provide electric vehicle charging across Ireland.

The decision also set out the need for the electric vehicle charging infrastructure to operate on a commercial basis. Currently, recharging electric vehicles at public charge points is free and unlimited. The Deputy will appreciate, however, that free fuel for electric vehicles, funded by electricity consumers, is not sustainable in the longer term as the number of EVs increases. 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. This includes examining options for providing convenient charging for apartment dwellers and other homeowners who do not have access to off street parking.

Climate Change Policy

1288. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount of funding his Department is providing to the green climate fund in 2018; if this is his Department's only contribution to overseas climate adaptation and mitiga-

tion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1147/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I refer to the replies to Questions Nos. 397 of 29 November 2017 and 595 of 14 December 2017. As set out in reply to these questions, Ireland made a commitment at the Paris Climate Change Conference in November 2015 to provide at least €175 million in public funding in support of climate action in developing countries between 2016 and 2020. This support will be provided primarily for bilateral assistance in respect of climate change adaptation goals in developing countries and will come from the Vote of Irish Aid managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. In addition, Ireland committed to commencing contributions to the Green Climate Fund in 2016 with a view to building up our support over the coming years.

An initial contribution to the Green Climate Fund of €2 million was made from my Department's Vote in 2016, as part of an overall amount of €52.66 million provided by Ireland in public financial support to address climate change in developing countries in 2016.

At the twenty-third Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, (UNFCCC COP 23) in November 2017, I announced that a further contribution of €2 million would be made by the Government to the Green Climate Fund in 2017. This is part of a package of additional funding by my Department totalling €2.5 million in 2017, which also included support for the UNFCCC's Adaptation Fund, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the NDC Partnership.

While no decisions have yet been taken in respect of contributions for 2018, any such decisions will take account Ireland's commitments, referred to above, regarding building up its support to the Green Climate Fund in the coming years.

Waste Management

1289. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the cost of establishing a bottle deposit scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1148/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The "International Review of Waste Management Policy", published in 2009, was a major review of waste management policy in Ireland. This report was commissioned by the then Minister for the Environment John Gormley. It reported on a deposit and refund scheme stating "the evidence is not sufficiently strong to support a recommendation of this nature, principally because the information regarding implementation costs is not such that the costs can be said to unequivocally justify the benefits".

In July 2014, the then Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government Phil Hogan published a Review of the Producer Responsibility Initiative model in Ireland. As part of this review, a wider examination of issues within the packaging sphere, which includes bottles, was undertaken and consideration was given to the introduction of a deposit and refund scheme. The review report did not recommend the introduction of a deposit and refund scheme and concluded that to establish such a scheme was inappropriate, in view of the operation of the existing successful packaging scheme.

A feasibility study identified - based on practice overseas, previous relevant studies, and stakeholder consultations - the projected financial implications of introducing a deposit and refund scheme in Scotland. The identified costs are:

- One-off set up costs = £15m sterling
- Machine take back (p.a.) = £29m
- Manual take back (p.a.) = £8m
- Logistics (p.a.) = £20m
- Counting centres (p.a.) = £3m
- Administration (p.a.) = £3m

That is £78 million pounds sterling – in excess of €88 million.

Deputy Eamon Ryan and Green Party Leader when introducing a Private Members' Bill on the subject, suggested a deposit and refund scheme would cost €276 million to implement in Ireland. A study investigating the possible introduction in the UK puts a figure of €790 million per year.

There is a lack of clarity around the costs associated with the introduction of a deposit and return scheme. Without a complete understanding of the cost implications on the taxpayer, on employers, on retailers and on customers it would be financially reckless of me to proceed with its introduction here without proper scrutiny. Our national approach to date for dealing with waste packaging has been based around the Extended Producer Responsibility principle – EPR. EPR seeks to ensure that the producer of a product bears a significant portion of the cost of dealing with the waste disposal of the product they supply. In Ireland this has been done very effectively through a producer funded compliance scheme, operated by Repak. Similar schemes operate in other waste streams such as batteries, waste electronic and electrical goods, farm plastics and end-of-life vehicles.

Notwithstanding this, on foot of a Private Members Bill tabled by Deputy Ryan, I have asked the Joint Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment to look at the merits of a deposit and refund scheme at a national level in the context of the associated costs and the contribution it could make in achieving our national waste targets under EU legislation.

In a 2014 Review of the Producer Responsibility Initiative model, it was concluded that Ireland has achieved significant progress in recent years in recovering and recycling packaging waste.

Mobile Telephony Services

1290. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount his Department is allocating toward implementing the recommendations of the mobile phone taskforce in 2018. [1149/18]

1291. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the cost of implementing each of the recommendations made by the mobile phone and broadband taskforce; and the amount of additional investment that would be required to implement all of the recommendations. [1150/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1290 and 1291 together.

My Department's role in relation to the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce is prin-

cipally focussed on working with the stakeholders to progress the actions in the Taskforce's report. This work is carried out in the general course of duties by officials in my Department. As such, the amount required by my Department to implement the actions is generally limited to the salaries of those officials.

I anticipate that in 2018 my Department will allocate additional resources to support reporting processes, attendance at the National Ploughing Championships and towards the holding of a second National Stakeholder Forum, following the success of last year's event on 6 October 2017 in Athlone. These resources have not yet been finalised.

Costs relating to the implementation of each individual action in the Taskforce Report are a matter for each action owner, including industry and my Department does not hold records in that regard.

Information and Communications Technology

1292. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his Department or the Digital Hub Development Agency provides funding to local authorities here for the purposes of co-ordinating and building upon the work of the Digital Hub Development Agency. [1151/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): My Department provides funding to the Digital Hub Development Agency (DHDA) which was established under the Digital Hub Development Agency Act 2003 to support digital entrepreneurship through the creation of a cluster of enterprises focussed on digital content and technology. The Agency is funded through a combination of Exchequer funding and commercial income and the DHDA uses its Exchequer funding to support the fulfilment of its statutory objectives.

Neither my Department nor the DHDA has provided funding to Local Authorities in relation to the work of the DHDA. While no funding is provided to Local Authorities, the DHDA has advised me that it has worked on a number of initiatives with Dublin City Council and is soon to collaborate with all four Dublin Local Authorities on the Smart Dublin initiative.

Broadcasting Sector

1293. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the position regarding the commitments to review the operation of the broadcasting levy (details supplied); the impact this will have on smaller and independent broadcasting organisations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1152/18]

1294. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the position regarding the commitments to establish a new bursary scheme for journalists working in local or community radio (details supplied); the amount that will be allocated to this scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1153/18]

1295. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the position regarding the commitments to establish a new bursary scheme for journalists working in local or community radio (details supplied); the amount that will be allocated to this scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1154/18]

1296. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and

Environment his plans for a new bursary scheme for journalists working in print media; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1155/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1293 to 1296, inclusive, together.

As the Deputy will be aware, I obtained Government approval to proceed with the drafting of a number of legislative amendments to the Broadcasting Act, 2009 including amendment of the provisions of the Act relating to the broadcasting levy to alleviate the burden on broadcasters. The proposals provide that a portion of the licence fee receipts will be paid to BAI to help defray their administrative costs. This will reduce the overall levy to be paid by the sector and would be applied evenly across all broadcasters. The amount of the reduction would be contingent on the overall level of licence fee receipts.

The proposals also provide for the introduction of a new funding scheme to offer bursaries to journalists working in local or community radio stations. The proposed amendments to the Broadcasting Act, 2009 only relate to the broadcasting sector as I have no statutory function under the Broadcasting Act, 2009 in relation to print media.

As the Deputy is also aware, the proposed amendments are currently being considered by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Communications, Climate Action & Environment under Pre-Legislative Scrutiny and I look forward to receiving the Committee's report as soon as possible.

Electricity Grid

1297. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to rectify the price farmers receive for unused units that are transferred back into the national grid (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1189/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): 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 which compared the cost of supporting a range of commercial renewable technologies 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. A public consultation on the new Scheme, which closed in November 2017, resulted in over 1,200 responses which are being analysed currently.

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 low carbon economy, in assisting Ireland meet its renewable electricity targets, and increasing social

acceptance of and promoting renewable energy projects right across the country. In October 2017 my Department and SEAI hosted a workshop on micro generation which discussed a number of these challenges with relevant stakeholders including the IFA. A micro renewable obligation scheme similar to the one in place in Northern Ireland was one of the policy proposals identified at the workshop and my intention is to shortly develop a policy position on how best to support micro generation and micro generators in Ireland.

The Deputy may also be aware that the 2017 Finance Bill introduced taxation changes vis-à-vis the treatment of agricultural land with regard to solar panels which are likely to also benefit the agricultural sector.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

1298. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the allocation in the 2018 estimates for the roll-out of the national broadband scheme; the amount of this that will be spent on the procurement process; the amount that will be spent on the roll-out of high speed broadband; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1278/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The 2018 estimates include a provision of €15 million for my Department's work on the State led Intervention under the National Broadband Plan, including costs associated with the procurement process. Progress of the NBP procurement process will be the principal factor influencing the actual spend incurred.

Mobile Telephony Services

1299. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will provide a map showing detailed coverage of mobile telephone receptions for the various operators throughout the country showing the areas that do not have a satisfactory coverage to make and receive calls using either a 3G or 4G network; his plans to ensure that there is improved mobile phone signals available in many black spots throughout the country; if he will provide such a map publicly and specifically on a townland basis such as the high speed broadband maps; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1323/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): 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 and make specific investments in 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. This includes ComReg, who attend as both an action owner, and in an observer capacity in their role as the independent Regulator.

I published the third Taskforce Quarterly Progress Report in November 2017, which demonstrates that good progress has been made in delivering the actions. I plan to publish an Annual Report shortly. These reports show continuing progress and also the sustained level of engagement between actions owners and industry. The Annual Report will also contain a work programme for 2018, with new actions identified that will lead to improvements for consumers across Ireland.

In terms of addressing blackspots, there are several actions in the 2016 Report which aim to improve mobile coverage:

- Under Action 17, my Department and the Department of Rural and Community Development worked with a pilot group of local authorities to identify the issues associated with mapping local blackspots. This pilot exercise has been completed, with more local authorities now being asked to map local blackspots and identify infrastructure that could potentially be used to provide additional coverage on an economic basis. This exercise will be included in the 2018 Work Programme.

- Under Action 40, my Department identified recommendations to address blackspots, including the initiation of a focus group to identify specific categories of locations where high quality mobile coverage should be available, to inform future policy development and initiatives. This focus group will be included in the 2018 Work Programme.

- Action 29 concerns the delivery of a composite national coverage map by the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg), in quarter 4 of 2018. Work to deliver this is a matter for ComReg in its capacity as the independent regulator of the telecommunications sector.

Broadband Service Provision

1300. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of homes and businesses in County Cork currently without high speed broadband; the number by geographic unit within the county; when he expects all of these homes and businesses to have access to high speed broadband; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1339/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to 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 today over 67% of the 2.3 million premises in Ireland have access to high speed broadband and this is set to increase to 77% (1.8 million premises) by the end of 2018 and to 90% (2.1 million premises) by the end of 2020.

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 a Commitment Agreement signed with me in April.

There are approximately 270,000 premises in Cork. Just under 75,000 (28%) fall within the AMBER area and will be covered under the State led Intervention. Approximately 173,000 (64%) of premises are in a BLUE area and are, or will be, covered by commercial providers, while nearly 21,000 (8%) are LIGHT BLUE and fall to be covered by eir's planned rural deployment. A document containing a townland by townland breakdown of premises into these three categories is attached. Individuals can visit my Department's website www.broadband.gov.ie and input their eircode to find out which category their premises falls under.

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 last September are being evaluated by the NBP specialist team. This is the last stage of the procurement process before moving to the final tender stage which will be followed by the appointment of a preferred bidder(s) and contract signature.

In April 2017, I signed a Commitment Agreement with eir in relation to its plans to provide High speed broadband to 300,000 premises in rural areas on a commercial basis. eir has committed to completing the rollout by the end of 2018. Information on eir's planned rural deployment, including timelines, is available at <http://fibrerollout.ie/eircode-lookup/>. A copy of the Commitment Agreement is available on my Department's website www.dccae.gov.ie.

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.

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.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

1301. **Deputy Brid Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the reason the State sought flexibilities in regard to a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions before 2030; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1378/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The European Union commitment under the Paris Agreement to a reduction of at least 40% in EU-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared with 1990 levels will be

met through reductions of 43% in the Emission Trading System (ETS) and 30% in the non-ETS sector compared with 2005 levels.

The legislative proposals for an Effort Sharing Regulation and for a Regulation on Land Use, Land Use-Change and Forestry (LULUCF), published by the European Commission in July 2016, address the EU commitment for a 30% reduction in non-ETS sector emissions compared with 2005 levels by 2030.

The draft Effort Sharing Regulation proposed individual Member State targets to be achieved on an annual basis over each of the years from 2021 to 2030, based on GDP per capita and the cost-effectiveness of domestic emissions reductions within individual Member States. In the case of Ireland, a target of a 39% reduction on 2005 levels by 2030 was proposed, adjusted to 30% to reflect the cost-effectiveness of measures within Ireland's economy.

The draft Regulation, as published by the Commission, also included a number of provisions for Member States to meet their annual compliance obligations in a flexible manner in the context of maintaining overall progress towards the targets for 2030. These include, subject to certain conditions, mechanisms to bank or borrow excess allowances between individual years, to trade allowances between Member States, to effect a transfer of allowances from the ETS to the non-ETS sector, and to take into account the climate mitigation impact of net removals of emissions from deforested land, afforested land, managed cropland and managed grassland towards a Member State's compliance with its targets.

Provisional agreements were reached on the draft Effort Sharing and LULUCF Regulations between the Council and the European Parliament in December 2017. These agreements must now be formally confirmed by both institutions.

The provisional agreement on the Effort Sharing Regulation maintains the overall approach to establishing Member State targets based on GDP per capita and the cost-effectiveness as well as the mechanisms providing a flexible approach to compliance as set out above.

I am satisfied that the outcome of the negotiations on these regulations confirms the high environmental ambition of the original Commission proposals, while providing appropriate recognition of different Member State circumstances and the need to provide flexibility to reduce emissions as cost-effectively as possible in the context of the overall EU target. The agreed outcome does not in any way diminish the significant challenge that will be required over the period to 2030 for each Member State to meet its respective targets.

Question No. 1302 answered with Question No. 1258.

Legislative Programme

1303. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the projects undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation, including the cost, the duration, the number of staff required and if this process was carried out by his Department or outsourced in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [1560/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment was established on 6th May 2016. Accordingly, I will include information on legislation prepared since that date.

In 2017, the Law Reform Commission, with the assistance of my Department, published an official revised version of the Electricity Regulation Act 1999. This is an administrative consolidation of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999. The revised version of the Electricity Regulation Act 1999 reflects all amendments and changes to the text of the 1999 Act up to July 2017. The revised version of the Act is available on both the Law Reform Commission and Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment websites.

The Minerals Development Act 2017 was enacted on 26 July 2017 with the purpose of modernising and consolidating all mineral development legislation. This work was undertaken in my Department by staff as part of their day to day work.

The Aarhus Bill 2018 will update certain provisions further to Ireland's transposition of the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice. Work has been ongoing on this Bill since the establishment of this Department. Work to date has been carried out by the Department.

It is not possible to isolate the administrative cost of processing legislation 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.

Illegal Dumping

1304. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the measures in place to deal with the problem of illegal dumping; the persons or bodies these schemes are open to; his further plans to introduce more funding for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1591/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Penalties for serious dumping offences provided for under the Waste Management Acts are substantial. Persons who are found to be responsible for, or involved in, the unauthorised disposal of waste are liable to a maximum fine of €5,000 on summary conviction and/or imprisonment for up to 12 months, and to a maximum fine of €15 million on conviction on indictment and/or imprisonment for up to 10 years.

My role, as Minister, is to provide the legislative and policy framework under which both local authority and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) enforcement action against illegal dumping is initiated. Enforcement action against illegal waste activity is a matter for the local authorities and the Office of Environmental Enforcement (OEE) of the EPA as appropriate.

Notwithstanding this arrangement, my Department encourages a multi-faceted approach to tackling the problem, incorporating enforcement, public awareness and education. As such, I introduced an Anti-Dumping Initiative in 2017 to work in partnership with local authorities and community organisations in identifying high risk or problem areas, developing appropriate enforcement responses and carrying out clean-up operations. Such was the response from across the country that I doubled the initial financial allocation with some €1.3M overall being provided to support 200 anti-dumping projects throughout Ireland.

The "before and after" reports from the projects that received funding illustrates the effectiveness of the range of clean-up and restorative projects led by community, environmental and sporting groups which have positively impacted on towns and villages across the country.

A review of last year's initiative has been undertaken to inform a 2018 anti-dumping work programme that will place an increased emphasis on all actors who facilitate the unauthorised

movement and disposal of waste. In that regard, I can confirm that I will be making funding available this year to support local authorities and community organisations in building on the momentum that has now been created, to continue to address dumping black spots and target those who show such disregard for their communities and environment.

It is my intention to launch the 2018 Anti-Dumping Initiative early this year at which point further information will be available from the Environment Section of each local authority for community and voluntary groups who wish to participate.

Recycling Data

1305. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of bring bank centres each local authority supports, by county, in tabular form; and the government provided supports for these essential facilities. [1592/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I understand that between 2000 and 2015, a total of approximately €210 million was provided to Local Authorities for the building and operation of bottle banks and civic amenity sites. With declining resources in the Environment Fund to provide subventions to Local Authorities and conclusion of the EU-supported capital schemes, my Department's support for local reuse and recycling has become more strategic in focus. In addition to funding the establishment and operation of the three regional waste management planning offices to drive reuse and recycling in our communities at a cost of some €300,000 each year, I am also providing funding in 2018 towards the refurbishment of Local Authority bottle banks and bring centres. This is a joint initiative of the regional waste management planning offices and Repak. The following table provides a breakdown of Local Authority supported civic amenity sites by county.

County	Total
Carlow	1
Cavan	3
Clare	5
Cork City	1
Cork Co	11
Galway Co	3
Donegal	6
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	1
Dublin City	2
Fingal	2
Galway City	1
Kerry	6
Kildare	2
Kilkenny	1
Laois	2
Leitrim	2
Limerick City & Co	5
Longford	0
Louth	2
Mayo	2

County	Total
Meath	3
Monaghan	2
Offaly	3
Roscommon	4
Sligo	1
South Dublin	1
Tipperary Co	5
Waterford City and Co	2
Westmeath	3
Wexford Co	5
Wicklow	4
-	91

Questions Nos. 1306 to 1310, inclusive, answered with Question No. 1286.

Bituminous Fuel Ban

1311. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to refrain from extending the nationwide ban on smoky coal in view of the fact that is more expensive and produces less heat; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1661/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The ban on the marketing, sale and distribution of bituminous coal, or ‘the smoky coal ban’ as it is commonly known, was first introduced in Dublin in 1990, and subsequently extended to our major cities. Following a public consultation process, it was further extended in 2012, and now applies in 26 urban areas nationwide. The ban has proved very effective in reducing particulate matter and sulphur dioxide levels and has had the effect of significantly improving public health. Research indicates, for example, that the ban has resulted in over 350 fewer annual deaths in Dublin alone.

Scientific understanding has evolved in the intervening years, however, and numerous studies now indicate that air pollution has impacts on human health at lower levels than was previously understood. Consequently, it is necessary to continue to strengthen policy to enhance air quality for the protection of people’s health and the environment.

Recent monitoring has also revealed that the air quality in some of our smaller towns in winter is worse than that in larger towns where the ban is in place. Given the clear human health benefits, I am committed to extending the ban nationwide.

This process necessarily involves discussion and consultation with a wide number of stakeholders, including with the European Commission, relevant Government Departments and Agencies, the residential fuel industry, and the general public. Discussions with many of these stakeholders on issues that may arise in connection with the proposed nationwide ban are underway. My next step will be to introduce the specific legal measures to give effect to the ban over a twelve month period commencing in Autumn 2018.

In relation to cost, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland has published figures comparing the respective costs of domestic fuels. These are available online at <https://www.seai.ie/resources/publications/Domestic-Fuel-Cost-Comparison-October-2017.pdf> and show that

while low smoke fuels are typically more expensive to buy on a weight by weight basis, they have a higher heat output than coal or lignite nuggets. Low smoke fuels, therefore, represent good value for money.

Broadband Service Provision

1312. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when fibre broadband will be available at a location (details supplied) in County Laois; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1714/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to 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 today over 67% of the 2.3m premises in Ireland have access to high speed broadband and this is set to increase to 77% (1.8m premises) by the end of 2018 and to 90% (2.1m premises) by the end of 2020.

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 represents 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 a Commitment Agreement signed with me in April.

The premises referred to by the Deputy is in an AMBER 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. This is the last stage of the procurement process before moving to the final tender stage which will be 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.

With regards to the available fibre connection close to the referred premises, decisions made by private telecommunication operators relating to the rollout and siting of infrastructure to provide high speed broadband services throughout Ireland are undertaken on a commercial basis by competing service providers operating in a liberalised market and one in which I have no statutory role.

I recognise the importance of availability of high speed connectivity for all premises in Ire-

land and the frustration for communities and businesses that do not currently have access to this level of connectivity. 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.

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.

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.

Public Service Obligation Services

1313. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to introduce a universal public service obligation on telecommunications providers in respect of the need to provide adequate and up-to-date broadband telecommunications coverage throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1779/18]

1314. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to introduce a universal public service obligation on mobile telephony providers with regard to the need to provide adequate and up-to-date mobile telephone coverage throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1780/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1313 and 1314 together.

The current EU and national regulatory framework for telecommunications allows for the application of a Universal Service Obligation (USO) in respect of fixed voice services. This framework has, in my view served consumers well over several decades and ensured that householders can get an affordable fixed voice service, regardless of where they are located.

There is no universal service obligation (USO) for high speed broadband provision or mobile voice services in Ireland. The current EU and national regulatory framework for telecommunications relates solely to voice telephony and Functional Internet Access (28.8 kilobits per second) and is provided for under the current EU regulatory framework governing telecoms.

There is also no provision in European or national regulation for a USO in relation to mobile voice services. Mobile operators are however rolling out 3G and 4G networks across Ireland following ComReg's 2012 Multiband Spectrum auction, with at least one operator now having over 90% population coverage of 4G services.

However, in September 2016, the European Commission published an ambitious new proposal for the regulation of the European telecoms sector (Proposal for a Directive Establishing a European Electronic Communications Code COM 2016/590), which aims to incentivise and encourage increased investment in high speed broadband networks. I have raised the issue of a USO for high speed broadband at EU level, seeking inclusion of a specific provision in the new framework that would allow Member States to apply a USO for high speed broadband, where such networks are available. Negotiations on the initiative remain live at EU level.

I am aware that the rate of demand for data services has increased over the last five years and this presents a continuing challenge for mobile operators, regulators and policy makers both in Ireland and internationally. Recognising this challenge, 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, that I co-chair with Minister Kyne is overseeing implementation of the actions and comprises all key stakeholders responsible for delivery.

I published the third Taskforce Quarterly Progress Report in November 2017, which demonstrates that good progress has been made in delivering the actions. I plan to publish an Annual Report shortly. These reports show continuing progress and also the sustained level of engagement between actions owners and industry.

This engagement was clear in October at 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.

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

Exploration Licences Applications

1315. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and

Environment the outcome for the majority of licencing options which will be concluding between the end of February and the end of June 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1812/18]

1324. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of the 28 granted licensing options that are progressing to frontier exploration licences, in tabular form. [1821/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Seán Kyne): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1315 and 1324 together.

A total of 28 Licensing Options were awarded following on the outcome of the 2015 Atlantic Margin Licensing Round. The term of these Licensing Options ends between 28 February 2018 and 30 June 2019. In addition the period of Licensing Option 16/15 in the North Celtic Basin ends on 30 April 2018.

The position in respect of these Licensing Options is as follows:

Licensing Option (LO)	End Date(s)	Current Status
LOs 16/1-14	28 February 2018	LO 16/2 has converted to Frontier Exploration Licence 1/17. Applications to convert to Frontier Exploration Licences have been received in respect of 11 Licensing Options. An indication that the Operator intends to submit an application to convert the Licensing Option to a Frontier Exploration Licence has been received in respect of 1 Licensing Option. An indication that the Operator intends to surrender the Licensing Option has been received in respect of 1 Licensing Option.

Licensing Option (LO)	End Date(s)	Current Status
LOs 16/15-29	30 April 2018 to 30 June 2019	An indication that the Operator intends to surrender the Licensing Option has been received in respect of 1 Licensing Option. No applications for follow-on Frontier or Standard Exploration Licences have been received in respect of 14 Licensing Options. However the Operators are not required to submit a proposal for a follow-on Frontier or Standard Exploration Licences until 3 months prior to end of the Option Period (2 months in respect of a Standard Exploration Licence).

Offshore Exploration

1316. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the estimated cost of extracting oil from Irish marine waters that his Department is using as a basis for the national energy projections. [1813/18]

1329. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the estimated cost of extracting oil from the Kish basin and the Porcupine basin. [1826/18]

1330. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the way in which oil deposits from the Kish basin will be processed, if onshore or offshore; and the details of his discussions with the industry, including a company (details supplied) on this matter. [1827/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Seán Kyne): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1316, 1329 and 1330 together.

There have been no commercial discoveries of oil to date in the Irish offshore.

Any estimation of the cost of extracting oil from a particular location in the Irish offshore would depend on consideration of a wide range of variables including the size of the discovery, the nature of the oil found, water depth, distance from where it could be refined, development technology options and prevailing development & operating costs.

In 2009, the Irish Shelf Petroleum Studies Group of the Petroleum Infrastructure Programme undertook a Cost Effective Field Development Study for Atlantic Basins which modelled a number of oil and gas discovery development scenarios. The scenarios were evaluated at three oil price cases: \$50, \$75 and \$100 per bbl together with three beach gas price cases: \$5.50, \$8 and \$10.50 MMBTU. It should be noted that this study was based on the 2007 Fiscal Terms and therefore did not utilise the revised 2014 fiscal terms introduced in the Finance Act 2015.

Only four wells have been drilled in the Kish Bank Basin, none of which discovered com-

mercially recoverable hydrocarbons. All four wells were plugged and abandoned as dry holes.

Providence Resources plc holds Standard Exploration Licence 2/11 located in the Kish Bank Basin. No well has been drilled to date on this Licence and as such it too early to anticipate a discovery that might lead to a commercial development.

Offshore Exploration

1317. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if offshore oil and gas exploration and exploitation including particular fields have been afforded the status of national strategic importance; and the reasons for designating or not designating the sector as such. [1814/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Seán Kyne): The Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006 provides for the making directly to An Bord Pleanála rather than to local authorities of applications for planning permission in respect of certain proposed developments of strategic importance to the State. This encompasses certain elements of a petroleum development as set out hereunder.

Where a person intends to carry out a strategic gas infrastructure development they prepare an application for approval of the development under section 182D as inserted in the Planning and Development Act 2000, and an environmental impact statement in respect of the development, and apply to An Bord Pleanála for approval. Strategic gas infrastructure development is defined as any proposed development comprising or for the purposes of a strategic downstream gas pipeline or a strategic upstream gas pipeline, and associated terminals, buildings and installations, whether above or below ground, including any associated discharge pipe.

The Act also provides that an application for permission to be considered by An Bord Pleanála and not a local authority can be made in respect of the following projects:

- an installation for the onshore extraction of petroleum or natural gas;
- an oil pipeline and any associated terminals, buildings and installations, where the length of the pipeline, whether as originally provided or as extended, would exceed 20 kilometres.

In 2010, An Bord Pleanála gave approval under the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act for the construction of the onshore Corrib Gas Pipeline.

Offshore Exploration

1318. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the estimated yield from oil and gas deposits by barrel and price; and the likelihood of finding deposits in each field in terms of a ratio, for example, 30 to 1 chance and so on. [1815/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Seán Kyne): To date one hundred and sixty exploration and appraisal wells have been drilled in the Irish Offshore and have resulted in four commercial gas discoveries (Kinsale Head, Ballycotton, Seven Heads, in the Kinsale area, and Corrib gas fields) but no commercial oil discoveries. Proven reserves for these gas fields total approximately three trillion cubic feet, comprising approximately two trillion cubic feet in the Kinsale Area gas fields

and approximately one trillion cubic feet at the Corrib gas field.

While petroleum authorisation holders may generate their own resource estimates for their prospects, these are unproven volumes and are only an estimate of what might be present, based on the available geological and geophysical data. The only way to accurately estimate the yield for each prospect is by drilling wells to determine firstly, if hydrocarbons are present and secondly, to calculate the volumes of hydrocarbons contained in each prospect. Most of the prospects contained in currently licensed acreage are undrilled.

Offshore Exploration

1319. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the extent to which Ireland's EU and UN commitments to mitigate climate change are considered as part of his Department's efforts to promote exploitation of offshore hydrocarbon resources, including the commitment under the Paris Agreement to engage in global efforts to keep a global temperature rise this century below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1816/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Seán Kyne): The Paris Agreement 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 finalised 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 Scot-

land. 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.

Exploration Licences Applications

1320. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of consents to drill his Department will be issuing in 2018, by month, day, name of licence, name of company and contractor, name of field and the stated likelihood of finding oil or gas deposits, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1817/18]

1321. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of consents to drill his Department issued in 2015, 2016 and 2017, by month, year, name of licence, name of company and contractor, name of field; if oil or gas was found in each well, if appropriate assessments or environmental impact assessments were conducted for that particular licence; and the consents which resulted in findings of a commercially viable deposit, in tabular form. [1818/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Seán Kyne): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1320 and 1321 together.

The following table details the drilling consents granted since 2015. No applications for consent to drill a well in 2018 have been received by my Department.

Month and year well consent granted	Well	Petroleum Authorisation	Operator	Prospect	Oil/gas found in well	AA/EIA conducted in advance of grant of well consent	Commercial discovery
07/2015	49/11-3	SEL04/07	PSE Seven Heads Ltd	Midleton Prospect	No	Yes	No
07/2017	53/6-1	FEL2/14	Providence Resources Plc.	Druid/Drombeg Prospects	No	Yes	No

Seismic Surveys

1322. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of seismic acquisitions conducted by the State and others from 2010, by month, year, survey area name, project code, name of relevant licence, survey identification, company and contractor conducting the survey, in tabular form. [1819/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Seán Kyne): The following table details the seismic acquisition surveys undertaken under a petroleum authorisation from 2010 to date.

Month and year that survey commenced	Survey area name	IPAS Project Code	Name of Relevant Petroleum Authorisation	IPAS Survey Identification	Company	Contractor
08/2010	Slyne Basin	SL103D	EL4/06	2010/01	San Leon Energy	PGS
05/2011	Porcupine Basin	SL113D	EL1/04	2011/01	San Leon Energy	PGS
06/2011	Celtic Sea	PB113D	LO08/1, PP1/10	2011/02	Providence Resources	Polarcus
07/2011	Celtic Sea	LA113D	EL5/08	2011/03	Lansdowne Celtic Sea	Polarcus
07/2011	Celtic Sea	LR113D	EL5/07	2011/04	Lansdowne Celtic Sea	Polarcus
07/2011	Celtic Sea	LM113D	EL4/07	2011/05	Lansdowne Celtic Sea	Polarcus
07/2011	Porcupine Basin	PS113D	EL4/08	2011/06	Providence Resources	Polarcus
07/2012	Slyne Basin	12SH3D	Corrib Lease, PPL1/12	2012/01	Shell E&P Ireland	Reservoir Exploration Technology
03/2013	Slyne Basin	13SH3D	Corrib Lease, PPL1/12	2013/01	Shell E & P Ireland Limited	Reservoir Exploration Technology
04/2013	North Celtic Sea Basin Deep Kinsale	13DK3D	PPL5/13	2013/02	Fastnet Oil and Gas (Ireland) Limited	CGG Veritas
05/2013	Mizzen Basin North Celtic Sea Basin	13MZ3D	PPL5/13	2013/03	Fastnet Oil and Gas (Ireland) Limited	CGG Veritas

Month and year that survey commenced	Survey area name	IPAS Project Code	Name of Relevant Petroleum Authorisation	IPAS Survey Identification	Company	Contractor
05/2013	Atlantic Margin Basin Off-shore West of Ireland	2DLO13	PPL1/13	2013/04	ENI Ireland BV	BGP
07/2013	North Celtic Sea and Fastnet Basin	PGSC13	PPL2/13	2013/07	PGS Exploration (UK) Ltd	PGS
07/2013	Porcupine Basin	13KE3D	PPL8/13	2013/05	Kosmos Energy Ireland	Polarcus
10/2013	Porcupine Basin	13KW3D	PPL8/13	2013/06	Kosmos Energy Ireland	Polarcus
04/2014	West of Ireland	2DLO14	PPL1/13	2014/01	ENI Ireland	BGP
07/2014	Porcupine Basin	14PL3D	PPL2/14	2014/02	Polarcus	Polarcus
08/2014	Porcupine Basin	14CA3D	EL1/14, PPL3/14	2014/03	Capricorn Ireland	Dolphin Geophysical
08/2014	Porcupine Basin	2DSE14	PPL4/14	2014/04	Seabird Exploration	Harrier Navigation
03/2015	Porcupine Basin	2DSR15	PPL5/14	2015/01	Searcher Seismic	JSC MAGE
07/2015	North Celtic Sea Basin	2DSB15	PPL4/14	2015/02	Seabird Exploration	JSC MAGE
05/2016	East Porcupine Basin	3DWG15	PPL2/16	2016/01	Woodside Energy Pty Ltd	PGS
05/2016	North Porcupine Basin	3DWB15	PPL2/16, FEL 3/14 and 5/14	2016/02	Woodside Energy Pty Ltd	PGS
06/2016	Porcupine Basin	3DCC15	PPL5/16	2016/03	CGG Services SA	CGG
07/2016	South Porcupine Basin	3DCG15	PPL5/16	2016/04	CGG Services SA	CGG
04/2017	South Porcupine Basin	3DCP15	PPL5/16	2017/01	CGG Services SA	CGG

Month and year that survey commenced	Survey area name	IPAS Project Code	Name of Relevant Petroleum Authorisation	IPAS Survey Identification	Company	Contractor
05/2017	South Porcupine Basin	2DCP15	PPL5/16	2017/02	CGG Services SA	CGG
05/2017	Porcupine Basin (North)	3DCN15	PPL5/16	2017/03	CGG Services SA	CGG
07/2017	Porcupine Basin	3DTG15	PPL8/16	2017/04	TGS - NOPEC Geophysical Company ASA	Shearwater Geoservices

Offshore Exploration

1323. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the process by which his Department considers if an environmental impact assessment or appropriate assessment is required for offshore oil and gas exploration and exploitation; if impacts in terms of carbon emissions are considered (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1820/18]

1325. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the processes in place to independently monitor the environmental and climate impacts of the offshore oil and gas industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1822/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Seán Kyne): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1323 and 1325 together.

Successful 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. However, any such exploration must be conducted in an environmentally sensitive manner.

In advance of the 2015 Atlantic Margin Licencing Round, Irish Offshore Strategic Environmental Assessment (IOSEA) 5 Environmental Report was undertaken and included consideration of potential greenhouse gas emissions projected to arise specifically as a result of exploration activities.

Separately, any individual exploration activity proposed to be carried out under a petroleum authorisation (e.g. seismic survey or drilling) is subject to assessment of compliance with the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive, the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive.

In respect of oil and gas production, activities arising from a commercial find are subject to assessment of compliance with the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive, the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive.

By way of example, approval for a seismic survey in the Porcupine Seabight off the South

West coast was granted to TGS-NOPEC Geophysical Company ASA on 5 July 2017. This survey overlapped the Hovland Mound Province and was within 19 Km of the Belgica Mound Province SAC. Prior to granting approval, the application to survey from TGS was considered against a range of technical and environmental considerations. In respect of environmental requirements, the company was required to submit an Environmental Risk Assessment and a Natura Impact Screening (Appropriate Assessment) Statement in support of its application to commence surveying activities, and these were considered in the context of the likely effects on the environment of the proposed survey.

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 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).

It was a condition of the survey that daily Marine Mammal Observer reports be submitted to my Department for review.

The documentation associated with this environmental assessment is available on my Department's website.

Question No. 1324 answered with Question No. 1315.

Question No. 1325 answered with Question No. 1323.

Offshore Exploration

1326. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if companies engaging in offshore oil and gas exploration and exploitation are required to guarantee supply to the State or sell resources at a reduced rate to the State or Irish companies. [1823/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Seán Kyne): There is no specific requirement on exploration companies to sell oil or gas discovered in the Irish offshore into the Irish market or to sell oil or gas at a reduced rate to the State or Irish companies. This is consistent with international practice. A combination of practical factors and market forces would dictate that where a local demand exists, a discovery will be landed and sold locally to ensure maximum recovery from the field and to reduce the cost of transportation. This has been the practice to date, with all commercial finds (Kinsale

Head, Ballycotton, Seven Heads and Corrib) having been delivered into the Irish market. In all cases, the State's fiscal regime applies to the production of gas in the Irish offshore.

Corrib Gas Field

1327. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount of tax revenue the State has collected from the Corrib gas project by tax on labour, tax on profits and tax on resources; the amount of tax that has been written off against company costs related to the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1824/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Seán Kyne): Profits from the Corrib gas field are subject to Corporation Tax at a rate of 25%. The operation of the taxation system and the receipt of taxation are matters for the Revenue Commissioners. As a consequence, I am not in a position to provide the Deputy with an estimate of the revenues to be received by the Exchequer in respect of the operations of the Corrib gas field.

Energy Prices

1328. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the estimated price of oil on which his Department is basing its future energy projections in terms of energy security. [1825/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The oil prices used for the National Energy Projections by SEAI are based on the ESRI COSMO (Core Structural Model of the economy) oil price. The COSMO oil price in turn comes from the UK NiGEM (National Institute Global Econometric Model) model which is maintained by the UK National Institute of Economic and Social Research. The rationale is to have a price that reflects global macroeconomic projections.

The oil prices used in the 2017 are as follows:

-	2017 Projections
-	\$2013 barrel of oil equivalent
2017	48.3
2020	56.8
2030	69.4

Note the prices are based in constant 2013 values as that is the base year used for all prices in COSMO.

Also note that the values quoted are the annual weighted average prices.

In terms of security of supply of oil, long standing policy has been to ensure that oil and oil products are available in the event of an emergency. In this regard Ireland holds 90 days of emergency oil stocks, in accordance with International Energy Agency (IEA) rules and EU legislation, to be used in the event of a supply disruption.

The National Oil Reserves Agency (NORA), which is under the aegis of my Department, is responsible for acquiring and managing Ireland's 90 days of emergency oil stocks and does so within the oil market. NORA is funded by way of the NORA levy, which is currently 2c per

litre of oil or oil product consumed. NORA monitors the price of oil on the markets and factors pricing concerns into purchasing decisions when sourcing oil to maintain its 90-day stockholding.

Questions Nos. 1329 and 1330 answered with Question No. 1316.

Departmental Staff Data

1331. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the proportion of employees in his Department or in organisations under its remit registered disabled. [1852/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): My Department is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity for all staff and supports the "Code of Practice for the Employment of People with Disabilities in the Civil Service" published by the Department of Finance in 2007. My Department reports each year to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on the number of staff who have disclosed a disability. The latest such report at the end of 2016 shows that 3.16% of staff in my Department have disclosed a disability. The report for 2017 is not yet available but current calculations indicate that the percentage remains at just over 3% of overall staffing.

The information requested in relation to the agencies under the aegis of my Department is an operational matter for each agency. The Department will request the relevant bodies to reply directly to the Deputy with the information requested in respect of their organisations.

National Broadband Plan

1332. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the date by which his Department will have concluded its evaluation of the detailed solutions that have been submitted by bidders to the national broadband plan; the date by which the next stage of the procurement process will be opened; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1905/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to 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 today over 67% of the 2.3m premises in Ireland have access to high speed broadband and this is set to increase to 77% (1.8m premises) by the end of 2018 and to 90% (2.1m premises) by the end of 2020.

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 deliver-

ing 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 a Commitment Agreement signed with me in April.

The premises referred to by the Deputy are both in an AMBER 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. This is the last stage of the procurement process before moving to the final tender stage in early 2018, which will be followed by the appointment of a preferred bidder(s).

As part of this procurement process, the bidder(s) will be required to submit their strategies, including timescales, for the network build and rollout. My Department will engage with the winning bidder(s) 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.

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.

Broadband Service Provision

1333. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the roll-out of broadband at a location (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1947/18]

1334. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the roll-out of broadband at a location (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1950/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1333 and 1334 together.

The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to 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 today over 67% of the 2.3m premises in Ireland have access to high speed broadband and this is set to increase to 77% (1.8m premises) by the end of 2018 and to 90% (2.1m premises) by the end of 2020.

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 un-

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The premises referred to by the Deputy are both in an AMBER 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. This is the last stage of the procurement process before moving to the final tender stage, which will be 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 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.

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.

Ministerial Meetings

1335. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of times he has met formally with the CEO of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland since his appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1993/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I have met with the CEO of the Sustainable Energy Authority (SEAI), on numerous occasions since my appointment as Minister for Communications, Climate Action, and Environment. I have held scheduled formal meetings with the CEO on three occasions:

- 6th July 2016
- 13th April 2017
- 2nd May 2017

As is to be expected the CEO and I attend a number of the same events and conferences in the energy sphere. When we meet at these events or conferences we have an opportunity to discuss energy issues. These events include, among others, the Better Energy Community grantee meeting in June 2016, the One Good Idea launch in September 2016, the Brexit Civic Dialogue on Energy in February 2017, the Energy Ireland Conference in June 2017, and the SEAI Oireachtas members briefing in November 2017. This list should not be considered exhaustive.

In addition to this officials from my Department are also in regular contact with the CEO and officials from the SEAI.

Offshore Exploration

1336. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the process by which his Department assesses if a company granted a licence to explore or exploit offshore hydrocarbon resources under the petroleum affairs division is in keeping with its work programme commitments; and if there are penalties for falling behind in those commitments. [1998/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Authorisations to carry out hydrocarbon exploration and production activities in the Irish Offshore are granted under the Petroleum and other Minerals Development Act, 1960. The terms and conditions under which any such authorisation is granted are set out in the Licensing Terms for Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration, Development and Production 1992 and 2007 and in the authorisation instrument itself. Exploration authorisations, in particular, Licensing Options and Exploration Licences, are granted subject to an agreed work programme, the progress of which is monitored by my Department.

Progression from Licensing Option to Exploration Licence and between the individual phases of an Exploration Licence, is dependent upon fulfilment by the authorisation holder of its existing work programme obligations, and consideration by my Department of the authorisation holder's proposed work programme for the next phase of the Exploration Licence, and its capacity to undertake same. Occasionally there may be practical and logistical reasons why commitments may not be delivered within a certain period of time and each such case is considered on its merits with a view to delivering the objectives of the work programme.

It should also be noted that one of the criteria for consideration of an application for an exploration authorisation contained in the Licensing Terms is the previous performance by the applicant under any authorisation to which the applicant has been a party.

Questions Nos. 1337 and 1338 answered with Question No. 1286.

Air Pollution

1339. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to increase air monitors in Rialto, Dublin 8, in view of the environmental pollution as a result of the construction of the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2004/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): 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. Currently Dublin has 14 monitoring stations.

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. The new national Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Programme is being developed under Section 65 of the EPA Act, 1992 as amended. One of the key objectives of the programme is to enhance the provision of real time air quality data to the public. The statutory basis for the programme underlines the importance placed on air quality monitoring in Ireland. The Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Programme covers the years 2017 to 2022, with the enhancement and expansion of the monitoring network to be prioritised in the first phases of the programme. Further details on the timeframes for the expansion of the network will be released as they become available. I fully support this important initiative, and have committed funding of some €5 million over the lifetime of the programme.

In relation to specific development sites, environmental management conditions may be imposed by the relevant local authority, or an An Bord Pleanála, as the case may be.

Broadcasting Sector Regulation

1340. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the pending review of the children’s commercial communications code; the research being undertaken by the BAI in respect of the review which will have regard to the experience here since the code’s introduction in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2069/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Broadcasting Act 2009 provided for the establishment of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) as the independent regulator responsible for the oversight of compliance in relation to broadcast content in the State. Section 42 of the Broadcasting Act 2009 requires the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) to draw up, and from time to time revise, Broadcasting Codes on the standards and practice to be observed by Broadcasters and to provide for related compliance matters.

The Children’s Commercial Communications Code was developed by the Authority in line with Section 42. Under this section, the question of revising a broadcasting code is also a matter for the Authority and as such, I, as Minister, have no function in this matter.

Broadcasting Sector Regulation

1341. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the pending review of the children's commercial communications code in respect of when the BAI will begin consulting with stakeholders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2070/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Broadcasting Act 2009 provided for the establishment of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) as the independent regulator responsible for the oversight of compliance in relation to broadcast content in the State. Section 42 of the Broadcasting Act 2009 requires the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) to draw up, and from time to time revise, Broadcasting Codes on the standards and practice to be observed by Broadcasters and to provide for related compliance matters.

The Children's Commercial Communications Code was developed by the Authority in line with Section 42. Under this section, the question of revising a broadcasting code is also a matter for the Authority and as such, I, as Minister, have no function in this matter.

Departmental Communications

1342. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his Department uses anti profanity software on its email systems and online contact forms; if so, the level of human oversight that is applied to the monitoring of these softwares and their effectiveness; his views on whether persons' legitimate right to petition Government may be blocked unintentionally by errors in the use of such softwares in determining that which qualifies as profanity being communicated in email and or online contact forms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2081/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): My Department receives over 33,000 external emails per week on average. All incoming email is scanned for the presence of malware and spam. Any email that is suspected of being spam is sent to a quarantine area where staff interaction is necessary to verify the validity of the message. If an email is found to be appropriate it can be removed from quarantine and sent to the appropriate recipient. The scanning software used by the Department does not specifically filter for profanity terms in respect of e-mail or online forms. Despite the robust nature of our screening software, I am confident that a person's right to legitimately petition my Department is not being impacted.

Question No. 1343 answered with Question No. 1258.

Driver Licence Data

1344. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of disqualified drivers in each of the years 2014 to 2017; and the number of these drivers that have surrendered their driver's licences. [54355/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The following tabular statement provides details recorded on the National Vehicle and Driver File requested by the Deputy.

Number of Drivers Disqualified in each year from 2014 to 2017

Year	No. of Drivers with Court Disqualification	Driving Licence Surrendered	No. of Drivers with Penalty Point Disqualification	Driving Licence Surrendered
2014	8,814	727	348	92
2015	7,816	1,213	844	405
2016	8,296	1,035	1,064	476
2017	9,449	1,289	1,271	535

Driver Licences

1345. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the mechanism in place to ensure disqualified drivers surrender their driving licence after they have been convicted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54356/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The requirement to return a driving licence to the licensing authority (the Road Safety Authority) on disqualification is set out in article 45(2) of the Road Traffic (Licensing of Drivers)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, S.I. No 6 of 2013, in the case of consequential or ancillary disqualification, and article 46(2) in the case of special disqualification. The various timeframes and mechanism for the surrender of a licence or learner permit to the licensing authority are set in article 45. Enforcement of the legislation is a matter for An Garda Síochána.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland

1346. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will request TII to address the specific road issue at the N62 Templemore to Roscrea, County Tipperary (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54983/17]

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.

Noting the above, I have referred the Deputy's Question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my Office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Road Network

1347. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will consider a once off tree topping grant for private landowners to safely top large trees on their property to protect communities and road users around the country; and if such a grant could be considered due to the amount of high wind storms that are occurring. [1015/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is a statutory function of each road authority in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993.

Works on regional and local roads are funded by local authorities' own resources supplemented by State grants. Within the overall resources available to it, the selection and prioritisation of works including the maintenance of road verges is a matter for each local authority.

Section 70 of the Roads Act 1993 sets out the responsibility of landowners to take all reasonable steps to ensure that trees, hedges and other vegetation growing on their land are not, or could not become, a danger to people using a public road or interfere with the safe use of a public road or the maintenance of a public road.

A local authority can serve notice requiring a landowner to take action to address a hazard. This section also allows the relevant road authority to step in where a landowner fails or is unable to take action to remedy a hazard and to seek recovery of reasonable costs from the landowner. This is, therefore, a matter for management between the landowner and the relevant local authority.

As Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and the relevant local authority are responsible for maintenance of national roads, I have referred the Deputy's Question to TII for direct reply. If the Deputy does not receive a reply within 10 working days please advise my Office.

Road Network

1348. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the proposed Narrow Water Bridge at Carlingford Lough; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1059/18]

1349. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the proposed Narrow Water Bridge at Carlingford Lough. [1066/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1348 and 1349 together.

Options are still being appraised in accordance with the terms of the Fresh Start Agreement in relation to the proposed bridge at Narrow Water.

Motor Tax Collection

1350. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason he will not allow vehicles to be taxed monthly to help hard pressed families; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1427/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Motor tax can currently be paid on a quarterly, half-yearly or annual basis.

On the basis of the current arrangements, the number of motor tax discs issued each year is in the order of some 5m discs. In addition, renewal notices are issued to vehicle owners in the month of expiry of a motor tax disc. The introduction of a facility whereby a motor tax disc can be taken out on a monthly basis would significantly increase the volume of discs and renewals, with a resultant increase in the costs of operating the motor tax system administratively and in terms of financial costs and controls, including bank charges, which are not currently met by vehicle owners.

If a system of payment by direct debit is being proposed, it should be noted such a proposal

would require significant additional enforcement provisions to recoup income lost to the taxpayer where there are insufficient funds in personal accounts to meet the payment or where the direct debit option is cancelled after a disc has been issued, as well as provisions to enable recovery of a disc in such circumstances.

I have no plans currently to review the basis for paying motor tax.

Motor Tax Collection

1351. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason his Department will not give the taxing of cars contract to An Post in order that it may help keep small post offices open; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1428/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Under existing arrangements, motor tax is payable in person or by post through motor tax offices. It is also payable online at any time, with the percentage of online usage increasing from 42% of motor tax transactions in 2010 to 72% in 2017. The shift to online usage is likely to increase further in coming years, with a corresponding reduction in the number of transactions being carried out in motor tax offices. As such, the provision of additional payment path for motor tax is likely to represent a diminishing financial return over time for any potential payment provider.

It should be noted that An Post are not the only potential service provider for alternative delivery of motor tax services and that there have been other expressions of interest in this regard. Accordingly, it would be expected that any outsourcing of service delivery arrangements would have to entail a competitive public procurement process.

Road Network

1352. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to bring forward a scheme to cut all roadside trees above two metres (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1442/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is a statutory function of each road authority in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993.

Works on regional and local roads are funded by local authorities' own resources supplemented by State grants. Within the overall resources available to it, the selection and prioritisation of works including the maintenance of road verges is a matter for each local authority.

Section 70 of the Roads Act 1993 sets out the responsibility of landowners to take all reasonable steps to ensure that trees, hedges and other vegetation growing on their land are not, or could not become, a danger to people using a public road or interfere with the safe use of a public road or the maintenance of a public road.

A local authority can serve notice requiring a landowner to take action to address a hazard. This section also allows the relevant road authority to step in where a landowner fails or is unable to take action to remedy a hazard and to seek recovery of reasonable costs from the landowner. This is, therefore, a matter for management between the landowner and the relevant local authority.

As Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and the relevant local authority are responsible for

maintenance of national roads, I have referred the Deputy's Question to TII for direct reply. If the Deputy does not receive a reply within 10 working days please advise my Office.

Motor Tax

1353. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of plans to implement the European Commission proposal COM 2017/276 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1700/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): European Commission proposal COM (2017) 276 relates only to vehicle taxation on heavy goods vehicles and does not apply to passenger cars. The proposal is to amend EU Directive 1999/62/EC which provides the legal framework for the charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain roads and which also sets minimum rates for the vehicle taxes applied by Member States to heavy goods vehicles. COM/2017/276 relates solely to the amendment of the vehicle tax element of the Directive.

The proposed amendment to the Directive has not yet been brought into force. The proposal is to gradually reduce the minimum tax levels currently set out in 1999/62/EC by 20% each year over the course of five years to bring the minimum tax to zero at the end of the process. The reductions will take effect from 1 January each consecutive year starting on 1 January of the year following the entry into force of the proposed amended Directive and will be met by Ireland in accordance with the timelines stipulated therein.

It should be noted that the proposal provides only for minimum rates of tax and it is open to Member States to levy vehicle tax at rates above the minimum.

Road Traffic Legislation

1354. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the regulations of rickshaws in regard to road traffic legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54373/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy may be aware, I asked the National Transport Authority (NTA) to conduct a public consultation on rickshaws, which concluded on 25 September 2017. A report on the consultation, along with recommendations by the NTA, are being considered by my Department as part of a process to develop a Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA). This will entail a detailed examination of all potential viable regulatory options for rickshaws.

I share many of the concerns that have been raised in relation to rickshaws, particularly from a public safety perspective. It is my intention, following completion of the RIA, to progress any legislative provisions deemed necessary to provide an appropriate modern regulatory framework for rickshaws.

National Transport Authority

1355. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a matter (details supplied) will be investigated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54320/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The regulation of the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry, including the renewal of vehicle licences, is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the provisions of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013.

Notwithstanding this, in order to be of assistance, I made enquiries of the NTA and I am informed that the matter to which the Deputy is referring has since been resolved.

Greenways Development

1356. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the greenway in east County Cork; and if a design work is in place. [54322/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department has not provided funding for the development of a Greenway in east County Cork and I am not in a position to provide any information to the Deputy on the status of the Greenway. I understand, however, that Cork County Council is progressing plans to develop the disused rail line between Youghal and Midleton as a Greenway. Cork County Council would be best placed to advise the Deputy on the current status of those plans.

My Department is currently developing a strategy for the future development of Greenways. I would advise local authorities to have as much preparatory work in place as possible, including planning and design, in advance of the next round of funding being made available for Greenways. I expect the next funding call to take place later in 2018 following the publication of the Greenways Strategy.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

1357. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will address a matter raised in correspondence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54347/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): When the 2017 Sports Capital Programme was advertised my Department issued a guide to filling out the application form which set out the minimum requirements that applicants had to meet to be considered for funding. My Department made significant efforts to streamline and simplify the application process on this occasion in order to try and reduce the number of invalid application. Amongst the measures introduced to reduce the number of invalid applications were the following:

- Simplification of the application form from 14 pages to 6
- The organisation of regional workshops to assist applicants completing the form
- Relaxation of rules around planning permission and quotations at application stage (requirements still stand before any grants will be paid)

Under previous rounds of the Programme typically one third of all applications were deemed invalid. For the 2017 round, this was reduced this to one in five. For the first time, invalid applicants were also given the opportunity to appeal the decision to make them invalid and the review of such appeals is now underway. My Department is also undertaking a more general review of all invalid applications including those where incorrect or incomplete documentation

was submitted. Improvements to further reduce the level of invalid applications under future rounds of the programme will be taken once these reviews are complete.

Sports Capital Programme Data

1358. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of grant applications that were made to the sports capital programme under the 2017 allocation; the number of those applications that were deemed to be invalid; and the reasons provided for applications being declared to be invalid, in tabular form. [54365/17]

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. Of these 2,320 applications, a total of 465 were deemed invalid.

Applications were deemed invalid primarily for one or more of the following reasons:

- Title/Access requirements of the Sports Capital Programme not satisfied
- Evidence of own funding not provided in prescribed format
- Insufficient own funding

All applicants have now been contacted with details of the outcome of the assessment of their application, including details of why applications were deemed invalid. Organisations were invited to appeal these decisions if they believe that an error was been made in deeming their application invalid and the assessment of these appeals is underway. Separately, my Department is undertaking a general review of all invalid applications including those where incorrect or incomplete documentation was submitted. Decisions in relation to how to address any successful appeals and improvements to further reduce the level of invalid applications under future rounds of the programme will be taken once these reviews are complete.

Taxi Regulations

1359. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the regulations of rickshaws in regard to road traffic legislation; his views on serious criminal allegations made in a newspaper report (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54374/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy may be aware, I asked the National Transport Authority (NTA) to conduct a public consultation on rickshaws, which concluded on 25 September 2017. A report on the consultation, along with recommendations by the NTA, are being considered by my officials as part of a process to develop a Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA). This will entail examination of all potential viable regulatory options for rickshaws.

While many of the issues raised in the newspaper report are beyond the remit of transport policy and legislation, I do share concerns that have been raised in relation to rickshaws, particularly from a public safety perspective. It is my intention, following completion of the RIA, to progress any legislative provisions deemed necessary to provide an appropriate modern regulatory framework for rickshaws.

Rail Services Provision

1360. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of plans to bring DART services to Drogheda; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54382/17]

1362. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if there will be progress on the expansion of the DART to the Kildare line in view of the mid-term capital review 2018 to 2021; if not, the other improvements planned up to 2021 to improve capacity and frequency of services on the Kildare line; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54423/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1360 and 1362 together.

The DART Expansion Programme has a key role to play in delivering an efficient transport system. When fully implemented the enhancements to the heavy rail system provided for in the NTA's Transport Strategy will create a full metropolitan area DART network for Dublin with all of the lines linked and connected. This integrated rail network will provide the core high capacity transit system for the region and will deliver a very substantial increase in peak-hour capacity on all lines from Drogheda, Maynooth, Hazelhatch and Greystones.

As the Deputies are aware, the Government's budgetary framework for capital investment, as set out in Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021, was reviewed last year in the context of the Mid-Term Review of capital priorities, delivery and funding. Following this work, Budget 2018 increased the multi-annual capital investment funding envelopes for the coming four-year period, including providing an enhanced capital envelope of €2.7 billion for public transport investment between 2018 and 2021.

This enhanced capital envelope includes funding in the order of €230 million for mainline rail and DART capacity enhancement and will allow acceleration of the initial stages of the overall DART Expansion Programme, focussing particularly at this stage on providing additional fleet to enhance capacity, and extending the electrified DART system.

Specifically, it will allow substantial progress on electrification of the Northern rail line as far as Balbriggan - now expected to be delivered in 2022 - and commencing work on the Maynooth line. The NTA's Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035, which provides a framework for the planning and delivery of transport infrastructure and services in the GDA over the next two decades, does not envisage an extension of the line beyond Maynooth. The remaining elements of the DART Expansion programme including the extension to Drogheda are being considered in the context of the 10 year investment plan that is expected to be published in the near future.

In light of the NTA's responsibility in this area, I have forwarded the Deputies' questions to the Authority for further information on the issues raised. Please advise my private office if the Deputies do not receive a response within ten working days.

Swimming Pool Programme Expenditure

1361. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding allocated to public swimming pools in each of the years 2008 to 2017. [54389/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Bren-

dan Griffin): Details of all swimming pool allocations and payments from 2008 to date are available on my Department's website at <http://www.dttas.ie/sport/english/allocations-and-payments>.

Question No. 1362 answered with Question No. 1360.

Fishing Industry

1363. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of Marine Survey Office inspectors assigned to working in the fishing fleet; and the number of inspections of relevant vessels containing, or suspected of containing, non-EU migrant fishing crew documented or undocumented by the office since the atypical scheme for non-EU migrant fishing crew was established. [54497/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Marine Survey office regulates the living and working conditions of all Irish ships and crews and foreign flagged ships and crews in Irish ports which are within the scope of the ILO Maritime Labour Convention, 2006. It has a team of 22 Surveyors who are responsible for examining and reporting on the condition of vessels, including fishing vessels, from a safety perspective. In 2016, 1387 vessels were licensed/surveyed. In carrying out its regulatory functions, the MSO works closely with the fishing sector to enhance the safety of fishing vessels to the benefit of all those who work on them, regardless of nationality.

Fishing Industry

1364. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of enforcement actions, civil or criminal, initiated by the Marine Survey Office in respect of violations of regulations in relevant vessels since the atypical scheme for non-EU migrant fishing crew was established. [54500/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Details of all prosecutions by the MSO for 2015 and 2016 are available on my Department's website www.dttas.ie/maritime/english/prosecutions. They are uploaded on a yearly basis. 2017 will be available in January 2018. The prosecutions listed here relate to the role of the MSO as safety regulator for maritime transport in Ireland. Its primary focus in exercising that role is to ensure safe travel at sea. This means ensuring the safety of the vessel itself – from design stage, to launch, to periodic checks, and ensuring seafarers operating those vessels have the right qualifications and training to operate them safely.

Bus Éireann Services

1365. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 524 of 4 July 2017 and the referred reply to same received from Bus Éireann (details supplied), the number of Bus Éireann journeys that have been cancelled in each of the years 2012 to 2017; the number of kilometres lost in the same period; if substitute bus drivers are available in the event of drivers calling in sick; and the number of sick days taken on average per driver. [54532/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issues raised are matters for Bus Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the Company for direct

reply. Please advise my private office if the Deputy does not receive a response within ten working days.

Coast Guard Services

1366. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the Coast Guard helicopter call out figures for each search and rescue base in each of the years 2015 to 2017. [54633/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table.

Base	2015	2016	2017
Shannon	334	277	231
Sligo	347	340	308
Dublin	151	126	99
Waterford	181	155	117
Total	1013	898	755

Coast Guard Services

1367. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of missions that have been carried out by Coast Guard helicopter crews, by search and rescue, SAR, base, specifically to assist the national ambulance service since January 2015. [54634/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table.

Base	2015	2016	2017
Shannon	58	49	43
Sligo	122	94	80
Dublin	22	14	10
Waterford	23	22	16
Total	225	179	149

Drugs in Sport

1368. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the discussions his Department has had with Sport Ireland in 2017 regarding the adequacy of its resources for anti-doping in sport; and his plans to increase funding specifically for this purpose. [54635/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Sport Ireland is designated as the National Anti-Doping Organisation for Ireland. Clause 22.6 of the World Anti-Doping Code states that “Each government will respect the autonomy of a National Anti-Doping Organization in its country and not interfere in its operational decisions and activities”.

Notwithstanding that I, as Minister, have responsibility for the oversight of Sport Ireland and I fully respect the autonomy of Sport Ireland in accordance with the World Anti-Doping Code.

Accordingly, it would not be appropriate for me or my Department to intervene in the operational decisions and activities of the Anti-Doping Unit of Sport Ireland, including the nature and manner of Sport Ireland's spending in this area.

My Department receives regular updates on the activities of the Anti-Doping Unit as part of the formal liaison meetings between my Department and Sport Ireland.

In the event that Sport Ireland considers that additional investment is required for the anti-doping effort, it is open to Sport Ireland to make the case for such funding in the context of the annual budgeting process.

Taxi Regulations

1369. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of local area hackney licences that have been issued in each county since the introduction of the scheme. [54636/17]

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. Furthermore, under the Taxi Regulation Act 2003 (Local Area Hackney) Regulations 2013, the NTA is responsible for the granting and renewing of local area hackney licences.

In order to be of assistance, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for their direct reply to the Deputy. Please advise my private office if the Deputy does not receive a response within 10 working days.

Sport Ireland Expenditure

1370. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount of Exchequer funding that has been allocated to programmes devoted to the development of young golfing talent in each of the past ten years. [54637/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Sport Ireland, which is funded by my Department, is the statutory body with responsibility for the promotion, development and co-ordination of sport. This includes responsibility for the allocation of funding to National Governing Bodies of Sport.

I have referred the Deputy's Question to Sport Ireland for direct reply in relation to funding provided to programmes devoted to the development of young golfing talent under Sport Ireland's funding programmes in each of the past ten years. I would ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within 10 days.

Additionally, in relation to capital works, the Sports Capital Programme is the primary means of providing Government funding to sports and community organisations throughout the country and some assistance has been provided to golf clubs in the past. Details of all previous allocations and payments made under the sports capital programme are available on my Department's website.

Public Transport Data

1371. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of persons who have taken rail journeys from Plunkett Station, County Waterford, in each of the years 2010 to 2017. [54638/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The collection and collation of transport statistics is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) in conjunction with the relevant transport operators and I have forwarded the Deputy's questions to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if the Deputy does not receive a response within ten working days.

Regional Airports

1372. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the subvention to Waterford regional airport in each of the years 2007 to 2017; the projected subvention in each of the years 2018 to 2021; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54644/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Regional Airports Programme operated by my Department provides for Exchequer funding in the form of capital and operational grants towards necessary safety and security related projects and activities at the four regional airports in Kerry, Donegal, Ireland West Airport Knock (IWAK) and Waterford.

Details of funding provided to Waterford Airport under the Programme for the period 2007-2017 is set out in the following table. Waterford Airport has not had any scheduled passenger air services since June 2016 and hence no Exchequer funding was provided to that airport in 2017.

As regards projected funding in the years 2018 to 2021, applications for grant support under the Regional Airports Programme in the areas of safety and security are invited from the airports on an annual basis and these applications are assessed by my Department, in conjunction with the IAA, against the criteria set out in the Programme. It is therefore not possible to forecast funding supports to particular airports in future years. In the case of Waterford Airport, the authorities there are aware that support under the Programme is subject to scheduled passenger air services operating at the airport.

As I indicated last month it is my intention to arrange for a review to be undertaken on the options for Waterford Airport. In the meantime, my Department will this month provide a sum of €375,000 to the airport to safeguard the Coast Guard Search and Rescue service for the first six months of 2018. This is an exceptional measure, given the current difficult financial circumstances at the airport, and will allow time for an evaluation of the future of Waterford Airport and ensure that the important work of the Search and Rescue service can continue.

Funding under Regional Airports Programme to Waterford Airport 2007-2017

Year	CAPITAL GRANTS €	OPERATIONAL GRANTS€	TOTAL€
2007	1,174,487	1,352,000	2,526,487
2008	1,907,729	1,540,000	3,447,729
2009	223,606	1,494,000	1,717,606

Year	CAPITAL GRANTS €	OPERATIONAL GRANTS€	TOTAL€
2010	23,381	1,584,458	1,607,839
2011	795,582	1,272,071	2,067,653
2012	1,333,830	1,232,964	2,566,794
2013	361,686	1,121,399	1,483,085
2014	533,210	1,038,784	1,571,994
2015	776,125	1,139,030	1,915,155
2016	18,381	1,020,215	1,038,596
2017	0	0	0
TOTAL	7,148,017	12,794,921	19,942,938

Coast Guard Services

1373. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of Coast Guard stations; and the number of these with running water, bathroom facilities and Internet facilities, respectively. [54671/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Irish Coast Guard, a Division of my Department, has 45 Units based in 58 coastguard stations.

There are a number of Coast Guard Units around the coast operating from Rocket Houses, some of which have been identified for upgrade in the Coast Guard Building Programme.

Of these 58 stations: 26 unit buildings have running water, bathroom facilities and internet facilities. 12 unit buildings have running water, bathroom facilities but no internet. 1 unit building has running water but no bathroom or internet facilities. Of the remaining 19 buildings without running water, bathroom or internet facilities, 17 are old Rocket Houses. 10 of these are sub-units or secondary Unit buildings.

Sports Capital Programme

1374. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if there is an appeal process available to clubs which made applications for 2017 capital sports grants that were unsuccessful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54701/17]

1380. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the appeals process for clubs that were deemed ineligible for sports capital funding in 2017. [54795/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1374 and 1380 together.

When the 2017 Sports Capital Programme (SCP) was advertised, my Department issued a guide to filling out the application form which set out the minimum requirements that applicants had to meet to be considered for funding.

Applications were deemed invalid primarily for one or more of the following reasons:-

- Title/Access requirements of the SCP not satisfied
- Insufficient quotations/estimates submitted

- Evidence of own funding not provided in prescribed format

All applicants have been informed of the outcome of the assessment of their application, including details of why applications were deemed invalid. Applicants were also offered the opportunity to appeal the Department's decision if they believe that an error was made in deeming their application invalid. The closing date for appeals for local applications was the 20th December and all appeals received are currently being assessed. The closing date for appeals for regional applications is the 19th January.

Separately, my Department is undertaking a general review of all invalid applications including those where incorrect or incomplete documentation was submitted. Decisions in relation to how to address any successful appeals and improvements to further reduce the level of invalid applications under future rounds of the SCP will be taken once these reviews are complete.

Rural Transport Programme

1375. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the scoring system used when tenders are being assessed for operators of the rural link service; the way in which the scoring process is weighted in terms of costing, age of vehicle, experience and local knowledge; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54732/17]

1376. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the detail of the criteria in the tender process of the rural link scheme which ask that operators have a legal right to a substitute bus; the way in which his Department assesses this information; if there is a need for applicants to own their own vehicle; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54733/17]

1377. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way in which the local link service monitors the usage of a primary vehicle by a successful applicant to the scheme; if there is a minimum requirement for usage time of the highlighted primary vehicle; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54734/17]

1378. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to investigate the possibility of harmonising contracts in the rural link service (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54735/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1375 to 1378, inclusive, together.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has national responsibility for integrated local and rural transport, including management of the Rural Transport Programme funded by my Department, and which now operates under the "Local Link" brand.

In light of the NTA's responsibilities regarding Local Link services, I have referred the Deputy's questions to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if the Deputy does not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Departmental Data

1379. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the name and number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from his Department 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 amount of money that they have spent on this particular campaign during that time; the number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from his Department that have expended resources seeking the retention of the eighth amendment; the amount of funding these organisations have received from the State in the past five years; and the amount of money that they have spent on this particular campaign during that time. [54774/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I am not aware that any organisation in receipt of funding from my Department has expended resources on the issues referred to by the Deputy.

Question No. 1380 answered with Question No. 1374.

Mountain Rescue Service

1381. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the operational and capital grants paid to each mountain rescue team in 2017; the basis on which this allocation was made; his plans to increase these grants in the future in view of the important work being done by mountain rescue teams on a voluntary basis; his further plans to increase the grants in 2018 to a level similar to the level that pertained in the 2008 to 2010 period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54810/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department, through the Irish Coast Guard, administers an annual grant scheme to Mountain Rescue Ireland, the umbrella organisation for mountain rescue teams on the island of Ireland, and to associated membership teams. However, it is important to recognise that the Garda Síochána have responsibility for the co-ordination of mountain rescue teams under the framework for major emergency management.

In administering this grant, my Department liaises with Mountain Rescue Ireland and relevant statutory bodies each year to review grant expenditure matters. It is a matter for individual teams to decide how the allocated maintenance grant is spent, as each team at local level develops its own administrative and operational practices. Going into 2018, there are 11 mountain rescue teams in Ireland that will be able to avail of grant funding.

Please see the following table setting out the expenditure for 2017. The grant aid took place in line with previous years and the grants are tiered to reflect regional activity. Mountain Rescue Ireland also receives an annual development grant, which for the past three years, it has invested in maintaining a “Tetra” communications system. I can confirm that the budget for grant aid in 2018 is set at the same level as that of 2017.

ANNUAL GRANTS- MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAMS

	Amount				
Mountain Rescue Ireland	€18,520.00	Glen of Imaal Mountain Rescue	€14,815.00	Irish Cave Rescue Organisation	€18,520.00

	Amount				
Mountain Rescue Ireland Development Grant	€60,000	Kerry Mountain Rescue	€14,815.00	Dublin/Wicklow Mountain Rescue	€14,815.00
Search and Rescue Dogs Association	€7,407.00	Tramore Mountain Rescue	€3,704.00	Donegal Mountain Rescue	€7,407.00
Mayo Mountain Rescue	€7,407.00	Galway Mountain Rescue	€7,407.00	South Eastern Mountain Rescue	€7,407.00
Sligo/Leitrim Mountain Rescue	€7,407.00				

Greenways Funding

1382. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount available in 2018 for the development of greenways; if funding will be available to purchase land for the development of such greenways; the process by which applications will be made and approved for this funding; the proposed date of approval of projects in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54811/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): An amount of €3.6m has been allocated under my Department's Tourism Services budget for greenway construction, planning and design for 2018. This amount is fully committed for ongoing projects in Kildare, Meath, Waterford, Galway and Kerry.

I will be in a position to announce a new funding call for greenways following the completion of the Greenway Strategy, which is currently being developed in my Department and which I hope to publish in the first quarter of this year. The funding call to local authorities will be a competitive process and proposals submitted will be assessed based on criteria set out in the funding call. I anticipate that decisions regarding projects to be funded will be taken around the end of 2018.

Under the recent mid-term review of the Capital Plan I was pleased to secure an additional €30m for greenways bringing the total available investment for the period 2018 to 2021 to almost €56m.

Matters concerning the purchase of land for greenway development are for local authorities. If there is a requirement to purchase land the local authority should include the cost of land purchase as part of any application submitted to my Department under the next funding call.

My advice to local authorities intending to submit proposals under the next funding call is to advance all statutory, planning and land purchase requirements to the greatest degree possible so as to be well placed to compete. It will be important that consultation with landowners begins at an early stage in the process to find an agreed route that will minimise the impact on landowners business either through the routing of the greenway or through accommodation works.

For completeness of information, I can inform the Deputy that my Department will also al-

locate €8m to the National Transport Authority (NTA) in 2018 towards the development of urban cycling and walking infrastructure. Whilst the exact amounts to be allocated to individual schemes are currently being finalised between the NTA and the relevant local authorities, there are a number of greenway-type schemes likely to be included under this funding stream such as sections of the Royal Canal in Dublin City, Fingal and Co. Kildare; the Grand Canal in Dublin City; the Dodder Greenway in Dublin City and South Dublin; and the Lee Valley in Cork City.

My Department is also part-funding a number of cross-border greenways in Donegal, Monaghan and Louth as part of the EU INTERREG VA Sustainable Transport Programme; the funding amount from my Department towards this programme is likely to be approximately €100,000 in 2018. A further €150,000 has been allocated to Transport Infrastructure Ireland to progress design work on the pedestrian and cycle bridge in Athlone that forms part of the Galway to Dublin Greenway.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland Projects

1383. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when permission will be given to Transport Infrastructure Ireland to lodge a planning application with An Bord Pleanála for the Galway city N6 extension; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54812/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual 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.

Greenways Development

1384. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 543 of 28 November 2017, the date in 2018 for a new round of funding for the development of greenways. [54908/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My officials have been engaging with various other departments and agencies with a view to developing an appropriate Greenways strategy. The next funding call for Greenways will be announced following the completion of that strategy, expected before the end of March 2018.

Road Tolls

1385. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 200 of 8 November 2017, his plans to review the situation regarding tolls in view of the fact that privately taxed commercial vehicles are charged commercial rates at road tolls which is proving costly for some road users; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54939/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As stated in reply to Dáil Reference PQ 200 answered on 8th November last, tolls in Ireland vary according to type and size of vehicles, and reflect inter alia the impact of their use on the toll roads. Toll charges related to vehicle types are publicly available on the *www.etoll.ie* website.

There is no link between toll charges and motor taxation class. Vehicles of a similar type are all charged the same toll rate regardless of the motor taxation class of the vehicle. The statutory powers to levy tolls on national roads as well as regional and local roads, to make toll bye-laws and to enter into toll agreements with private investors are vested in TII (for national roads) and each local authority (for regional and local roads) under Part V of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended by the Planning and Development Act 2000 and the Roads Act 2007).

There is no basis for rates to correspond between the two very different regimes of 1) tolls for use, and 2) motor taxation.

National Transport Authority Funding

1386. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason Fingal County Council has received significantly less funding than other greater Dublin area local authorities under the National Transport Authority sustainable measures grants in each of the years 2015 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54952/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. However, I am not involved in the day-to-day operations of public transport, including the management of the Sustainable Transport Measures Grant (STMG) Programme.

My Department provides aggregate funding to the National Transport Authority (NTA) for the STMG Programme to provide grants to the seven local authorities in the Greater Dublin Area, including Fingal County Council, to support implementation of sustainable transport projects including cycling & walking infrastructure, Quality Bus Corridors, road safety, public transport accessibility and traffic management projects.

Noting the NTA's responsibility in this matter, I have referred your question to the NTA for a more detailed reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Road Tolls

1387. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if claims by persons in counties Louth and Meath that have been reporting overcharging at the M1 and M1 slip tolls in Drogheda will be examined (details supplied); the steps he will take to resolve the issue; the recourse that will be put in place to ensure that persons that were double charged within the three hour period will be refunded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55014/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy in relation to roads. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects on national roads are a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the relevant local authority. For regional and local roads it is a matter for each respective local

authority.

More specifically, the statutory powers to levy tolls on national roads as well as regional and local roads, to make toll bye-laws and to enter into toll agreements with private investors are vested in TII (for national roads) and each local authority (for regional and local roads) under Part V of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended by the Planning and Development Act 2000 and the Roads Act 2007).

Noting the above, I am referring the question to TII for direct reply within 10 working days. Please inform my private office if you do not receive the information.

National Car Test

1388. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the fact that some insurers choose to ignore the NCT when considering a quote for an older vehicle (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55020/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Car Test which was introduced to comply with an EU Roadworthiness Testing Directive, is aimed at helping to prevent avoidable crashes and improving road safety, and a car which passes this test may be driven on our roads.

The Cost of Insurance Working Group, chaired by Michael D'Arcy, T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Finance, examined the circumstances behind the rising cost of motor insurance and how to improve the situation. This included an examination of the issue raised by you. A copy of the Cost of Insurance Working Group Report and subsequent updates can be found here - <http://www.finance.gov.ie/what-we-do/insurance/the-cost-of-insurance-working-group/>.

The Cost of Insurance Working Group Report commented that an 'older vehicle may have a greater risk of injury due to its lack of safety features compared to a modern vehicle' (See Point 2.4 Underwriting Risks and Coverages, Section vii. Vehicle details on page 29 of the Report). Research by the Road Safety Authority indicates that in the event of a collision, the level of personal injury to an individual in an older car can be significantly higher than if that person was driving a new car. Safety features on newer cars can include greater use of airbags, electronic stability, improved braking systems, roll-over protection, etc., all of which are designed to reduce the impact of a collision on the occupants. A higher overall level of personal injury payout may be one factor that leads some insurance companies to consider older cars a higher risk in terms of potential payouts when considering the underwriting of a policy.

Road Safety

1389. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will request the NTA and TII to prepare a report on the placing of rubber infills on sections of the new Luas line that would enhance the safety of cyclists crossing the tram lines at busy junctions (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55052/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy may be aware, the National Transport Authority (NTA) is responsible for the development and implementation of public transport and sustainable transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area

(GDA), including the Luas Cross City Green Line Extension.

I am informed by the NTA that trials abroad for installing a rubber insert, or similar, into rail grooves have not been successful, with the material becoming ripped and dislodged by the tram wheels during operation. Therefore, the NTA does not propose to use that approach. An alternative approach which would provide a satisfactory long-term solution has not yet been identified to the NTA that would provide a hazard-free surface along tram lines, while accommodating significant tram, bus, taxi and cyclist movements. Collaboration is ongoing between NTA, TII and the City Council and will guide the future approach to this matter.

Noting the NTA's responsibility in the matter, I have referred your question to the NTA for a more detailed reply with regard to the issues raised. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Emergency Services

1390. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to allow vehicles transporting blood to travel in bus lanes. [55060/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Bus lanes were created, at some expense to the taxpayer, to provide on-street priority for bus-based public transport.

In addition to buses, the emergency services may also use bus lanes, as may cyclists, due to their status as vulnerable road users. Taxis are permitted to use with-flow bus lanes, due to the fact that they are available to the public for on-street hire.

My predecessors and I have received numerous requests over the years to open bus lanes to other classes of traffic. They and I have always rejected these requests, as they would undermine the efficiency of the lanes for the purpose for which they were introduced. While some additional classes of traffic may not involve many vehicles, it would be difficult to justify adding any one of the many proposed additional categories while refusing others.

Greenways Provision

1391. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the budget provided to roll out the Galway to Clifden greenway project; the amount that has been drawn down and spent at year end 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55061/17]

1392. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the Galway to Clifden greenway project started; the anticipated completion date; if a specific team has been allocated to this project; if so, the number of staff and the role of each; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55062/17]

1393. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the works completed to date on the Galway to Clifden greenway; the works under way to date; the works projected for 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55063/17]

1394. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of a further consultation process in relation to the Galway to Clifden greenway project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55064/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1391 to 1394, inclusive, together.

My Department awarded €2m to Galway County Council under the National Cycle Network Funding Programme 2014-2016 to construct a greenway between Galway City and Moycullen. Any proposal by Galway County Council to progress this project onward to Clifden would be a matter for the Council. As no funding has been provided by my Department for a Greenway between Moycullen and Clifden, I am not in a position to update the Deputy.

Progress on the Galway to Moycullen project will require certain local land issues to be resolved. To date Galway County Council has been progressing the planning and statutory elements of the project and I understand that the Council hopes to be in a position to lodge a planning application in 2018.

The total grant amount drawn down by Galway County Council to the end of 2017 is €127,399.

Galway County Council is best placed to comment on the further consultation process between Galway to Clifden, the anticipated completion date and the numbers and roles of staff members assigned to this project.

Driver Test Centres

1395. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of driving test centres, by county. [55070/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The number of driving test centres by county is as follows:

County	
Carlow	1
Cavan	1
Clare	3
Cork	4
Donegal	3
Dublin	4
Galway	4
Kerry	2
Kildare	1
Kilkenny	1
Laois	1
Leitrim	1
Limerick	3
Longford	1
Louth	1
Mayo	2
Meath	1
Monaghan	1
Offaly	2

County	
Roscommon	1
Sligo	1
Tipperary	4
Waterford	2
Westmeath	2
Wexford	2
Wicklow	1

This information is available on the Road Safety Authority website at www.rsa.ie/en/Utility/Contact-Us/Driving-Test-Centres/

Driver Test Waiting Lists

1396. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the average waiting time in each county for driving tests. [55071/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The average waiting time for each driving test centre is available on the Road Safety Authority website at www.rsa.ie/en/RSA/Learner-Drivers/The-Driving-Test/Test-Waiting-Times/.

This information is updated weekly.

Driver Test

1397. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of applications for driving tests being processed, by county. [55072/17]

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.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

1398. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the capital sport grant application of a club (details supplied) will be reviewed in view of the fact that its application complied with his Department's criteria; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55127/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): When the 2017 Sports Capital Programme (SCP) was advertised, my Department issued a guide to filling out the application form which set out the minimum requirements that applicants had to meet to be considered for funding.

Applications were deemed invalid primarily for one or more of the following reasons:-

- Title/Access requirements of the SCP not satisfied
- Insufficient quotations/estimates submitted

- Evidence of own funding not provided in prescribed format

All applicants have been informed of the outcome of the assessment of their application, including details of why applications were deemed invalid. Applicants were also offered the opportunity to appeal the Department's decision if they believed that an error was made in deeming their application invalid. The club referred to by the Deputy has lodged such an appeal which is currently under consideration.

Separately, my Department is undertaking a general review of all invalid applications including those where incorrect or incomplete documentation was submitted. Decisions in relation to how to address any successful appeals and improvements to further reduce the level of invalid applications under future rounds of the SCP will be taken once these reviews are complete.

Public Transport

1399. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the current time for amendments to be made to bus routes by operators for approval by the NTA; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55138/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) 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.

Driver Test

1400. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to reduce the waiting times for driving tests; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55154/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Driver Testing Service, provided by the Road Safety Authority, has seen an increase of almost 20% in the levels of driving test applications over the last four years. This, coupled with the retirements of driver tester staff, has meant that the waiting times for customers for driving tests have increased.

The Authority currently employs almost 100 driver testers. Since October 2016, my Department has sanctioned the recruitment of an additional 28 Driver Testers. It is envisaged that the recruitment of the latest appointees will be assigned, trained and conducting testing by early 2018.

The Authority is currently undertaking initiatives in order to increase capacity to deliver extra driving tests. These initiatives include the recruitment of additional driver testers and the delivery of 120 extra overtime tests per driver tester who participates. Other measures include initiatives to reduce the number of applicant no-shows at the driving test, and to reduce the number of non-conducted driving tests. The Authority plans to introduce a new test booking system in 2018 that will give test applicants much more control over their booking and appointment choice.

The Authority is committed to working with any applicants that require an urgent appointment. A priority list system is in place whereby cancelled test appointments are made available

for such applicants. Over 1,000 tests are cancelled by driving test applicants weekly and these slots are subsequently offered to applicants who require urgent test appointments.

While I accept that current waiting times remain too high, I am assured that the measures the Authority has put in place will have the desired effect of reducing waiting times to the public.

Sports Capital Programme

1401. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the sports capital programme 2018 will be launched. [55169/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): Allocations in respect of applications submitted under the 2017 Sports Capital Programme were announced in November and December last. Full details of these allocations are available on my Department’s website. The priority in the medium term will be on advancing these projects.

A decision on the timing of the next round of the programme will be made later this year and all clubs and sports organisations registered with my Department will be informed at the time.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland Expenditure

1402. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will address a matter (details supplied); if a meeting will be facilitated on the matter; if so, the date for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55171/17]

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 maintenance of the national road network is the responsibility of Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Within its overall budget, the assessment and prioritisation of expenditure is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

The position in relation to budgets for 2018 is that TII’s current expenditure budget has been reduced by about €6 million compared to the 2017 outturn while its capital budget has been increased by about €35 million to €434 million.

As regards the allocation of resources under particular expenditure headings, such as ordinary maintenance, this is a matter for decision by TII. In this context I understand that TII explained the basis of the 2018 allocations to local authorities in advance of notifying them of their 2018 allocations.

As regards regional and local roads, each local authority has statutory responsibility for the maintenance of roads within its area. Works on regional and local roads are funded by local authorities’ own resources supplemented by State grants. While there is a reduction of about €8 million in current funding budget for 2018, there is a significant increase in capital funding to approx. €381 million.

I will be notifying local authorities of their grant allocations shortly. As in previous years I will be aiming to allocate funding on as equitable basis as possible taking road lengths within each local authority area into account.

As regards a possible meeting, I suggest that Monaghan County Council contact my Office.

Public Transport Fares

1403. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to review Irish Rail train fair costs in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55191/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) 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.

Roads Maintenance

1404. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will address concerns that funding for the ordinary maintenance programme for 2018 for Louth County Council will be cut by 30%; the way in which Louth County Council will be in a position to deal with an already strained road network maintenance budget; the other avenues of funding that Louth county council can avail of to make up the shortfall; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55197/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I understand that the Deputy is referring to the current funding allocation for national roads in 2018. As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The maintenance of the national road network is the responsibility of Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Within its overall budget, the assessment and prioritisation of expenditure is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

The position in relation to budgets for 2018 is that TII's current expenditure budget has been reduced by about €6 million compared to the 2017 outturn while its capital budget has been increased by about €35 million to €434 million.

As regards the allocation of resources under particular expenditure headings, such as ordinary maintenance, this is a matter for decision by TII. In this context I understand that TII explained the basis of the 2018 allocations to local authorities in advance of notifying them of their 2018 allocations.

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.

Departmental Data

1405. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the vacant properties and land not in use, owned, rented or leased by his Department or by bodies and agencies under the aegis of his Department by square footage for buildings and acres for land, in tabular form; the address and location of these properties; and the last date of occupancy or use of these properties. [55220/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Office of Public Works (OPW) is responsible for the procurement of office and other accommodation required for Government Departments, including the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and accordingly arrangements for vacant property and land not in use is a matter for OPW.

My Department does, however, own one vacant property in the State, which is under the remit of the Irish Coast Guard. Details of this property are given in the following table

Vacant Property	Location	Square Footage	Last Date of occupation
Rocket House, Dun Laoghaire Harbour	Dun Laoghaire	Internal Floor approx. 244.34 External floor 337.23	2010

The position regarding the agencies under the remit of this Department is a matter for them. I have forwarded a copy of your question to them for a direct reply. If you have not heard from the Agencies within ten working days, please contact my private office

Driver Test

1406. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the delays for driving tests in the Dublin city and county areas; his plans to reduce the waiting times in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55227/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Driver Testing Service, provided by the Road Safety Authority, has seen an increase of almost 20% in the levels of driving test applications over the last four years. This, coupled with the retirements of driver tester staff, has meant that the waiting times for customers for driving tests have increased.

The Authority currently employs almost 100 driver testers. Since October 2016, my Department has sanctioned the recruitment of an additional 28 Driver Testers. It is envisaged that the recruitment of the latest appointees will be assigned, trained and conducting testing by early 2018.

The Authority is currently undertaking initiatives in order to increase capacity to deliver extra driving tests. These initiatives include the recruitment of additional driver testers and the delivery of 120 extra overtime tests per driver tester who participates. Other measures include initiatives to reduce the number of applicant no-shows at the driving test, and to reduce the number of non-conducted driving tests. The Authority plans to introduce a new test booking system in 2018 that will give test applicants much more control over their booking and appointment choice.

The Authority is committed to working with any applicants that require an urgent appointment. A priority list system is in place whereby cancelled test appointments are made available for such applicants. Over 1,000 tests are cancelled by driving test applicants weekly and these slots are subsequently offered to applicants who require urgent test appointments.

While I accept that current waiting times remain too high, I am assured that the measures the Authority has put in place will have the desired effect of reducing waiting times to the public.

1407. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the basis on which it was decided to award one point for non GAA sports for ball stop netting while awarding two points for applications in respect of ball stop netting for GAA; his views on whether this scoring system is fair; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55260/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The assessment process and scoring scheme used for the Sports Capital Programme (SCP) has been developed based on experience of overseeing the programme over a number of years. While some changes were made to the scoring system for the 2017 round of the SCP, no alterations were made to the scores awarded for ball stop netting. The assessment process and scoring system is primarily designed to reward projects:

- that have a positive impact on participation,
- that are being proposed by clubs/organisations that have not received significant funding in the past,
- that are from disadvantaged areas, and
- that promote sharing of facilities

Ball stop netting is clearly more relevant for certain sports due to the nature of the sports themselves. In this regard, the necessity for ball stop netting for gaelic games was deemed to be particularly strong due to the fact that gaelic footballs and sliotars regularly get kicked and pucked higher and further away from goal posts in comparison to other field sports. Accordingly, it was decided that these applications could receive a higher mark than non-GAA applications. While I consider the overall scoring system for the SCP to be reasonable and fair, all aspects of it will be reviewed prior to the next round of the SCP.

Sports Capital Programme

1408. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the steps he is taking through the sports capital grants scheme or by other methods to encourage the sharing of sports facilities by different sports or to promote the development of multi-sport facilities. [55261/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The sharing of facilities is one of the stated objectives of the Sports Capital Programme (SCP). Applicants are advised at application stage that they will obtain extra marks at assessment if they show that the proposed facilities will be shared. Under the SCP, schools, colleges and Education and Training Boards may only apply for funding jointly with a local sports club or group. Of the 1,807 allocations made to local projects under the 2017 programme, almost 500 were to organisations that stated in their application that they would share their facilities with other groups. The SCP also allocates generous funding to multi-sport and community sport facilities. Details of all the allocations made under the most recent round of the programme, including those to multi-sports facilities are available on my Department's website.

In relation to future capital funding for sports projects, my Department is currently finalising a review of national sports policy which includes a specific focus on how Government should optimally fund sports facilities in the years ahead.

Sport Ireland

1409. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount, date and recipient of each of the youth field sports grants in each of the years an allocation was made since 2000. [55262/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Sport Ireland, which is funded by my Department, is the statutory body with responsibility for the development of sport, increasing participation at all levels and raising standards, including the allocation of funding across its various programmes, including the scheme that provides considerable grant funding to the three major field sports (Soccer, Rugby and GAA) in respect of their work to encourage greater underage participation.

I have referred the Deputy's Question to Sport Ireland for direct reply in relation to the amount, date and recipient of each of the youth field sports grants in each of the years an allocation was made since 2000. I would ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within 10 days.

Public Transport Provision

1410. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the new extended LUAS trams on the green line and cross city line are to be introduced; the further measures his Department will take to deal with increased demand on this line following the opening of the cross city line; the increase in number of passengers on this line since the opening of the extension in December 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55263/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): With the introduction of the new Luas service through the city centre and onwards to Broombridge, many new users have been attracted to try out the new service.

Numbers on Luas increased by 10.26% to 37.6m on both lines in 2017. With the Green Line now extended to Broombridge, and providing interchange with the Red Line and greater connectivity to rail services, those numbers are likely to grow substantially again in 2018. While it is welcomed that so many new customers are using the extended Green Line, it has meant that some trams are operating at capacity.

The Green Line Capacity Enhancement project was recently approved by Government. The purpose of the project is to address current capacity limits at peak hours on the Luas Green Line and to cater for future demands along the line. The project is proposed in the National Transport Authority's (NTA) Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035. It includes the lengthening of the existing green line tram fleet, the purchase of additional trams to meet future passenger demand and modifications to Sandyford Depot to stable and maintain these trams. A complementary investment project to lengthen the platforms at the Green Line stations was completed last year.

The NTA have advised that the first of the new 55 metre long trams is expected to be deployed in the coming weeks.

Tourism Industry

1411. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to rectify an issue (details supplied) regarding advertisement on the Wild Atlantic Way; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55269/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): My Department's role in relation to tourism lies in the area of national tourism policy development. It is not directly involved in the management or development of individual tourism projects, such as the Wild Atlantic Way. These are operational matters for the Board and Management of Fáilte Ireland.

Accordingly, I have referred the Deputy's question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply to the Deputy. Please contact my private office if you have not received a reply within ten working days.

Driver Test Waiting Lists

1412. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of persons on waiting lists for a driving test in County Tipperary for each category in each County Tipperary test centre, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1006/18]

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 Test

1413. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the waiting time persons in County Tipperary are expected to wait before a driving test date is issued for each category and in each County Tipperary test centre, in tabular form; if driving test waiting times in County Tipperary are in line with the national average of ten weeks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1007/18]

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 Test

1414. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if an earlier date can be offered for a driving test for category B for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1008/18]

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.

Coast Guard Services

1415. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding the termination of membership with the IRCG; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1021/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): A 2012 Value for Money Review for the Coast Guard recommended that Waterville Coast Guard Unit and Knightstown Coast Guard Unit be amalgamated to form a single Unit (Iveragh) for the South Kerry area. The new Unit was formally approved on 30th June 2015. An extensive consultation process was followed in order to assuage concerns raised by existing members. A building was renovated in Waterville as an administrative centre for the new Unit. This building was opened by the then Taoiseach Enda Kenny on 27th March 2017.

Despite numerous requests by the Coast Guard, several members of the now-defunct Waterville Unit refused to enrol in the Iveragh Unit. Following the official opening of the Station-house the members in question had further opportunities to enrol which they were not prepared to do. This left the Coast Guard with no option but to reluctantly terminate their membership. The Unit has now completed its establishment and intensive training is ongoing to make it a fully operational Search and Cliff Rescue Unit.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland

1416. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will liaise with TII to ensure that signage is placed on the M6 prior to exit six Moate informing motorists of the Moate Business Park; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1023/18]

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.

Coast Guard Services

1417. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number and location of designated sites across the country in which the coastguard helicopter can land in the hours of darkness; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1052/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Coast Guard Helicopter service is provided under contract to my Department by CHC Ireland DAC. The primary role of the service is maritime Search and Rescue. Helicopter services are also made available to the Health Service Executive for HEMS (Helicopter Emergency Medical Service) flights on an as available basis.

Under regulations governing the conduct of Search and Rescue missions the Helicopter Commander can exercise discretion in determining the suitability of a 'Landing Site' during both day and night operations. This decision is based on an assessment of site suitability, risk, requirements of the casualty and safety of the general public.

For all other missions, including HEMS flights, Coast Guard Helicopters may use specific surveyed landing sites. These sites are further categorised as 'Day Only' or 'Day/Night'. Currently 26 sites are designated as night time sites in the CHC Ireland landing site directory.

Suitability and classification of sites are determined by site surveys which are conducted on behalf of the operator of the Coast Guard helicopter service.

The 26 site locations are in the table:

	Site Locations
1	Achill Sound GAA
2	Alltnagelvin Hospital Derry
3	Ballybofey GAA Pitch
4	Bishopstown Cork GAA Club
5	Blacksod
6	Buncrana GAA Pitch
7	Carlow
8	Castlebar Hospital
9	Castletownbere GAA Pitch
10	Castletownbere Refuel
11	Cross Co. Clare
12	Dingle GAA Pitch
13	Drogheda Athletics Ground
14	Dunfanaghy GAA Pitch
15	Enniskillen Hospital
16	Galway University Hospital
17	Goleen GAA Pitch
18	Kilkenny College
19	Letterkenny Hospital
20	Limerick General Hospital
21	Moville GAA Pitch
22	Reenard GAA Pitch
23	Sligo Hospital
24	Sneem GAA Pitch
25	Tralee Hospital
26	Wexford Rugby Grounds

Roads Maintenance

1418. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount spent on regional and local roads in County Mayo in each of the years 2011 to 2017. [1104/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Details of the re-

gional and local road grant payments to local authorities are outlined in the regional and local road grant payment booklets which are available in the Dáil Library.

The tables included in the payment booklets outline expenditure by type of grant programme. For the Deputy's information an explanation of the purpose of the main Regional and Local Road Grant Programmes is set out below:

Restoration Maintenance (RM): The purpose of the RM grant is to protect the structural integrity of the road by way of surface dressing through the sealing of the road surface. The purpose of restoration maintenance is to maintain the asset before it requires improvement.

Restoration Improvement Grant (RI): The RI grant programme is the main road strengthening programme and caters for surface restoration, pavement overlay works, complete road rehabilitation works and for drainage works where required.

Discretionary Grant (DG): Councils have discretion in spending these grants for improvement and maintenance works subject to selecting from a list of eligible works. However Councils are requested to prioritise projects which involve strengthening works, remedying road defects, winter maintenance and drainage works.

Bridge Rehabilitation (BR): This programme allows local authorities to apply for monies to undertake bridge rehabilitation works. **Safety Improvement Works (BS):** This programme allows local authorities to apply for monies to undertake safety improvement works.

Training Grant (TG): The Training Grant assists in the provision of training of persons engaged in maintenance and improvement of regional and local roads.

Specific Grant and Strategic Grants : The Department no longer seeks annual applications from local authorities in respect of the Specific (road improvement schemes costing up to €5m.) and Strategic (improvement schemes costing over €5m.) grant programmes. Instead it considers projects on a case by case basis with a particular focus on:

- Major bridge rehabilitation works which are outside the scope of the normal bridge rehabilitation programme
- Critical safety improvement works which are outside the scope of the normal safety improvement programme
- Projects which would have a significant and quantifiable economic impact, particularly as regards employment and on industrial, tourism, agricultural, rural development and urban regeneration.

Roads Maintenance

1419. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocations for regional and local roads in his Department in each of the years 2014 to 2018, by grant type and outturns; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1161/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Details of the regional and local road grant allocations and payments to local authorities are outlined in the regional and local road grant booklets which are available in the Dáil Library.

The tables included in the payment and allocation booklets outline expenditure by type of grant programme. For the Deputy's information an explanation of the purpose of the main Re-

gional and Local Road Grant Programmes is set out below:

Restoration Maintenance (RM): The purpose of the RM grant is to protect the structural integrity of the road by way of surface dressing through the sealing of the road surface. The purpose of restoration maintenance is to maintain the asset before it requires improvement.

Restoration Improvement Grant (RI): The RI grant programme is the main road strengthening programme and caters for surface restoration, pavement overlay works, complete road rehabilitation works and for drainage works where required.

Discretionary Grant (DG): Councils have discretion in spending these grants for improvement and maintenance works subject to selecting from a list of eligible works. However Councils are requested to prioritise projects which involve strengthening works, remedying road defects, winter maintenance and drainage works.

Bridge Rehabilitation (BR): This programme allows local authorities to apply for monies to undertake bridge rehabilitation works.

Safety Improvement Works (BS): This programme allows local authorities to apply for monies to undertake safety improvement works.

Training Grant (TG): The Training Grant assists in the provision of training of persons engaged in maintenance and improvement of regional and local roads.

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- Major bridge rehabilitation works which are outside the scope of the normal bridge rehabilitation programme
- Critical safety improvement works which are outside the scope of the normal safety improvement programme
- Projects which would have a significant and quantifiable economic impact, particularly as regards employment and on industrial, tourism, agricultural, rural development and urban regeneration.

It is expected that regional and local road allocations for 2018 will be notified to local authorities shortly. In line with my Department's 2018 roads budget, an increase in allocations to local authorities is anticipated.

Roads Maintenance

1420. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount his Department has allocated for the maintenance of the regional and local road network in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1258/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of each local authority, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from local authorities' own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the local authority.

It is expected that regional and local road allocations for 2018 will be notified to local authorities shortly.

Public Transport

1421. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the cost of restoring PSO subvention levels to those of 2008. [1259/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The allocation for the Public Service Obligation (PSO) is subject to the annual Budgetary process. As the Deputy is aware last year I committed publicly to further increasing Public Service Obligation (PSO) funding levels in the future as resources allowed. PSO subvention increased in both 2016 and 2017 and will increase yet further this year. In Budget 2018 I secured an 8% increase in the overall Exchequer funding available for PSO services throughout the country. This means that in 2018 €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.

Public Service Obligation (PSO) subvention provided in 2008 - the year of record funding - was €308 million. Therefore the total funding committed toward the PSO programme in 2018 now stands at approximately 93% of the 2008 figure.

As is normal, the precise allocations to the companies will be decided by the NTA in exercise of its statutory mandate and in accordance with the various contract arrangements that it has in place with PSO service providers.

Pension Provisions

1422. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if changes have taken place from 1 January 2018 to the CIÉ pension schemes; if his approval was required for these changes; if this approval was given despite assurances provided in Dáil Éireann on 6 December 2017 in reply to a parliamentary question that there would be no changes to the CIÉ pensions schemes without the agreement of the active membership; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1270/18]

1423. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has satisfied himself that CIÉ has adhered to the requirements of statutory instrument numbers 323/2000 and 205/2010; if not, the steps he will take to ensure such a compliance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1271/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1422 and 1423 together.

Issues in relation to C oras Iompair  ireann (CI ) pension schemes are primarily a matter for the Trustees of the pension scheme, the CI  Group and their employees.

In a Topical Issues debate in this House on 6 December 2017, I outlined the challenges faced in addressing the solvency of the schemes and the process underway to address the deficit which involves detailed discussion between CI  and employee representatives, facilitated by the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC). I said that CI  was on record at the WRC that it will not impose any change that it proposes without the agreement of the active members of both schemes and that it will continue to contribute to both schemes in accordance with the

rules of the schemes. I am informed that this remains CIÉ's position in order to bring about a set of proposals that could form the basis of the trustees' submission to the Pensions Authority and that it continues to engage with the WRC.

Separately, the Deputy is asking about a decision of the Pensions Committee, which consists of four CIÉ Board appointed members and four employee elected members. The legal structure of CIÉ's Scheme for management and administrative personnel bestows certain trustee powers and responsibilities on the Committee of this Scheme.

I am informed that a notification issued to members across the CIÉ group following the Committee's decision on 9 May 2017 concerning early retirement discount factors which came into effect on 1 January 2018. This change was made by the Committee under the Scheme's rules which clearly attribute this power to the Committee alone without the need to refer or seek approval from the Minister.

The Deputy is also asking about CIE adherence to the requirements of Statutory Instruments 323 of 2000 and 205 of 2010. CIÉ has advised that it has complied with its contribution requirements under these Statutory Instruments. Also, the Deputy may be aware that the Schemes' accounts are independently audited and are required to be signed off by the trustees if they are satisfied that the Rules have been complied with. These audited and trustee approved accounts form part of each Scheme's Annual Report that is circulated to all the members. To date, no case exists where this has not occurred.

Driver Licensing Exchange Agreements

1424. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the process for an Irish citizen seeking to transfer an international class 1-5 licence to an Irish equivalent class licence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1283/18]

1425. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the difficulties encountered by Irish citizens that hold international class 1-5 licences and seek to transfer this licence to the Irish equivalent upon return here; if these difficulties will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1284/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1424 and 1425 together.

The International Driving Permit is not a driving licence. It is a document in a standard international format giving details of the national licence which the person holds. It is therefore irrelevant to the question of driver licence exchange, which depends on the underlying national licence. Likewise, the citizenship of an applicant is not relevant to the question of driving licence exchange.

The rules on the exchange of non-Irish for Irish driving licences are clear. Irish driver licensing law operates within a framework of EU law. Under EU law, we may issue driving licences only to people resident in the jurisdiction.

Where people with a driving licence issued by another EU Member State take up residence in Ireland, they may exchange their licence for the Irish equivalent. In the case of non-Member States, we may reach bilateral agreements on exchange of licences. Where a holder of such a licence takes up residence in Ireland, they may exchange their licence for the Irish equivalent.

In the absence of a bilateral agreement - which means that there is no recognised standard of

testing which people have met - we require people to go through the national driver learning process in order to obtain an Irish driving licence.

Ministerial Correspondence

1426. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has received correspondence sent to him by the chairperson of a group (details supplied); if the correspondence has been replied to; his plans to meet with the group with a view to discussing the matters outlined therein; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1304/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The correspondence you refer to was received in my office on 3rd January, 2018.

Divisions in my Department are currently working on a full response to the issues raised in the letter and a reply will issue shortly.

I met with members of the West Ulster Rail Initiative Group on February 20th 2017. A further meeting request will be considered in due course, as is normal procedure for all such requests.

Traffic Management

1427. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to alleviate congestion on the M7; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1307/18]

1428. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason plans were not put in place to reduce the amount of commuters on the M7 for the commencement and duration of the M7 road widening works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1308/18]

1429. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a task force comprising representatives from stakeholders (details supplied) will be established to examine the measures that could be put in place for the duration of the M7 road widening works. [1309/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1427 to 1429, inclusive, together.

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.

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.

Driver Test Waiting Lists

1430. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the length of the waiting times for driving tests in County Laois; and the steps being taken by the RSA to shorten these times. [1336/18]

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.

Public Transport Initiatives

1431. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he or the National Transport Authority has plans to introduce free travel for transport workers across all public transport networks along the lines of the Transport for London scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1346/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) 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.

Driver Test Waiting Lists

1432. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to reduce the waiting time for driving tests in County Laois; and the waiting times for tests at all centres throughout the State, in tabular form. [1395/18]

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.

Legislative Reviews

1433. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to outsource the consolidation of road traffic legislation to a law firm; the projected cost of outsourcing this work; the number of persons that will be needed to carry out the consolidation of road traffic legislation; the expected timeframe for this work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1536/18]

1434. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the human resources and skills that are lacking within his Department to publish an outsourcing contract for the consolidation of road traffic legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1537/18]

1435. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the process for tendering for the contract to consolidate road traffic legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1538/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1433 to 1435, inclusive, together.

The priorities in my Department in respect of road traffic legislation are currently focused on the passage of both the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2017 and the Vehicle Registration Data (Automated Searching and Exchange) Bill 2018 through both houses of the Oireachtas.

In addition, I have asked my officials to commence work on a road traffic bill to provide for graduated penalties for speeding offences. Consolidation of the Road Traffic Acts may ultimately require an element of outsourcing but this has yet to be fully examined.

Road Safety Data

1436. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way in which data on cyclists' injuries is being collected and collated; the number of persons presenting to hospitals around the country with such injuries in each of the years 2015, 2016 and 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1544/18]

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 Safety Data

1437. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way in which data on serious injuries from road traffic collisions is being collected and collated; the number of persons presenting to hospitals around the country with serious injuries due to road traffic collisions in each of the years 2015, 2016 and 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1545/18]

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.

Traffic Management

1438. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the measures he is taking to mitigate increasing traffic congestion on busy routes and arteries in each of the four Dublin counties; when such measures will be operational; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1546/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): While traffic management in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) is a matter in the first instance for the seven local authorities in the GDA, I recognise that the growth in travel demand is becoming an increasing challenge in our towns and cities.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) is responsible for the development and implementation of public transport and sustainable transport infrastructure in the GDA. Under the Sustainable Transport Measures Grants (STMG) Programme, my Department provides funding to the NTA for the seven local authorities in the GDA for the implementation of sustainable transport projects including traffic management projects.

The Government's recently announced 4 Year Capital Plan made an allowance of €130m for STMG projects to 2021. These include Quality Bus Corridors, road safety and accessibility schemes and traffic management projects throughout the GDA and will allow transport infrastructure to function more effectively and will help relieve traffic congestion.

Over €110 million will also be invested in new urban cycling and walking routes which will provide additional sustainable travel options to complement increased capacity and faster, higher quality public transport in our main cities.

The Plan also provides investment of over €770 million for the BusConnects programme to address growing congestion in the Dublin region in the short to medium term. Bus Connects will provide a greatly enhanced bus service across Dublin, with high quality infrastructure, including continuous bus lanes as far as is practicable along the busiest bus corridors along with a network of park and ride facilities at key locations, enhanced services and major improvements in ticketing and information, all providing a modern, faster, reliable, convenient and attractive public transport solution.

Work is ongoing on the redesign of the bus services network and also on infrastructure proposals for Core Bus Corridors which will be an integral part of the programme. When this work is completed the proposals will be launched for public consultation in the first half of this year.

Noting the NTA's responsibility in the matter, I have referred your question to the NTA for a more detailed reply with regard to the various projects under these programmes. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Public Transport Provision

1439. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when all public transport fleets and carriages will be fully accessible for persons with mobility issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1547/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport.

Under the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008 the National Transport Authority (NTA) has functional responsibility for promoting the development of an integrated, accessible public transport network.

In light of the NTA's responsibilities in this matter, 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.

Legislative Reviews

1440. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the projects undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation, including the cost, the duration, the number of staff required and if this process was carried out by his Department or outsourced in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [1573/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The information requested by the Deputy is contained in the following table.

Year	Legislation	Cost	Duration	No. of Staff	Carried out Internally	Carried out Externally
2007	Consolidated and annotated text of Merchant Shipping Acts 1894 - 2005	€47,081.10	Approx. 9 months total (across 2007 and 2008)	1	No	Yes
2008	Consolidated and annotated text of Merchant Shipping Acts 1894 - 2005	€5,505.50	Approx. 9 months total (across 2007 and 2008)	1	No	Yes

Departmental Funding

1441. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the capital funding application for the Boyneside trail from the Maiden Tower at Mornington to Drogheda; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1584/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department does not currently have an open call for Greenways funding and is therefore not considering any applications at present.

I refer the Deputy to my reply to his Question no. 197 of 4 October 2017 and to a reply provided directly to the Deputy by the National Transport Authority. The position of my Department and the National Transport Authority as outlined to the Deputy remains unchanged.

Meath and Louth County Councils are best placed to advise the Deputy on the current planning status of this project.

I expect to announce a call for Greenways funding later this year following publication of the Greenways Strategy which is currently being prepared in my Department. My advice to all local authorities wishing to submit proposals under the next funding call is to advance to the greatest extent possible all design, planning and resolution of any local issues so as to be well placed in what I anticipate will be a highly competitive process.

Departmental Expenditure

1442. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount that has been spent on maintenance for each motorway service stations (details supplied) since their construction by year and station, in tabular form. [1631/18]

1443. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount that has been spent on security for each motorway service station (details supplied) since their

construction, by year and station, in tabular form. [1632/18]

1444. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount that has been spent on electricity for each motorway service station (details supplied) since their construction, by year and station, in tabular form. [1633/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1442 to 1444, inclusive, together.

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.

Road Safety

1445. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the speed limit review will take place in County Kerry; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1650/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): While the Road Traffic Act 2004 sets default speed limits for various categories of roads, elected members of local authorities have statutory responsibility for deciding on and making appropriate Special Speed Limit bye-laws for roads within their administrative area, and in the case of national roads, subject to the consent of Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII).

To assist local authorities in the application of Special Speed Limits, my Department's updated Guidelines for Setting and Managing Speed Limits in Ireland, which is available to all local authorities, reiterates the statutory responsibilities of elected members in relation to the making of such Special Speed Limit bye-laws, subject to following Department Guidelines.

Therefore, the undertaking of a speed limits review in County Kerry is a matter for Kerry County Council and the Council is the appropriate organisation to advise on progress in respect of any review.

Regional Road Network

1446. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the progress that has been made regarding the removal of overhanging trees to prevent further fatalities and serious injuries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1655/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is a statutory function of each road authority in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993.

Works on regional and local roads are funded by local authorities' own resources supplemented by State grants. Within the overall resources available to it, the selection and prioritisation

sation of works including the maintenance of road verges is a matter for each local authority.

Section 70 of the Roads Act 1993 sets out the responsibility of landowners to take all reasonable steps to ensure that trees, hedges and other vegetation growing on their land are not, or could not become, a danger to people using a public road or interfere with the safe use of a public road or the maintenance of a public road.

A local authority can serve notice requiring a landowner to take action to address a hazard. This section also allows the relevant road authority to step in where a landowner fails or is unable to take action to remedy a hazard and to seek recovery of reasonable costs from the landowner. This is, therefore, a matter for management between the landowner and the relevant local authority.

As Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and the relevant local authority are responsible for maintenance of national roads, I have referred the Deputy's Question to TII for direct reply. If the Deputy does not receive a reply within 10 working days please advise my Office.

Road Safety

1447. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to initiate a programme to stop deer roaming roads to prevent further fatalities, serious injuries and damage to vehicles; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1656/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Management measures in relation to deer do not come under the remit of my Department or agencies.

Appropriate road signage, including hazard warning signs regarding deer or other wild animals, is the responsibility of the local authorities.

Road Improvement Schemes

1448. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding will be provided to widen roadside margins and remove vegetation and roadside hedges to create a safe environment for pedestrians and cyclists and to prevent further fatalities and serious injuries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1659/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is a statutory function of each road authority in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993.

Works on regional and local roads are funded by local authorities' own resources supplemented by State grants. Within the overall resources available to it, the selection and prioritisation of works including the maintenance of road verges is a matter for each local authority.

Section 70 of the Roads Act 1993 sets out the responsibility of landowners to take all reasonable steps to ensure that trees, hedges and other vegetation growing on their land are not, or could not become, a danger to people using a public road or interfere with the safe use of a public road or the maintenance of a public road.

A local authority can serve notice requiring a landowner to take action to address a hazard. This section also allows the relevant road authority to step in where a landowner fails or is unable to take action to remedy a hazard and to seek recovery of reasonable costs from the

landowner. This is, therefore, a matter for management between the landowner and the relevant local authority.

As Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and the relevant local authority are responsible for maintenance of national roads, I have referred the Deputy's Question to TII for direct reply. If the Deputy does not receive a reply within 10 working days please advise my Office.

Driver Licences

1449. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to review the process for replacing a lost or stolen driving licence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1670/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The requirements for an application for a driving licence, including a duplicate licence for one which has been lost or stolen, are set out in regulations for which I am responsible.

The requirements for an application reflect the importance of the driving licence in itself and the wide use of driving licences as proof of identity, and are necessary to ensure that the person is who they claim to be and that all appropriate checks are made.

I have no plans to revise these regulations.

Rail Services Provision

1450. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if TII or Irish Rail has responsibility for purchasing new train engines and carriages; the way in which the process of purchasing is conducted in the context of the capital plan spending; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1712/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Transport Authority (NTA) is responsible for the development and implementation of public transport and sustainable transport infrastructure. Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and Irish Rail each carry out the procurement for their own rail stock - including, as appropriate, trams, engines, railcars and carriages - subject to approval and funding for the investment from the NTA.

Noting the NTA's responsibility in the matter, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for a more detailed reply. Please advise my private office if the Deputy does not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Rail Services Data

1451. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of new train engines and carriages purchased in the past five years; the amount of stock that provided new and-or extended services; the number that replaced old stock; the anticipated delivery of new stock in 2018, 2019 and 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1713/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is

aware, Iarnród Éireann operates the heavy rail network and is responsible for assessing rolling stock requirements for the heavy rail network in conjunction with the National Transport Authority.

Noting the responsibility of the agencies in this regard, I have referred the Deputy's question to Iarnród Éireann for direct reply on this issue. Please advise my office if the Deputy has not received a reply within 10 working days.

Rail Services Data

1452. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of capacity issues and-or deficiencies in service delivery identified by Irish Rail in 2016 and 2017; his plans to rectify the situation as outlined by Irish Rail; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1725/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy will be aware, as Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport.

Iarnród Éireann operates its services under a Public Service Obligation (PSO) arrangement with the National Transport Authority and receives funding from the NTA in respect of this PSO. The arrangements and the funding are governed by a Public Transport Contract between the NTA and the company. The contract sets strict standards of operational performance and customer service and contains penalties for non-performance. The NTA monitors the contracted performance of Iarnród Éireann on a quarterly basis. In light of this, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply as regards the matter of any capacity issues or deficiencies in service identified. Please advise my private office if the Deputy does not receive a reply within ten working days.

More generally, the Deputy will be aware of a report, known as the Rail Review, published by the NTA in 2016, which is a comprehensive analysis of issues facing the rail network, including the levels of funding required to support its maintenance and development.

Over 300 submissions were received by the NTA in response to a public consultation process about the Review, and following its examination of these, the NTA submitted a report of those submissions. When I have reviewed the NTA's report on the consultation process, and when the NTA has updated it to reflect the considerably increased funding that has since been made available for both current PSO subvention and, in particular, the Capital Plan 2018 to 2021, I intend to bring the NTA's document to Government for consideration and would expect that it would be published shortly thereafter by the NTA.

Sports Capital Programme Eligibility

1453. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if an appeal by an organisation (details supplied) will be approved in respect of the 2017 sports capital programme allocations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1726/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): When the 2017 Sports Capital Programme (SCP) was advertised, my Department issued a guide to filling out the application form which set out the minimum requirements that applicants had to meet to be considered for funding.

Applications were deemed invalid primarily for one or more of the following reasons:-

- Title/Access requirements of the SCP not satisfied
- Insufficient quotations/estimates submitted
- Evidence of own funding not provided in prescribed format.

All applicants have been informed of the outcome of the assessment of their application, including details of why applications were deemed invalid. Applicants were also offered the opportunity to appeal the Department's decision if they believed that an error was made in deeming their application invalid. The club referred to by the Deputy has lodged such an appeal which is currently under consideration.

Separately, my Department is undertaking a general review of all invalid applications including those where incorrect or incomplete documentation was submitted. Decisions in relation to how to address any successful appeals and improvements to further reduce the level of invalid applications under future rounds of the SCP will be taken once these reviews are complete.

Public Transport Fares

1454. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the rationale for charging children over 16 years of age adult fares on public transport in some parts of the State while others in the greater Dublin area are charged a child's fare between 16 and 18 years of age for bus services; his plans to introduce a State-wide policy whereby all 16 to 18 year olds are charged a child's rate on public transport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1728/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Transport Authority (NTA) has responsibility for regulating fares charged by public transport operators. I have therefore forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if the Deputy does not receive a response within ten working days.

Rural Transport Services

1455. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if every operational local link service will continue to operate in 2018. [1732/18]

1456. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of local link routes that are operational. [1733/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1455 and 1456 together.

My Department provides funding for the Rural Transport Programme (RTP) to the National Transport Authority (NTA) which has national responsibility for integrated local and rural transport, including management of the RTP which now operates under the "Local Link" brand.

In light of the NTA's responsibilities in this matter, I have referred the Deputy's questions to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if the Deputy does not receive a response within 10 working days.

Road Projects

1457. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the development of the M11 service station at Ballyellen, Gorey, County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1770/18]

1458. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the expected date of opening of the M11 service station at Ballyellen, Gorey, County Wexford; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1771/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1457 and 1458 together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects, including service areas, is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above, I have referred the Deputy's Questions to TII for direct reply. Please advise my Office if the Deputy does not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Taxi Regulations

1459. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he will place the regulation of rickshaws on a statutory footing. [1776/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy may be aware, I asked the National Transport Authority (NTA) to conduct a public consultation on rickshaws, which concluded on 25 September 2017. A report on the consultation, along with recommendations from the NTA, are being considered by my Department as part of a process to develop a Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA). This will entail a detailed examination of all potential viable regulatory options for rickshaws.

I share many of the concerns that have been raised in relation to rickshaws, particularly from a public safety perspective. It is my intention, following completion of the RIA, to progress any legislative provisions deemed necessary to provide an appropriate modern regulatory framework for rickshaws.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

1460. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the actions being considered in order to reduce greenhouse gasses; if companies will be allowed to reclaim VAT on petrol in addition to diesel in order to allow for the purchase of hybrid vehicles; if the VRT grant for full hybrid vehicles will be extended beyond 31 December 2018; and if the possibility of implementing a free toll policy and the use of certain bus lanes for hybrid and electric vehicles will be investigated in view of the fact that transport was responsible for 19.8% of greenhouse gas emissions in 2015. [1795/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that transport emissions in 2016 were 20% of Ireland's total emissions, ranking third behind the Agriculture (32%) and Energy Industries (20.5%) sectors. Rising

transport emissions are not unexpected given increased transport demand, linked to our increasing population and welcome return to economic growth. Although emission reduction targets are set at national - rather than sectoral - level, transport has a significant role in the mitigation effort, and the challenge is to reduce emissions without hindering economic recovery or social improvement.

We are decarbonising transport through: investing in public and sustainable transport to expand capacity and provide attractive alternatives to private car use where feasible; incentivising the transition from fossil fuels to alternative fuels and technologies; and making the conventional fuel mix more sustainable by incrementally increasing the blend ratio under the Biofuel Obligation Scheme. The suite of transport's emission mitigation measures - both in-use and under consideration - are described in the National Mitigation Plan at <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/National%20Mitigation%20Plan%202017.pdf> .

Budget 2018 supported further progress on decarbonisation. I secured significant funding that can actively address the climate challenge, including investment of over €400m for public transport infrastructure in 2018 alone as part of a 4-year enhanced capital envelope for this area of some €2.7billion. It also includes over €100m for a new multi-annual investment in cycling and walking routes in urban areas to support greater uptake of active travel.

Following recent work of the Low Emissions Vehicle (LEV) Taskforce - co-chaired by my Department and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment - Budget 2018 also had specific tax and expenditure measures showing Government's support for a low-carbon, electric vehicle (EV) future; one notable such measure was a new, zero-rate benefit-in-kind arrangement for at least three years. Primary responsibility for grant support measures for EVs lies with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, while taxation incentives (including VAT and VRT) are primarily the responsibility of the Minister of Finance.

The LEV Taskforce is now examining the potential for road charging exceptions/reduced tolls for electric and hybrid vehicles. With funding under Budget 2018, I will be introducing some such incentives for EVs, and the design of the arrangements for this will reflect the Taskforce's recommendations when they emerge.

As regards extending bus lane access to EVs, I am informed that jurisdictions who have done this report mixed findings. I am concerned that such a measure would conflict with our broader public transport policy aims. Replacing private car use, where feasible, with greater bus use reduces both congestion and emissions. Ireland's investment in bus lanes is primarily justified because it makes bus travel faster, more reliable, efficient and attractive, thereby promoting modal shift onto public transport away from lower occupancy private cars. However, allowing additional vehicles to use bus lanes could undermine their efficiency for buses and detract from this objective, so at this stage it seems better to pursue transport emissions reduction and EV promotion through the range of other measures already indicated.

Departmental Staff Data

1461. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the proportion of employees in his Department or in organisations under its remit registered disabled. [1865/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport is subject to specific legal obligations under the Disability Act

2005. Part 5 of the Act sets out a requirement for public service bodies to meet a target of 3% of employees with disabilities each year.

The National Disability Authority (NDA) reports on compliance with this 3% target. In the last report submitted by my Department to the NDA in March 2017, the total number of employees with a disclosed disability as at 31st December 2016 was 21. This represented 4.32% of the total workforce. Staff in the Department provide this information on a voluntary disclosure basis and do not provide details as to whether or not they are registered disabled with the relevant representative disability organisation/agency.

In regard to organisations under the remit of my Department, the information requested by the Deputy is a matter for the Agencies themselves, however I have forwarded the Deputy's question to them for their direct response. If the Deputy does not receive a reply within 10 working days please contact my private office.

Bus Services

1462. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the time-frame for the provision of bus based park and ride facilities on the N4 and N7 under the BusConnects project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1890/18]

1463. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to review the decision of the NTA not to include a bus rapid transit corridor on the N7 as part of the BusConnects project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1891/18]

1466. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the progress being made with the BusConnects project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1894/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1462, 1463 and 1466 together.

As the Deputy will be aware the recently announced 4 Year Capital Plan provides for investment of over €770 million to progress the BusConnects programme to address growing congestion in the Dublin region in the short to medium term.

BusConnects was launched last summer by the National Transport Authority (NTA) and work is ongoing on the redesign of the bus services network and also on infrastructure proposals for Core Bus Corridors which will be an integral part of the programme. When this work is completed the proposals will be launched for public consultation in the first half of this year. The results of the public consultation will inform the final decisions to be made on the network redesign, Core Bus Corridors and park and ride facilities.

Public Transport Initiatives

1464. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a review of the likely usage of Kishogue station has been undertaken by the NTA; if this station will be fully open and operational in advance of the development of the lands in the Clonburrish SDZ; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1892/18]

1465. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the

provision of an east-west Luas line to Lucan in parallel with the proposed new Clonburris SDZ can be now phased in, given the NTA's adapted transport strategy 2016 to 2035 which proposes its future development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1893/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1464 and 1465 together.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the development and implementation of public transport and sustainable transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA).

Noting the NTA's responsibility in the matter and their previous response to the Deputy of 19th October 2017, I have referred the Deputy's questions to the NTA for an update on the issues raised. Please advise my private office if the Deputy does not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Question No. 1466 answered with Question No. 1462.

Taxi Regulations

1467. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to licence and regulate the supply of rickshaws; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1895/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy may be aware, I asked the National Transport Authority (NTA) to conduct a public consultation on rickshaws, which concluded on 25 September 2017. A report on the consultation, along with recommendations by the NTA, are being considered by my Department as part of a process to develop a Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA). This will entail a detailed examination of all potential viable regulatory options for rickshaws.

I share many of the concerns that have been raised in relation to rickshaws, particularly from a public safety perspective. It is my intention, following completion of the RIA, to progress any legislative provisions deemed necessary to provide an appropriate modern regulatory framework for rickshaws.

Road Projects Status

1468. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the significance and importance of the proposed western distributor road, phase two, to the economic and social development of County Sligo and its urban environs; if his attention has been further drawn to the time limited agreement in place between the IDA and Sligo County Council whereby the IDA has agreed to provide €5 million towards the €15 million estimated costs, subject to his Department approving the project in 2018; his views on this road project; if it will be funded in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1918/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The maintenance and improvement of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of the relevant road authority under section 13 of the Roads Act, 1993. Works on those roads are funded from the

local authority's own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the local authority.

As regards the Western Distributor Road in Sligo, I am aware of IDA's support for the project and my Department has also been facilitating the development of the project by providing grant assistance for a number of years.

In relation to the construction phase of the project, my Department made a strong case for additional funding under the Capital Plan Review and following the conclusion of the Review significant extra funding will be made available to my Department in the period to 2021. This means that I will now be in a position to provide grant assistance for the Western Distributor Road project.

Sports Capital Programme Eligibility

1469. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a capital sports grant appeal by a club (details supplied) will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1938/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): When the 2017 Sports Capital Programme (SCP) was advertised, my Department issued a guide to filling out the application form which set out the minimum requirements that applicants had to meet to be considered for funding.

Applications were deemed invalid primarily for one or more of the following reasons:-

- Title/Access requirements of the SCP not satisfied
- Insufficient quotations/estimates submitted
- Evidence of own funding not provided in prescribed format.

All applicants have been informed of the outcome of the assessment of their application, including details of why applications were deemed invalid. Applicants were also offered the opportunity to appeal the Department's decision if they believed that an error was made in deeming their application invalid. The club referred to by the Deputy has lodged such an appeal which is currently under consideration.

Separately, my Department is undertaking a general review of all invalid applications including those where incorrect or incomplete documentation was submitted. Decisions in relation to how to address any successful appeals and improvements to further reduce the level of invalid applications under future rounds of the SCP will be taken once these reviews are complete.

Ports Policy

1470. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 38 of 22 November 2017, if he met with the British transport secretary, Mr. Chris Grayling, in December 2017; if so, if the meeting examined the ownership of Rosslare Europort, County Wexford; the agreed outcome of this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1948/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I most recently met with the UK Government’s Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling on the margins of the Transport Council in Brussels on 5th December 2017. The issue raised by the Deputy was not examined in our discussion.

The Deputy will be aware that 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. The status of the port, and whether its current status potentially inhibits its development, 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.

The Deputy may also be interested to know that the Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO), in conjunction with the Department, has commenced a study into the use of the UK Land-bridge by Irish importers and exporters. The purpose of this research is to establish the volume of traffic using the UK Land-bridge at present, the likely consequences that Brexit will have on Land-bridge usage and the various alternative options that may be viable. This piece of research is expected to be completed in Q1 of 2018 and should inform the potential for the future utilisation of all Ports, including Rosslare Europort.

Electric Vehicles

1471. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the percentage of State vehicles which are electric or hybrid; the way in which this percentage compares with 2015 and 2016; and his plans to increase this figure up to 2020. [1949/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The information requested by the Deputy is not collected in the format sought; however, the following relevant information has been extracted from the National Vehicle File. As of the 31st of December 2017 there were 6,605 vehicles registered under the ‘State Owned, Emergency Vehicles and Rescue Vehicles’ tax classification. The Deputy should note that this definition potentially omits some state/public vehicles that are not registered under this tax exemption category. Based on this definition, the following table summaries the number of hybrid and fully electric “State Vehicles” registered from 2015 to 2017.

	31st Dec 2017	31st Dec 2016	31st Dec 2015
Total State Owned	6,605	6,474	6,162
Petrol Electric	4	4	7
Electric	4	5	5

As the Deputy is aware, to date the uptake of electric vehicles (EVs) in Ireland has been relatively low. There are a range of factors accepted internationally as being barriers to transition to EV technology including limited vehicle choice, range anxiety and low consumer awareness. This slower than anticipated transition to EVs is not Ireland-specific and does not indicate a lack of ambition or support. Increasing range performances, technology advancements, greater affordability and improved consumer choice will be the greatest levers in triggering large-scale change.

The Government is, of course, very supportive of the transition to EVs. My Department and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, have jointly convened an interdepartmental Low-Emitting Vehicles (LEV) Task Force to consider a full suite of potential measures to expedite the deployment of low carbon technologies, especially the uptake of EVs. Recommendations from the Taskforce were considered in the budgetary process; subsequently a generous package of measures to promote the uptake of electric vehicles was announced in Budget 2018. Current incentives include the following:

Relief	
VRT Relief	Continuation of VRT relief in 2018- Up to €5,000 for new EVs until end 2021 and up to €2,500 for new PHEVs.
SEAI Grant Scheme	Continuation of SEAI Purchase Grant in 2018- Up to €5,000 towards the purchase of a new EV or PHEV.
Accelerated Capital Allowance (ACA)	EVs and charging infrastructure are qualifying equipment under the ACA scheme.
Charging Supports	A new grant to support installation of home charger points for buyers of new and second-hand EVs from January 1st 2018.
SPSV Grant Scheme	A new grant scheme to stimulate take-up of EVs in the taxi/hackney/limousine sector from February 1st 2018.
0% Benefit-in-Kind (BIK)	A new BIK 0% rate to incentivise EVs without mileage conditions for at least three years.
Public Body Procurement	National Procurement Service to introduce a new public procurement framework contract for EVs in 2018 to allow public bodies to buy EVs with reduced administrative burden.
Public Engagement Programme	National awareness campaign; Driver experience roadshow; Public sector and commercial fleet trials; Support for EV use in car sharing trials.
Toll Incentive Regime	Funding to support a reduction in tolls for EVs

As part of Working Group 1 of the LEV Taskforce – chaired by my Department - the role of public sector leadership in encouraging EV uptake is being examined. The National Procurement Service are planning to introduce a new public procurement framework contract for EVs in 2018 which would allow public bodies to purchase EVs with reduced administrative burden. It is expected that this measure will promote greater uptake of EVs within the State Vehicle

Fleet.

Tourism Industry

1472. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding will be provided by Fáilte Ireland in 2018 to institutes across the country conducting courses on tourism and hospitality; if so, the amount that will be provided; when the funding will be made available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1957/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): This is an operational matter for the board and management of Fáilte Ireland. Accordingly, I have referred the Deputy's question to the agency for further information and direct reply.

Please advise my private office if the Deputy does not receive a reply within ten working days.

Road Projects

1473. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of funding for specific work at a location (details supplied). [1962/18]

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 the Deputy does not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Public Service Obligation Data

1474. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount of public service obligation subvention paid to each of the public transport companies in each of the years 2008 to 2011 in tabular form. [2001/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Since 2010 there is no subvention paid directly by my Department for public transport services.

The award of Public Service Obligation (PSO) contracts falls under the independent statutory remit of the National Transport Authority (NTA), which has direct responsibility for this area along with the routes covered and therefore I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply.

The total PSO subvention provided to the primary transport operators by my Department in the years 2008 to 2009 is as follows:

Schedule of Exchequer Subvention: 2008 to 2009

Year	Iarnród Éireann€000	Bus Éire- ann€000	Bus Átha Cliath€000	Other Op- erators €000	Total€000
2008	181,152	41,846	85,629	-	308,627
2009	170,624	49,365	83,199	-	303,188

Information regarding PSO allocations is publicly available in tabular form through the NTA's Statistical Bulletin series for State funded bus and rail services. Those documents are published on www.nationaltransport.ie

Cycling Facilities Funding

1475. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount spent on cycling infrastructure in each year since 2008. [2002/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Since 2009 my Department has directly funded “active travel” measures, including improved cycling infrastructure, throughout Ireland under a number of programmes including the Smarter Travel Areas, Active Travel Towns and National Cycle Network programmes. This investment in sustainable transport involves many projects that benefit cycling, but some analysis is required to identify and extract information on the level of expenditure specifically relevant to cycling infrastructure in the period requested. The data is now being compiled by my Department and will be forwarded to the Deputy in line with revised Standing Orders.

Since 2010 my Department has also provided funding to the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the Sustainable Transport Measures Grants (STMG) Programme and the Regional Cities Programme for the implementation of sustainable transport projects, including cycling infrastructure, in the Greater Dublin Area and the regional cities of Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford. Noting the NTA's responsibility in this regard, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for a more detailed reply in relation to funding for cycling infrastructure provided under these Programmes. Please advise my private office if the Deputy does not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Departmental Expenditure

1476. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount spent on pedestrian infrastructure in each year since 2008. [2003/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As indicated to the Deputy in PQ 51363/17 in November 2017, road improvement and maintenance (including footways and footpaths) together with traffic management measures within its area of responsibility is the statutory responsibility of each local authority funded by its own resources supplemented by grant funding. The Department does not, therefore, hold the information requested by the Deputy.

Departmental Communications

1477. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department uses anti-profanity software on its email systems and online contact forms; if so, the level of human oversight that is applied to the monitoring of this software and its

effectiveness; his views on whether persons' legitimate right to petition Government may be blocked unintentionally by errors in the use of such software in determining that which qualifies as profanity being communicated in email and-or online contact forms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2094/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department welcomes input from citizens and taxpayers. We regularly receive correspondence from people within the State and, indeed, as we deal with Transport and Tourism issues we often receive correspondence from outside the State.

We take this interest from the public at large seriously and we have procedures in place, like all Government Departments, to ensure such contact is dealt with appropriately.

While we appreciate input from interested parties, we generally prefer if civil language is used in engagement with us. For example my Department has published a Customer Service Action Plan and it contains a section on engaging with the department where we make clear that we will not tolerate abusive, offensive or threatening behaviour in phonecalls.

We feel our work on behalf of the people in Ireland and our staff as individuals merit a certain level of respect and civility but this is no more or less than any other person in this country deserves. It may be the case that people sometimes feel the need to vent frustration but even in those cases we try to listen to the key points they are making.

To answer your specific question, my Department uses an e-mail and Web Security Gateway for monitoring incoming e-mails but does not filter the e-mails for profanity, nor does it filter content contained in contact forms submitted through the external Departmental Web Site.

The net effect is that our systems and our people will not block genuine representations from the public and interested parties even if that contains small amounts of profanity and we listen to those who have something relevant to share with us.

HIQA Inspections

1478. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of inspections carried out by HIQA of an organisation (details supplied) since that organisation began operations; and the dates on which those inspections took place [1207/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) was established under the Health Act, 2007 to promote safety and quality in the provision of health and social care services for the benefit of the health and welfare of the public. Under the Act, the Authority has the function of setting standards on safety and quality in relation to services provided by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, as well as the function of monitoring compliance with the standards set and to advise the Minister and Tusla accordingly. HIQA inspects children's residential centres, Foster Care Services and Child Welfare and Protection Services. HIQA publishes its inspection reports on their website - www.hiqa.ie.

Tusla is the statutory regulator of private and voluntary Children's Residential Centres. Registrations are granted based on centre adherence to the National Standards for Children's Residential Centres, 2001, created under Section 63 of the Child Care Act, 1991 and underpinned by the Child Care (Placement in Residential Care) Regulation 1995, and the Child Care (Standards in Children's Residential Centres) 1996

I have asked Tusla for the details requested by the Deputy and a further reply will issue when this information is supplied.

Foreign Adoptions

1479. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of foreign adoptions that have been undertaken by Irish persons in each of the past three years; the countries from which the adoptions took place; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1920/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The total number of intercountry adoptions recognised between 2015 and 2017, where the adopters were habitually resident in Ireland and held a valid Declaration of Eligibility & Suitability at the time of effecting the adoption, (Section 5, Adoption Act 1991 and Section 57(2)(b)(ii) of the Adoption Act 2010 refers):

Country	2015	2016	2017
Bulgaria	8	4	8
China	15	7	10
Ethiopia	0	1	0
India	0	0	1
Lithuania	1	1	0
Mexico	11	0	1
Russia	2	2	0
Thailand	1	4	2
United States of America	6	14	9
United Kingdom	5	0	0
Vietnam	31	21	22
Total	80	54	53

Departmental Contracts

1480. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the fact that a company (details supplied) that receives public contracts from her Department does not recognise trade unions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54385/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Department of Children and Youth Affairs has a contract with the organisation concerned to provide the pilot Bail Supervision Scheme for a 2 year period following a public tender. Therefore this Department has no role in the operation of this organisation or in Human Resources within their organisation.

Children First Guidelines

1481. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will address a matter (details supplied) regarding the implementation of the Children First Act 2015;

and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54514/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): On 11 December 2017, all of those provisions of the Children First Act 2015 which were not already in force, were commenced in full. The Children First Act places the following statutory obligations on providers of relevant services to children:

- To keep children safe from harm while they are availing of the service [section 10];
- To carry out a risk assessment to identify potential safeguarding risks which could arise while children are availing of the service [section 11 (1) (a)], and,
- To develop a Child Safeguarding Statement [section 11 (3)] which must include both the written risk assessment and the policies and procedures which are in place to:
 - (i) Manage any risk identified
 - (ii) Investigate an allegation against any staff member about any act, omission or circumstance in respect of a child availing of the service
 - (iii) Select and recruit staff who are suitable to work with children
 - (iv) Provide information and training to staff on child protection and safeguarding issues
 - (v) Enable staff members, whether mandated persons or otherwise, to make a report to Tusla in accordance with the Act, or any guidelines issued by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs
 - (vi) Maintain a list of persons in the organisation who are mandated persons under the Act
 - (vii) Appoint a relevant person in the organisation for the purposes of the Act.

A list of the types of organisations which are classified as providers of relevant services to children is set out in Schedule 1 of the Children First Act. To qualify as a provider of a relevant service under the Act, an organisation must employ at least one other person to provide that service. Organisations should consult the Schedule to establish if they are a relevant service, and if so, it is a matter for each organisation to satisfy themselves if they have any statutory obligations under the Act, as outlined above, and to discharge those obligations. As with any regulatory regime, it is a matter for organisations to ensure that they are in compliance with the relevant requirements and to take their own advice as required

To assist sectors and organisations to fulfil their statutory obligations under the Act, my Department and Tusla have developed a suite of resources to support the full implementation of the Act. This suite of resources was launched on 2nd October 2017, and includes a revised edition of Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children [DCYA 2017] which contains a chapter specifically in relation to the responsibilities of organisations who provide services to children and young people.

In addition, Tusla has prepared several resource documents in relation to implementation of the Act, including one guidance document specifically in relation to the preparation of child safeguarding statements. Tusla has also developed a comprehensive Children First e-training module which is universally available, free of charge and which sets out the information required to recognise and report child welfare and protection concerns. These resources are available on Tusla's website.

Departmental Funding

1482. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount of funding received by an organisation (details supplied) in each of the past five years and to date in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54550/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Details of the financial resources made available by my Department to the organisation since 2013 are set out in the following table.

Year	Funds
2013	€136,223
2014	€279,184
2015	€258,958
2016	€443,667
2017	€159,802
TOTAL	€1,277,834

The grant payments made directly by my Department supported operational costs relating to the administration of the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund and the operation of the Missing Children's Hotline.

Departmental Funding

1483. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of agencies or groups in County Waterford that are receiving annual funding or subvention from her Department. [54608/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department administers a range of funding schemes and programmes to support children and young people throughout the country. There are currently twenty seven agencies or groups that are in receipt of annual funding from my Department in County Waterford, details of which can be found in the following table.

Number	
1	Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board
2	Waterford Youth Information Centre
3	Ballybeg Special Youth Project
4	Childrens Group Link Project
5	Ferrybank Special Project
6	Little Red Kettle Theatre Company
7	Manor of St John Youth Project
8	Sacred Heart Youth Project
9	Waterford Youth Transport Service
10	Waterford Traveller Youth Support Project
11	Waterford Youth Arts Ltd
12	Dungarvan Youth Resource Centre Project
13	Woodstown Activity Centre Project

Number	
14	Axis Programme Ballybeg
15	Farran Park/Farronshoneen Community Youth Project
16	Ferrybank Drug Prevention Project
17	Farronshoneen Youth and Community Centre
18	Frontline Project
19	Gracedieu/Logloss & Hillview Youth Project
20	Innercity Community Youth Project
21	Larchville/Lisduggan Millenium Youth Project
22	Manor Street Youth and Community Centre
23	Woodstown Activity Centre Project
24	Waterford City Arts Access
25	Waterford County Council
26	Waterford Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC)
27	Waterford Childcare Committee

The Deputy should note that this list relates to agencies or groups that are directly funded by my Department and does not take into account creches and playschools under the various childcare schemes.

Departmental Budgets

1484. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the percentage of the out-of-hours 2017 budget for social work services that was allocated to County Carlow; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54646/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the subject matter of the Deputy's question relates to an operational matter for Tusla, I have referred the matter to the attention of Tusla for a direct reply.

Child Care Services Staff

1485. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of staff working in the early years sector who are eligible for the higher capitation rate in 2017 in comparison to the number in 2016; the reason eligibility requirements for the higher rate were changed from three years experience in 2016 to three years paid experience in 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54665/17]

1486. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views on whether it is feasible for persons working in the early education sector to have three years paid experience before being eligible for the higher capitation grant in view of the fact that most have already studied for a minimum of three years; the precedent for doing so compared with comparable sectors in which no such paid experience is required; her further views on whether this new stipulation will impact on the provision of services; and if she will make a statement

on the matter. [54666/17]

1495. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of staff working in the early years sector eligible for the higher capitation rate in 2017; the number eligible in 2016; the reason the eligibility requirements for the higher rate were changed from three years experience in 2017 to three years paid experience in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1013/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1485, 1486 and 1495 together.

DCYA does not have a register for all staff in the Early Years (EY) sector, and can only provide figures regarding the number of active room leaders in ECCE Higher Capitation rooms, based on applications that have been received and processed.

It is difficult to measure the number of staff working in the EY sector who are potentially eligible for ECCE Higher Capitation, as eligibility does not directly correspond to uptake. It may be the case that individuals eligible for ECCE Higher Capitation are working in the sector but not availing of ECCE Higher Capitation, for various reasons to do with the function of the Early Years setting or their own working role. There may also be other reasons associated with non-compliance with the ECCE programme, such as not meeting adult:child ratios.

DCYA is also aware that some services have reduced numbers of children enrolling in ECCE this year, as they are instead availing of the expansion of CCS. As Higher Capitation is part of the ECCE programme and dependent on ECCE capitation as measured by enrollments, some services may have appropriately qualified staff for which they are not currently receiving ECCE Higher Capitation. DCYA is considering how best to put in place some mitigation for service providers who find themselves in this situation.

In the 2016/2017 programme year, the number of services in receipt of ECCE Higher Capitation was 1918. The 2017 / 2018 programme year is still in progress, but I am pleased to confirm that as of 15 December, less than half-way through the programme year, the number of services in receipt of ECCE Higher Capitation has increased on the year-end total for 2016/2017, to 1935. My officials are confident that this will increase further before year end. For 2016 / 2017, 2946 individuals were recorded as being ECCE Higher Capitation room leaders. The figure for 2017/2018 thus far, as at December of 2017, is 2921. Again, this is expected to increase as the year progresses, and more children enter the ECCE programme in January and April.

The ECCE Higher Capitation rate is paid in respect of an experienced practitioner who also holds full, relevant, degree level qualification. In addition to the completed training, a graduate should have three years paid work experience in the Early Years sector. This work experience can be accrued at any time during the career of the individual and can be achieved, before, during or after their qualification. Cumulative work experience should be taken into account, not just one continuous employment period. DCYA do not ask for proof of this work experience, but trust that employers will assess their staff appropriately. The employer simply notes the paid work experience of the staff member on the form when applying for ECCE Higher Capitation. This information, as supplied by the employer, is generally accepted by DCYA.

The three years' work experience on the part of the ECCE Room Leader has been a requirement of ECCE Higher Capitation, on the recommendation of DCYA's own officials, and officials from the Department of Education (DES) Early Years Policy unit, following a review of ECCE Higher Capitation in 2011. It was not the case, however, that it was always applied as had been intended, and steps were taken from the 2015/2016 programme year onwards to regularise my department's approach in this regard. Higher Capitation was introduced to in-

centivise the hiring and retention of graduates, which international research shows can assist with the provision of quality services to children. As the standard capitation is available to services that meet regulatory requirements, including minimum qualification levels, the fairly significant additional weekly payment offered by the Higher Capitation was intended to focus on both a degree qualification and paid experience deemed important for the delivery of quality services to children.

Issues such as this are part of a wider conversation around professionalization and award standards for the Early Childhood Care and Education sector in Ireland. Since 2010, there has been a sea-change in the Early Years sector and increased professionalism through training and education has been at the forefront of that. While DCYA has supported further training and education for the sector, it is admittedly only in 2017 that we were able to provide some support for Early Years graduates through the Learner Fund bursary payment. Many practitioners have up-skilled to degree level on their own initiative, often studying part-time on top of work and their own personal commitments.

In the context of the training and education landscape in Early Childhood Care and Education in Ireland which is still growing, developing and standardising, both DCYA and DES continues to believe that additional Exchequer funding to providers via the Higher Capitation should recognise both the degree qualification and important hands-on experience with children. The historical requirement for three years' work experience as part of the eligibility reflects DCYA efforts to incentivise more graduates, and retention of these graduates.

Our colleagues in DES have initiated a report on the award standard at degree level for Early Childhood Care and Education degrees and are consulting with the sector on this. The review will include consideration of the practical experience required as part of the degree. DCYA is engaged with the process as well, and will take the findings into account in our approaches to the very important issue of further professionalization of the Early Years sector, and our own operational processes.

DCYA has introduced a number of measures in recent years to support providers of early years care and education services provide financially viable, high quality and accessible services. These measures include the forthcoming increase to both the standard and higher capitation rates from September 2018. DCYA is committed to continuing with these endeavours.

Preschool Services

1487. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if access will be provided for preschools registered with her Department and that operate the early childhood care and education scheme to the State indemnity operated by the National Treasury Management Agency; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54669/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As I previously informed the Deputy, the State indemnity is operated by the National Treasury Management Agency who acts as the State Claims Agency. All Department's claims are delegated for management to this agency. This State indemnity also extends to bodies under the aegis of the Department which include the Adoption Authority of Ireland, the Children Detention Schools, the Child and Family Agency/Tusla and the Ombudsman for Children's office.

The Early Childhood Care and Education scheme is a scheme operated mainly by private childcare services. It is not possible to extend the State's indemnity to such businesses which have access to the insurance market. For this to occur all of these facilities would require to be

designated as a State Authority.

Early Childhood Care and Education

1488. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reason for the removal of the over age exemption from the early childhood care and education scheme from September 2018; the assessment that was made in advance of this decision with respect to the impact it will have on children with special needs, their classmates, teachers and all aforementioned groups (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54691/17]

1493. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if a reply will issue to correspondence from a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55077/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1488 and 1493 together.

It is important to be clear that there has been no withdrawal, or proposal to withdraw, any ECCE provision for children with disabilities. All children will be eligible to 76 weeks or 2 academic years of ECCE from September 2018. On Wednesday 6th December I announced that I have paused a decision on the upper age limit exemption for ECCE so that further consultation with parents can occur. This means that for the 2018/2019 ECCE year the overage exemption will continue to be available. Since ECCE was introduced in 2010, approximately 500 children availed of the exemption each year, although for reasons set out below, it is expected that much fewer than this would have applied in 2018. I hope that my decision of December 6th will bring the parents who planned to apply for this overage exemption from September 2018 some relief and I encourage them to make sure their views are represented in the consultation that will occur over the coming months, the details of which I will publish shortly.

It is important that I set out the rationale for the original decision. The recent announcement of changes was designed to support the achievement of better outcomes for children with disabilities. No child would have lost out as a result of the overage exemption being removed.

Overage exemptions were introduced at the onset of the ECCE programme in 2010. At that time, the ECCE Programme only operated for a 38 week period, or one programme year. For some children with special/additional needs, attending preschool five days a week was not feasible and so an allowance was made to enable them split ECCE over 2 years, for example, a child may have availed of 3 days ECCE provision in year one and 2 days in year two. Their total ECCE provision remained at 38 weeks.

In order to facilitate this, in the cases where the child would have been over the age limit for ECCE (5 years and 6 months when finishing ECCE) an overage exemption was approved. This flexibility was never intended to conflict with the legislative requirement to start school by age six. The law and policy on school start-age is clearly established in Ireland. Children should be in school by the time they are six and the primary school system has a variety of resources to support children with disabilities. If children are not in school by the age of six, under the Educational Welfare Act, the Educational Welfare service of Tusla must be satisfied that the child is receiving a minimum standard of education in a place other than a recognised school. Tusla does this by sending Educational Welfare Inspectors out to the place of the child's education. Should this be required, this would be in addition to the Early Years Inspectorates funded by my Department.

Since ECCE was first introduced, DCYA has worked, with some success, to improve the

pre-school experience for children with disabilities and to optimise their early development. The two main enhancements are:-

- ECCE provision currently averages at 61 weeks, up from 38 weeks, and it will expand further to 76 weeks from September 2018. This is in keeping with good international practice.

- The Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) has been introduced with 7 different levels of support for children with disabilities. Over 4,000 children have so far benefitted from targeted supports and many multiples of this from universal supports available under AIM.

Purely in the best interests of children, and for no other reason, a proposal was considered to remove the overage exemption to the upper age limit to the Programme. This was signalled last year, but in order to give longer notice to parents and providers, the planned introduction was delayed until September 2018. The motivation underpinning this development is entirely evidence based. Children with a disability benefit from early intervention, high quality early childhood care and education and high quality primary school education. In this regard my Department is complementing the work of the HSE's role in early intervention and the Department of Education and Skills's role in high quality primary school education by:-

- expanding the ECCE programme so that all children have access to a full 76 weeks, double what was available in 2010.

- providing access to the comprehensive suite of resources under the Access and Inclusion model (AIM), introduced in September 2016.

The evidence is that children with a disability should start school with their peers once they have access to high quality and inclusive primary school education. The evidence is also that they should become teenagers with their peers and transition to secondary school with their peers.

The original decision to remove the overage exemption was made with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and in close collaboration with members of the AIM Cross-Sectoral Implementation Group, which includes representatives from the National Council for Special Education, the National Disability Authority, the HSE, a representative of parents of children with special needs and a representative of early years providers. There was broad agreement that, in light of the very significant developments and improvements to free pre-school education, both in terms of the two year duration of ECCE and the range of supports available, and the very significant supports that are in place for children in primary schools, the overage exemption would no longer support the overarching policy aim that children should transition to primary school with their peers. The decision acknowledged the supports provided by the relevant primary school, the National Council for Special Education and other bodies as required.

Notwithstanding the strong evidence base underpinning this proposal as being in the best interests of the children concerned, and the significant enhancements to the ECCE scheme in terms of two years duration and access to AIM supports; measures which effectively address the reasons for introducing the overage exemptions in the first place, I am also conscious of the need to listen further to those with concerns. To this end, as stated above, I have paused the proposed change and committed to consulting more widely with parents of children with disabilities. I have also committed to having this consultation completed by mid 2018.

Early Childhood Care and Education

1489. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to

Parliamentary Question No. 458 of 12 December 2017, if consideration will be given to over-turning the decision regarding the over age exemption in view of the fact that the decision will result in children with special needs starting primary school at a younger age than children who do not have special needs. [54730/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): It is important to be clear that there has been no withdrawal, or proposal to withdraw, any ECCE provision for children with disabilities. All children will be eligible to 76 weeks or 2 academic years of ECCE from September 2018. On Wednesday 6th December I announced that I have paused a decision on the upper age limit exemption for ECCE so that further consultation with parents can occur. This means that for the 2018/2019 ECCE year the overage exemption will continue to be available. Since ECCE was introduced in 2010, approximately 500 children availed of the exemption each year, although for reasons set out below, it is expected that much fewer than this would have applied in 2018. I hope that my decision of December 6th will bring the parents who planned to apply for this overage exemption from September 2018 some relief and I encourage them to make sure their views are represented in the consultation that will occur over the coming months, the details of which I will publish shortly.

It is important that I set out the rationale for the original decision. The recent announcement of changes was designed to support the achievement of better outcomes for children with disabilities. No child would have lost out as a result of the overage exemption being removed.

Overage exemptions were introduced at the onset of the ECCE programme in 2010. At that time, the ECCE Programme only operated for a 38 week period, or one programme year. For some children with special/additional needs, attending preschool five days a week was not feasible and so an allowance was made to enable them split ECCE over 2 years, for example, a child may have availed of 3 days ECCE provision in year one and 2 days in year two. Their total ECCE provision remained at 38 weeks.

In order to facilitate this, in the cases where the child would have been over the age limit for ECCE (5 years and 6 months when finishing ECCE) an overage exemption was approved. This flexibility was never intended to conflict with the legislative requirement to start school by age six. The law and policy on school start-age is clearly established in Ireland. Children should be in school by the time they are six and the primary school system has a variety of resources to support children with disabilities. If children are not in school by the age of six, under the Educational Welfare Act, the Educational Welfare service of Tusla must be satisfied that the child is receiving a minimum standard of education in a place other than a recognised school. Tusla does this by sending Educational Welfare Inspectors out to the place of the child's education. Should this be required, this would be in addition to the Early Years Inspectorates funded by my Department.

Since ECCE was first introduced, DCYA has worked, with some success, to improve the pre-school experience for children with disabilities and to optimise their early development. The two main enhancements are:-

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Purely in the best interests of children, and for no other reason, a proposal was considered to remove the overage exemption to the upper age limit to the Programme. This was signalled

last year, but in order to give longer notice to parents and providers, the planned introduction was delayed until September 2018. The motivation underpinning this development is entirely evidence based. Children with a disability benefit from early intervention, high quality early childhood care and education and high quality primary school education. In this regard my Department is complementing the work of the HSE's role in early intervention and the Department of Education and Skills's role in high quality primary school education by:-

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The evidence is that children with a disability should start school with their peers once they have access to high quality and inclusive primary school education. The evidence is also that they should become teenagers with their peers and transition to secondary school with their peers.

The original decision to remove the overage exemption was made with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and in close collaboration with members of the AIM Cross-Sectoral Implementation Group, which includes representatives from the National Council for Special Education, the National Disability Authority, the HSE, a representative of parents of children with special needs and a representative of early years providers. There was broad agreement that, in light of the very significant developments and improvements to free pre-school education, both in terms of the two year duration of ECCE and the range of supports available, and the very significant supports that are in place for children in primary schools, the overage exemption would no longer support the overarching policy aim that children should transition to primary school with their peers. The decision acknowledged the supports provided by the relevant primary school, the National Council for Special Education and other bodies as required.

Notwithstanding the strong evidence base underpinning this proposal as being in the best interests of the children concerned, and the significant enhancements to the ECCE scheme in terms of two years duration and access to AIM supports; measures which effectively address the reasons for introducing the overage exemptions in the first place, I am also conscious of the need to listen further to those with concerns. To this end, as stated above, I have paused the proposed change and committed to consulting more widely with parents of children with disabilities. I have also committed to having this consultation completed by mid 2018.

Community Childcare Subvention Programme

1490. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 234 of 13 December 2017, if community child care subvention will be provided to the parents of children who have a medical card (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54740/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Subvention funding is based only on the verification of the relevant parent's CCS (Community Childcare Subvention) eligibility during the snapshot period. To be CCS eligible the parent/child must hold a valid medical card/GPVC and/or be in receipt of certain payments from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP).

It is current practice that when a DEASP payment and a medical card (parent's or child's) is received the system should automatically award the highest band due to a parent.

The eligibility criteria and subsequent childcare and subvention options are set out in the accompanying table;

Table 1 CCS/CCSP Band Eligibility

Level of service	Band A (with medical card)	Band AJ (with medical card)	Band B	Band D
	- One Parent Family Payment	- Job Seekers Benefit/ Allowance*	- Medical Card	- GP Visit Card*** (6yrs+ only)
	- Widow's/Widower's Pension	- Supplementary Welfare Allowance**	- Parents who are in receipt of Social Welfare payments listed under Band A/AJ but have no medical card	- Parents who no longer qualify for Band A/AJ this year but who were verified as being on Band A/AJ at the end of the previous school year
	- Pre-retirement Allowance			
	- Farm Assist / Fish Assist			
	- State Pension			
	- Blind Pension			
	- Guardian's Payment			
	- Illness/Injury Benefit			
	- Disability Allowance			
	- Carer's Benefit/ Allowance			
	- Back to Work Enterprise/Education Allowance			
	- Community Employment / Rural Social Scheme			
	- Domiciliary Care Allowance			
	- Family Income Supplement (FIS)			
	- Secondary School students			

Level of service	Band A (with medical card)	Band AJ (with medical card)	Band B	Band D
	- Invalidation Pension			
	- Disablement Pension			
	- Official Tusla Referrals (no medical card required)			
	- HSE Public Health Nurse referrals (no medical card required)			
	- TÚS			
	- Part-time Job Incentive Scheme Gateway			
	- Gateway			
	- Partial Capacity Benefit			
Full-day payment				
(5 hrs +)	€145	€80	€70	€50
Part-time payment				
(3:31 – 5:00)	€80	€80	€35	€25
Sessional payment				
(2:16 – 3:30)	€45	€45	€25	€17
Half-session payment				
(1:00 – 2:15)	€22.50	€22.50	€12.50	€8.50

*parents who qualify for Band AJ under Jobseeker's allowance/benefit receive maximum subvented childcare of €80 for full day care per week

**parents who qualify for Band AJ under Supplementary Welfare Allowance payments receive maximum subvented childcare of €80 for full day care per week

Departmental Funding

1491. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the name and number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from her Department 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 amount of money they have spent on this particular campaign during that time; the number of organisations here that

are in receipt of funding from her Department that have expended resources seeking the retention of the eighth amendment; the amount of funding these organisations have received from the State in the past five years; and the amount of money they have spent on this particular campaign during that time. [54760/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department has identified two organisations who have announced their affiliation to the Repeal the Eight Amendment movement. Details of the funding provided to these organisations are set out in the following table.

	Funding provided	Purpose of payments
BeLong To	€840,554	Ensure the emergence, promotion, growth and development of youth organisations with distinctive philosophies and programmes aimed at the social education of young people.
ICTU	€42,815	Support the activities of the ICTU Youth Officer and Youth Committee which ensures the voices of young people is given a priority within the trade union movement.

I wish to emphasise that the financial resources allocated were for specific purposes and not intended in any way to support costs associated with the Repeal the Eight Amendment campaign.

Child Care Services

1492. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the position regarding efforts to reopen a facility (details supplied) County Longford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54798/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the Deputy is aware, my Department does not directly provide childcare - rather we fund the provision of childcare through individuals, companies and community/not-for-profit groups. Therefore, following the closure of the existing childcare provider in this location, I requested that Pobal and Longford CCC work with local bodies and potential partners in relation to the re-establishment of a service for the local community.

Unfortunately, my Department did not receive a viable proposal for the creation of a childcare service at that time. However, my Department is currently in discussions with Longford CCC with the aim of progressing a procurement process as soon as possible to source a suitable operator for a childcare service in this area.

Question No. 1493 answered with Question No. 1488.

Departmental Properties

1494. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the vacant properties and land not in use, owned, rented or leased by her Department or by bodies and agencies under its aegis by square footage for buildings and acres for land, in tabular form; the address and location of these properties; and the last date of occupancy or use of these properties. [55206/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Department of Children and Youth Affairs does have any land not in use, nor does it own, rent or lease any vacant properties.

The Adoption Authority, the Ombudsman for Children and Oberstown Children Detention Centre have confirmed a similar position.

Tusla has confirmed that it has three properties that meet this criteria as outlined as follows.

Tusla Vacant Property January 2018					
Address	Tenure	Floor Area	Lands	Last date of occupation	Comment
Quinns House,Ballymote Road,Tubbercurry,Co. Sligo	Owned	c. 3200 sq.ft.	0.9 Acres	c. 2011	Currently for sale on the open market.
69 Amien Street,Dublin 1	Owned	c. 2000 sq.ft	None	Prior to es- tablishment of Tusla	Received grant of planning permission at end of 2017 for re- furbishment so building can be reoc- cupied.
Pioville House,92 Ballyhooley Road,St. Lukes Cross,Cork	Owned	c. 2000 sq.ft.	None	c. 2016	Planned re- furbishment in 2018 for use by Cork Special- ist Enquiry Team for Retrospec- tive Cases

Question No. 1495 answered with Question No. 1485.

Community Employment Schemes Data

1496. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her Department's expenditure on the community employment child care training and development scheme in each year since 2013, by subheading. [1105/18]

1497. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of persons in the community employment child care training and development scheme in each year since 2013. [1106/18]

1498. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount that her Department contributed to the cost of training persons in the community employment child care training and development scheme in each year since 2013; if this constituted the full cost of training persons; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1107/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1496 to 1498, inclusive, together.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs has no role in the training of Community Employment participants. Community Employment programmes are operated and funded solely by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

Early Childhood Care and Education

1499. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the full cost of training a person in the Aistear and Síolta programmes. [1115/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The National *Síolta Aistear* Initiative (NSAI) was established in 2016 to support the national coordinated roll-out of *Síolta* and *Aistear*, the national quality and curriculum frameworks for early childhood education. The initiative is being funded by my Department and is being developed in collaboration with the Early Years Education Policy Unit (EYEPU) in the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

55 *Síolta* and *Aistear* mentors from a range of National Voluntary Childcare organisations (NVCOs) and City/County Childcare Committees (CCCs) have been trained and are providing supports to early years settings to implement both *Síolta* and *Aistear* on a national basis. Currently *Síolta Aistear* mentors from CCCs are back filled at an hourly rate of €30 to provide 10 hours of supports within the NSAI activities per month. From February-June 2018 the amount of mentoring hours available per mentor, per month will increase to a maximum of 20 hours.

There are a range of training, coaching and mentoring supports within the NSAI which mentors can provide based on local needs and context. These include introductory and awareness raising supports, training in aspects of *Síolta* and *Aistear* and on site mentoring and coaching supports which are individualised to the particular needs of settings. Therefore, the amount of time and intensity of support that is provided to each setting is based on a needs assessment and may vary between settings due to the diversity of needs, size, capacity etc. On average, a service which is going through the formal QAP requires approximately 120-150 hours of mentoring at a cost of €30 per hour.

A pilot CPD programme to support practitioners and services to use the Aistear Curriculum Framework and the Aistear-Síolta online practice guide was run in 2017 by the NCCA and selected Síolta Aistear mentors. The pilot programme consisted of 109 hours being delivered by each of 27 mentors to 401 participants/162 settings at a cost of €45,630 (this figure is cost for mentor hours @€15 per hour and printing grant of €55 per mentor. The practitioners availing of the CPD received 10 hours of training and 4 hours of on-site coaching in their setting.

The content of the CPD programme is now under review and a revised programme will be available for implementation by September 2018. The model for delivery of the CPD materials

is also under review so that a model that is cost effective and with national reach can be put in place and costed.

Overall the cost of expenditure for the NSAI in 2017, including the salaries of the two national Co-ordinators, was €185,899.05.

In addition to the NSAI, my Department also provides funding to the NVCOs and CCCs to undertake a range of quality improvement supports, guided by *Síolta* and *Aistear*. NVCOs currently carry out supports within the NSAI as part of their core work which is funded by my Department.

School Completion Programme

1500. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount of funding that has been allocated to the school completion programme for 2018. [1183/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Educational Welfare Service of Tusla has advised that confirmation of the allocation for 2018 will be confirmed following the completion of the 2018 business planning process in Tusla.

School Completion Programme

1501. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount of funding that was allocated to the school completion programme in each of the years 2009 to 2011, inclusive. [1184/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am advised by the Educational Welfare Service of Tusla that the amount of funding allocated to the School Completion Programme from 2009 to 2011 is as set out in the following table.

Year	SCP Funding
2009	€30.404m
2010	€30.007m
2011	€30.258m

Family Resource Centres

1502. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount of funding provided to each family resource centre in 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1185/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): There are 109 Family Resource Centres currently in receipt of funding from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. Tusla provides funding to the centres under an annual agreement. This funding is provided by way of a contribution towards the running costs of the centres. The financial allocation to support this programme amounted to €13.51m in 2017.

I was also pleased to announce recently that additional funding of €3.0m is being allocated to the programme in 2018, increasing the base budget to approximately €16.5m. This will support the inclusion of 11 new centres to the programme, as well as allowing for an increase in allocation to the existing 109 centres of up to €10,000 each.

I understand that the Deputy is seeking information relating to the individual allocation provided to each Family Resource Centre in 2017. I have asked Tusla to supply such information to my Department, and will forward the information to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Family Resource Centres

1503. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of family resource centres that were operational in each year since 2007. [1186/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla, the Child and Family Agency has advised that there are currently 109 Family Resource Centres that are fully operational.

The following table presents the number of Family Resource Centres that were operational between the years 2007 and 2017.

	Year	Number of Family Resource Centres
1.	2007	96
2.	2008	101
3.	2009	105
4.	2010	107
5.	2011	107
6.	2012	106
7.	2013	106
8.	2014	107
9.	2015	107
10.	2016	107
11.	2017	109

Tusla values the work of Family Resource Centres (FRCs) and recognises the positive impact of their work in supporting families and local communities. FRCs provide a holistic service of child, family and community support and advocacy to all children and families in their community.

Family Resource Centres

1504. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount of funding that has been provided to the family resource centre network in each year since 2007. [1187/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Acting as a focal point within their communities, Family Resource Centres provide a holistic service of child, family and community support and advocacy to all children and families in their communities.

Tusla, the Child and Family Agency provides funding to over 100 Family Resource Centres. The 2017 allocation by Tusla to Family Resource Centres is €13.512m.

It should be noted that prior to 2014, funding was provided to the Family Resource Centres by the former Family Support Agency, which was incorporated into Tusla in 2014.

The following table sets out the level of allocated funding provided to Family Resource Centres in the period 2007 - 2017.

Family Support Agency/Tusla Funding to Family Resource Centres 2007-2017

	Year	Tusla Funding (€m)
1.	2007	18.66
2.	2008	18.84
3.	2009	18.05
4.	2010	15.37
5.	2011	15.90
6.	2012	15.10
7.	2013	14.31
8.	2014	13.51
9.	2015	13.09
10.	2016	13.50
11.	2017	13.51

Source: Family Support Agency (2007 – 2013)/Child and Family Agency (2014 – 2017)

In 2016 and 2017, additional once-off funding was provided by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to Family Resource Centres to assist in the upgrade of equipment and infrastructure. The administration of this funding was carried out by Tusla.

In 2016, this additional funding came to a total of €1.42m. In 2017, additional once-off funding to Family Resource Centres for this purpose came to a total of €2.12m.

Child and Family Agency

1505. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if Tusla has ever carried out an audit of the way in which the more than €7 million given to an organisation (details supplied) in each of the years 2015 and 2016 was spent; and if Tusla has concerns in regard to the level of directors' remuneration at this service. [1208/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the subject matter of the Deputy's question relates to an operational matter for Tusla, I have referred the matter to the attention of Tusla for a direct reply.

Early Childhood Care and Education

1506. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the ECCE scheme and the provision of two years for children with additional and-or special needs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1296/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): ECCE entitlement currently averages at 61 weeks, up from 38 weeks when ECCE was first introduced. It will expand further, to 76 weeks / two pre-school years, from September 2018. The two years of ECCE will be available to all children, including those with disabilities. This is in keeping with good international practice.

The question I understand relates to a recent announcement that I would pause a decision on

the overage exemption for ECCE pending consultation.

Overage exemptions were introduced at the onset of the ECCE programme in 2010. At that time, the ECCE Programme only operated for a 38 week period, or one programme year. For some children with special/additional needs, attending preschool five days a week was not feasible and so an allowance was made to enable them split ECCE over 2 years, for example, a child may have availed of 3 days ECCE provision in year one and 2 days in year two. Their total ECCE provision remained at 38 weeks.

In order to facilitate this, in the cases where the child would have been over the age limit for ECCE (5 years and 6 months when finishing ECCE) an overage exemption was approved. This flexibility was never intended to conflict with the legislative requirement to start school by age six. The law and policy on school start-age is clearly established in Ireland. Children should be in school by the time they are six and the primary school system has a variety of resources to support children with disabilities. If children are not in school by six, under the Educational Welfare Act, the Educational Welfare service of Tusla must be satisfied that the child is receiving a minimum standard of education in a place other than a recognised school. (Tusla does this by sending Educational Welfare Inspectors out to the place of the child's education. Should this be required, this would be in addition to the Early Years Inspectorates funded by my Department.)

Since ECCE was first introduced, DCYA has worked to improve the pre-school experience for children with disabilities and to optimise their early development. The two main enhancements are:-

- The expansion to a full two years for every child from September 2016 as stated above.
- The Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) has been introduced with 7 different levels of support for children with disabilities. Over 4,000 children have so far benefitted from targeted supports and many multiples of this from universal supports available under AIM.

Purely in the best interests of children, and for no other reason, a proposal was considered to remove the overage exemption to the upper age limit to the Programme. On 6th December 2017, I announced that I paused on the removal of the Upper age limit exemption for ECCE so that further consultation with parents can occur. This means that for the 2018/2019 ECCE year the overage exemption will continue to be available.

Child Care Services Funding

1507. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when funding for grants will be made available for persons involved in child care; the amount that will be made available (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1330/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): In Budget 2018 I secured €6.86 million in capital funding for the expansion and improvement of early years and school age childcare services in Ireland. This capital funding will directly support outdoor play areas, extra spaces and essential maintenance and reflects my on-going commitment to developing quality, affordable childcare in Ireland, and assisting providers in delivering world class services to parents and children.

This funding comprises the Early Years and School Age Childcare Capital 2018 programmes, which are set to run simultaneously, with a single online application form on the Programmes Implementation Platform (PIP) for both. This should streamline the application process for

service providers.

It is intended that applications for capital funding under these programmes will open in February and close in March 2018. It is my hope that successful service providers will be notified of the outcomes of their capital applications in May 2018 so that the capital works concerned can be undertaken during the summer months. A further announcement, including a more detailed timeline, will issue in January 2018.

More details about the Capital 2018 programme can be found on my Department's website in announcements made on 21st December 2017 (<https://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?Docid=4541>) and 4th December 2017 (<https://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?Docid=4498>). I would also strongly encourage service providers to contact their local City/County Childcare Committee (CCC) who can provide additional information and assistance with applications.

Child Protection

1508. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if there have been child protection issues reported regarding the use of hotels and commercial accommodation as emergency homeless accommodation in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018; the number of such reports in each of those years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1552/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am advised by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, that the information requested by the Deputy is not collected in their performance data.

Children living with their parents in homeless accommodation or hotels are in the care of their parents. Concerns about the welfare or safety of a child should be reported promptly to Tusla. If there is a concern that a child is in immediate danger, An Garda Síochána should be contacted without delay.

Organisations working with, or providing services to children must have appropriate child safeguarding policies in place, in line with Children First legislation.

Legislative Programme

1509. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the projects undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation, including the cost, the duration, the number of staff required and if this process was carried out by her Department or outsourced in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [1559/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I would like to advise the Deputy that no project has been undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation coming within the remit of my Department since the establishment of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in 2011.

Freedom of Information Requests

1510. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reason for a delay of more than two years with a freedom of information application lodged by a person

(details supplied) in County Wexford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1705/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department has not received the Freedom of Information request to which the Deputy refers.

Child and Family Agency Services

1511. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the position of Tusla regarding the need to address concerns and provide therapy for a person's (details supplied) child; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1706/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): While it is not appropriate for me to comment on individual cases, I am advised by Tusla that no current welfare concerns exist for the individual's child at this time. The Principal Social Worker has responded to the concerns raised, and the local social work team will make further contact with the child's mother to address her concerns and offer any assistance required.

Departmental Staff Data

1512. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the proportion of employees in her Department or in organisations under its remit registered disabled. [1851/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005 sets out the legal obligations of public service bodies to meet a target of 3% of employees with disabilities. Under the Act, the National Disability Authority (NDA) has the statutory role to report, on an annual basis, on compliance with the 3% target.

The Disability Act 2005 defines disability as follows:

“Disability, in relation to a person, means a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment.”

In order to report on this target my Department asks every employee, whether or not they have any disability, to complete a census form and return it, in confidence, to the nominated person in the HR Unit.

Based on these returns, my Department reported a total of 6.32% of staff who had declared a disability as at 31 December 2016.

My Department acts as the monitoring committee for the collection of this data from the agencies under its remit. For the end of December 2016, the agencies reported the following:

Agencies	% of employees with disabilities
Child and Family Agency (TUSLA)	0.7%
Oberstown Children Detention Campus	5.99%
Adoption Authority of Ireland	12.5%

As an independent body, the Ombudsman for Children's Office reports directly to the Department of Expenditure and Reform with their statistical return on employees with a disability. I have asked that office to furnish the information requested directly to the Deputy.

Child and Family Agency Services

1513. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to correspondence (details supplied) circulated to Members of Dáil Éireann; her plans to deal with this issue; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1935/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am aware of the correspondence referred to by the Deputy. I intend to ask Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, to look into the matter and provide a response to the issues raised in the correspondence.

Homeless Persons Supports

1514. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if funding is available for transport for homeless families that have children attending school (details supplied); and if not, the reason therefor. [1936/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the Deputy is aware, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government is funding an initiative (arising from Rebuilding Ireland, the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness) to provide homeless families, residing in hotel accommodation and family hubs in the Dublin Region, with access to free public transport for essential school journeys. The Dublin Region Homeless Executive is overseeing the implementation of this initiative and, working in partnership the National Transport Authority, has been distributing such leap cards those homeless families with school-going children residing in hotel accommodation and family hubs in the Dublin Region.

The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government funded initiative is only available in Dublin. Outside of Dublin, homeless households that have additional transport costs arising as a result of residing in emergency accommodation can make inquiries with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection's Community Welfare Service. The Community Welfare Service will consider meeting the cost of such needs on a case-by-case basis under the scheme for Exceptional Needs Payments.

Child Care Services Funding

1515. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views on a motion (details supplied) by Monaghan County Council for increased funding to the child care sector; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1997/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department invests significant resources in the Early Years sector. In the last three Budgets (2016, 2017 and 2018) investment in Early Years sector has increased by some 87% which reflect the emphasis being placed on developing a quality service with appropriately supported staff. This has helped to address affordability, access and quality, although it is recognised that there is more to be done. The announcement under Budget 2018 to increase ECCE capitation rates by 7% is intended to support the workforce.

My Department secured €18 million in Programme Support Payments (formerly known as 'non-contact time') for Early Years providers to assist with the administration and programme costs associated with the various childcare schemes. The first payment - some €14.5 million

in total - was made available in June 2017 to Early years providers to cover all schemes and represented a payment for an additional 7 days' work. The majority of services have now been paid an average of over €2,000 under this Programme Support Payment. The second payment - some €3.5 million in total - was made available to all Early Years services who signed up to deliver measures to make childcare more available from September 2017. This funding recognises the time providers need to spend familiarising themselves with the new measures, signing contracts, meeting regulatory and compliance requirements and assisting parents with how they can benefit. Applications for this payment were made available on the PIP portal up to the end of November, and payments were issued in late December 2017. This brought the overall total 'Programme Support Payments' to €18m in 2017. In Budget 2018 it was announced that €18m in programme support payments will be continued for the coming year. This funding is also intended to support providers and their employees.

I am also keenly aware of the pressures on the sector with regard to availability of places and sustainability and, following on from significant investment in 2016 and 2017, my Department will provide €6.86m for its capital funding programme under Budget 2018.

Although my Department has been successful in securing additional funding for this sector over the past three budgets, as outlined above, it is acknowledged that much more must be done if we are truly to have affordable, accessible, quality childcare and continue to improve both the affordability and quality of childcare. To this end I will continue to engage with my Government colleagues with a view to securing additional investment for the Early Years sector in future budgets.

Childcare workers are part of a growing sector, which the Government is strongly supporting. I and my Department believe that by working together with all the stakeholders in the early years sector we can ensure that it is a viable and strong sector which makes a significant contribution to the care and personal development of our children.

I am committed to ensuring childcare is accessible, affordable and of a high quality.

Departmental Communications

1516. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her Department uses anti-profanity software on its email systems and online contact forms; if so, the level of human oversight that is applied to the monitoring of this software and its effectiveness; her views on whether persons' legitimate right to petition Government may be blocked unintentionally by errors in the use of such software in determining that which qualifies as profanity being communicated in email and-or online contact forms; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2080/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Department of Children and Youth Affairs utilises anti-profanity software which monitors its email systems and online contact forms. Inbound communications blocked by this software are forwarded to IT Helpdesk for review and, if valid and absent of malware threats to the Departmental ICT network, are then released to the correct recipient. All blocked communications are subject to human oversight and any legitimate petitions are released regardless of language or tone used.

Departmental Strategies

1517. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the Govern-

ment's initiatives in her Department in 2017 that promoted State services or welfare payments, public awareness of regulatory changes and public consultations that involved advertising and promotion on television, radio, newspapers and online, in tabular form; and the level of expenditure for each such initiative. [2257/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The information is contained in the following table.

Public Awareness Campaigns	Advertising/Promotion Spend in 2017
Affordable Childcare scheme	€218,175.37
Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes	€91170.70
LGBTI+ Strategy	€4897.38

Noise Pollution

1518. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if there is legislation to deal with the issue of noise pollution caused by dogs barking constantly; if not, his plans to introduce legislation to address this problem; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54462/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The following legislation and arrangements are in place to deal with the issue of noise pollution caused by barking dogs.

Under Section 25 of the Control of Dogs Act 1986, the District Court may act on a complaint by any person where a nuisance has been created by excessive barking by a dog. A copy of the form used for complaints to the Courts regarding barking is available from local authorities. The Court may make an order, requiring the occupier of the premises in which the dog is kept to abate the nuisance by exercising due control over the dog. The Court may also limit the number of dogs that can be kept on a premises or may direct that the dog be delivered to a dog warden to be dealt with as an unwanted dog.

While complaints in relation to barking dogs are largely dealt with under the provisions of the Control of Dogs Acts, the position in relation to noise nuisance generally is that a person experiencing noise nuisance may contact their local authority, which may initiate proceedings on grounds of noise nuisance under the Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992. This Act also provides for any person, or group of persons, to seek an order in the District Court to have noise abated if it gives reasonable cause for annoyance. The procedures involved have been simplified to allow action to be taken without legal representation.

A public information leaflet, A Guide to the Noise Regulations, outlining the legal avenues available to persons experiencing noise nuisance, is available from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment at <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/A%20Guide%20to%20the%20Noise%20Regulations.pdf>

A National Protocol for Dealing with Noise Complaints for Local Authorities was recently developed as a cooperative project between the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment; Local Authorities; and the Environmental Protection Agency. The Protocol provides guidance to Local Authorities, given existing legislation, as to what is considered best practice for dealing with noise complaints. The protocol can be accessed through the following link: <http://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/environment/topics/noise-pollution/typical-noise-pollution/Pages/default.aspx>.

As the existing legislation provides a robust regulatory framework in relation to noise pollution from barking dogs, I have no plans to introduce further legislation in this area.

Dormant Accounts Fund Grants

1519. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the County Waterford based projects that have received funds from the Dormant Account Fund over the past five years; and the amount in this fund. [54639/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Statutory responsibility for the Dormant Accounts Fund transferred to my Department in July 2017. The legislation governing the Fund provides for disbursements to be made from the Fund to projects and programmes which benefit economically, socially or educationally disadvantaged people, and people with a disability.

My Department's role is to prepare a Disbursement Scheme every three years and to co-ordinate the preparation of annual Action Plans. The Action Plans contain the details of specific programmes and projects for delivery across Government Departments each year.

A Dormant Accounts Fund Disbursement Scheme for the period 2017-2019 was approved by Government in April 2017 and the 2017 Action Plan was published in July 2017, following a detailed consultation process across Government Departments.

With regard to funding for projects based in County Waterford, the programmes and projects funded through the Dormant Accounts Fund are implemented through a range of Government Departments, and the details of individual projects and their geographic location are a matter for each individual Department.

With regard to my own Department, three Waterford based projects were approved for funding in 2017 under a Social Enterprise Measure which is administered on my Department's behalf by Pobal. These projects are run by Dungarvan Care of the Aged, which was approved for funding of €50,342; GIY Ireland CLG, which was approved for funding of €49,768; and Waterford & Suir Valley Railway Company Limited by Guarantee, which was approved for funding of €44,415.

The Dormant Accounts Fund is managed by the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA). The net value of uncommitted Dormant Accounts Funds stood at €124.8 million at the end of September 2017, taking account of a reserve for future claims by account holders and a provision for funds which remain to be disbursed by the NTMA on foot of cumulative approvals made through annual Action Plans.

Dog Breeding Industry

1520. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his plans to introduce regulations to prevent the practice of puppy farming in view of concerns for animal welfare; the enforcement activity of his Department in this area in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55023/17]

1526. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his plans to introduce legislation to ban puppy farming; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1347/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1520 and 1526 together.

The Dog Breeding Establishment Act 2010 provides a robust regulatory framework for, inter alia, the licensing, monitoring and inspection of dog breeding establishments by local authorities and, where a serious and immediate threat exists to public health or animal health and welfare, for the closure of such establishments.

Responsibility for the Control of Dogs Acts 1986 to 2014, including the Dog Breeding Establishments Act 2010, transferred to the Department of Rural and Community Development in July 2017. My Department has completed its review of the feedback and data received from the public consultation on the Dog Breeding Establishment Guidelines which was undertaken by the then Department of Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government in early 2017. The findings are currently under consideration and discussions with officials are ongoing regarding possible next steps.

Enforcement activities relating to dog breeding establishments are a matter for local authorities in accordance with the Dog Breeding Establishment Act 2010 and I have no function in those activities.

Details of the enforcement activity of local authorities in relation to the regulation of dog breeding establishments can be found on my Department's website at the following link <http://drcd.gov.ie/dog-control/view-our-dog-control-statistics/>

More generally, the enforcement of welfare standards regarding all animals is a matter for the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine under the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013.

Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme Administration

1521. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the reason there is no non-legal appeal process for SICAP tendering; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55124/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The SICAP programme ended on 31 December 2017 with the next iteration, SICAP 2018 – 2022, rolling out 1 January 2018.

As with the previous programme, the delivery of SICAP in 51 different geographical areas from 2018 onwards was tendered for by way of a public procurement process. This was conducted by the Local Community Development Committees, in accordance with the Procurement Directive 2014/24/EU, which comprises the most up-to-date EU procurement rules. These rules together with the national Public Procurement Guidelines govern all public procurement and place an emphasis on best practice and value for money. The rules do not provide for a non-legal appeal process.

Tender results for SICAP delivery issued to all bidders on 24 November last, and Programme Implementers have been put in place in 47 of the 51 Lot areas. I am aware that the process in four Lot areas did not result in a successful bid. In such situations, the governing provisions, as referred to above, apply and provide for a negotiated procedure, which is a non-legal process. This is currently underway in these areas. Arrangements have been put in place in these areas to ensure service delivery is not affected while the negotiated procedure takes place.

Charities Regulation

1522. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the body that regulates a charity (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55188/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department is responsible for the Charities Regulatory Authority (“the Charities Regulator”) which was established on 16 October, 2014 pursuant to the Charities Act, 2009. The general function of the Regulator is to regulate charitable organisations operating in Ireland, in order to increase public trust and confidence in their management and administration. Under the Charities Act, 2009, the Charities Regulator is fully independent in the performance of its statutory functions. As of end December 2017, there were 9,061 charities registered with the Authority. The Authority can be contacted at (01) 6331500 or at *info@charitiesregulator.ie*

I am advised that the organisation referred to by the Deputy is registered with the Regulatory Authority.

Local Improvement Scheme

1523. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding a local improvement scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1019/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Local Improvement Scheme supports improvement works on private, non-public roads, to improve access for people who live or work along those roads.

There has been very little funding available for this scheme in recent years due to constraints on public expenditure. However, I was very conscious of the underlying demand for the scheme in rural areas throughout the country.

I therefore announced the provision of €10 million to Local Authorities for a Local Improvement Scheme last September. Based on demand and the capacity of Local Authorities to complete works before the end of 2017, I announced an additional €7.4 million to Local Authorities for LIS roads at the end of November.

It is clear that there is a continuing demand for LIS funding in rural communities across Ireland, and I have therefore secured an allocation of €10 million for the scheme in my Department’s Estimate for 2018. I intend to launch the scheme early this year to give the Local Authorities every opportunity to manage their programme of works as effectively as possible. Details of the scheme will be announced shortly.

Charities Regulation

1524. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if the Charities Regulator is empowered to enforce sanctions against charities operating in contravention of the Charities Act, such as in the case of an organisation (details supplied). [1206/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Under the Charities Act, 2009, the Charities Regulatory Authority is fully independent in the performance

of its statutory functions. The general function of the Regulatory Authority is to regulate charitable organisations operating in Ireland, in order to increase public trust and confidence in their management and administration.

Under Section 41 of the 2009 Act, it is an offence for any person to advertise on behalf of, to invite members of the public to give money or property to, or to accept such money or property on behalf of a charitable organisation that is not registered, or for an unregistered charitable organisation to carry on such activities. In addition, it is an offence under Section 46 of the Act for a body (other than a registered charitable organisation) to describe itself or its activities in a manner that would cause a member of the public to reasonably believe that the body was a charitable organisation. An offence under the Charities Act 2009 carries with it maximum penalties on indictment of a fine not exceeding €300,000 and imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years.

If anybody has concerns that a charitable organisation is in breach of the Charities Act, 2009, they should forward details of these concerns to the Charities Regulator. All concerns received by the Regulator are actively reviewed.

Community Services Programme

1525. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the full-year cost of matching the contribution to the community services programme to the national minimum wage rate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1221/18]

1544. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if Pobal funded organisations can reduce working hours at their discretion in view of the fact that Pobal provides a block employment grant based on working hours with no allowance for the increase in the minimum wage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1618/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1525 and 1544 together.

The Community Services Programme (CSP) supports community organisations to provide local services through a social enterprise model. Funding is provided as a contribution to the cost of a manager and a specified number of full time equivalent positions.

The CSP contribution is based on a 39-hour working week. It is not aligned to the national minimum wage, rather it is a fixed annual contribution that is required to be co-funded by the organisation concerned from other sources, for example, from income received from the public use of their facilities and services. Accordingly, CSP funded organisations must maintain the 39-hour working week for supported positions notwithstanding the increase in the national minimum wage.

The funding allocation for the programme in 2018 is €46.2m. It would cost an additional €3m to match the increase in the national minimum wage in 2018.

Responsibility for the CSP transferred to my Department on 1 January 2018. My immediate priority is to ensure its smooth transfer to my Department and maintain continuity of service for funded organisations. My Department plans to commence a review of the CSP later in 2018.

Question No. 1526 answered with Question No. 1520.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

1527. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development further to Parliamentary Question No. 452 of 13 July 2017, the status of the proposed scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54368/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): A pilot scheme to encourage residential occupancy in rural towns and villages is currently being developed as part of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme which is administered by my Department. The pilot will consider ways in which properties that are currently not in use in town centres can be renovated to allow them to be used for residential purposes. This will help to rejuvenate town centres while also contributing to the housing needs of individuals.

Following initial discussions between my Department and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, I have now established a Steering Group to accelerate and oversee the design and delivery of the pilot scheme. The Steering Group is chaired by my Department, and involves a number of other key Departments and agencies, including the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the Department of Finance, and the County and City Management Association which provides representation from the Local Authority sector.

The first meeting of the Steering Group will take place shortly and I will be briefed on its progress on an on-going basis.

CLÁR Programme

1528. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the funding that may be available to a primary school located in rural location not within a CLÁR area; if a pedestrian crossing will be provided to improve traffic management and safety for children; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54745/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): CLÁR (Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais) is a targeted investment programme for rural areas that aims to provide funding for small infrastructural projects in areas that have experienced significant levels of population decline.

The 2017 CLÁR programme provided total funding of just under €7 million for 230 projects across four Measures as follows:

Measure 1: Support for School and Community Safety Measures

Measure 2: Play Areas

Measure 3: Targeted Community Infrastructure

Measure 4: First Responder Supports

Details of the approved projects are available on my Department's website at <http://drcd.gov.ie/subheader1/clar>.

Funding under the CLÁR programme is only available to projects that are located within CLÁR areas. Outside of these areas, the Local Authorities might be best placed to provide funding for measures such as those referred to by the Deputy to improve traffic management and safety for school children.

Departmental Funding

1529. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the name and number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from his Department 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 amount of money they have spent on this particular campaign during that time; the number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from his Department that have expended resources seeking the retention of the eighth amendment; the amount of funding these organisations have received from the State in the past five years; and the amount of money they have spent on this particular campaign during that time. [54772/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Each organisation that receives funding from my Department is funded to provide services in the public interest in line with overall Government objectives and it is essential that this be done in an equitable, transparent and non-partisan way. This Department does not provide funding for political or legislative campaigns.

Rural Recreation Promotion

1530. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he will address a matter regarding an agricultural show (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54910/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): In December 2017, I announced once-off financial support for Agricultural shows to alleviate financial difficulties suffered by a number of these shows in recent years, primarily due to adverse weather conditions.

The allocation was made in coordination with the Irish Shows Association (ISA) and will result in each of approximately 120 shows under the umbrella of the ISA in the Republic of Ireland receiving between €3,500 and €7,000, depending on their size.

The Irish Shows Association is the umbrella organisation for Agricultural Shows in Ireland and membership of the Association is open to all recognised Agricultural Show Societies. On that basis, I considered that distributing the funding through the Association was the most effective way to support the shows.

The matter raised in the Deputy's question is an internal matter for the Irish Shows Association and I have no function in relation to the matter.

Departmental Funding

1531. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of an application (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54997/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I am advised that funding of €200,000 was awarded to the project referred to by the Deputy by the Local Action Group which administers the programme concerned at its meeting on 6th December 2017.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

1532. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the towns that were unsuccessful in their application to the town and village renewal scheme 2017, in tabular form; the amounts they had requested; the reason they did not receive funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55021/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The 2017 Town and Village Renewal Scheme, which forms an important part of the Action Plan for rural Development was launched on 13th April last, with a focus on improving the economic development of our rural towns and villages.

In total, my Department received 333 applications under the scheme, including 20 applications under a separate strand for public art works. Officials in my Department assessed each Town and Village application under 5 separate criteria:

- Economic Development potential
- Strategic nature of the proposal, in line with Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs)
- Demonstration of need and potential
- Realistic nature of the proposal
- Value for Money

In order to reach a minimum qualifying standard, a score of at least 65% had to be achieved under each of the criteria listed above.

On the 4th October last, I published a list of 281 successful projects, to a total value of €21.6 million, to be supported under the 2017 scheme. A decision on the 20 applications for funding for public art works was deferred. In addition there were 32 applications that were that were unsuccessful in their bid for funding. I will revert to the Deputy with the details of these applications in tabular form within the coming days.

Leader Programmes

1533. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if there are grants available to assist an area (details supplied) in completing work on a hall for upgrading; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55194/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I am advised that an expression of interest for funding under the LEADER programme in respect of the project referred to in the Deputy's question was received on 20 November 2017 by the Local Action Group which administers the programme for the area concerned. I also understand that the Local Action Group has invited the project promoter to submit a full application for funding.

LEADER is a multi-annual programme covering the period 2014-2020. It is co-funded by the EU and funding is delivered through Local Action Groups in each of the 28 LEADER sub-regional areas around the country. The LEADER programme funds projects under three policy themes:

- Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation

- Social Inclusion, and
- Rural Environment.

In order for a project to be eligible for LEADER funding, it must be compatible with the actions outlined in the approved Local Development Strategy in the sub-regional area concerned, and it must comply with the Operating Rules and EU Regulations in place for the programme.

The decision to approve a project, or otherwise, is a matter for the Local Action Group in the relevant area.

Departmental Properties

1534. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the vacant properties and land not in use, owned, rented or leased by his Department or by bodies and agencies under the aegis of his Department by square footage for buildings and acres for land, in tabular form; the address and location of these properties; and the last date of occupancy or use of these properties. [55218/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Four state bodies fall under the remit of my Department, Pobal, Irish Water Safety, the Western Development Commission and the Charities Regulatory Authority.

There are no public buildings owned either by my Department or by any of the above agencies. All properties used by this Department are owned, or leased, by the Office of Public Works on our behalf.

Community Services Programme

1535. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if funding will be awarded for a project (details supplied). [1057/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Community Services Programme (CSP) supports community organisations to provide local services through a social enterprise model. Around 425 community organisations are supported under the CSP, with funding provided as a contribution to the costs of a manager and an agreed number of full time equivalent positions.

The organisation in question submitted a business plan for consideration under the CSP in April 2017. This application was unsuccessful but the organisation was given an opportunity in Autumn 2017 to submit a revised business plan. This was received by Pobal in mid-December.

Pobal is currently assessing the business plan and is expected to forward a recommendation to my Department within the coming weeks.

Dog Breeding Industry

1536. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development when the dog breeding establishment guidelines review will be completed; when the public consultation submissions will be made public; when the new guidelines will be issued; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1068/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Responsibility for the Control of Dogs Acts 1986 to 2014, including the Dog Breeding Establishments Act 2010, transferred to the Department of Rural and Community Development in July 2017. Under the Dog Breeding Establishments Act, 2010, local authorities are responsible for the registration, inspection and regulation of dog breeding establishments within their areas.

A public consultation process on the Dog Breeding Establishment Guidelines took place in 2017. The Department has completed its review of the submissions received and a draft final report is under consideration with a view to publication in the coming weeks. At that time, consideration will be given to publication of submissions which were received as part of the consultation process.

Local Improvement Scheme Data

1537. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount of funding that has been allocated to the local improvements scheme for 2018. [1210/18]

1545. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if a budget has been set aside for the local improvement scheme in 2018; the intended budget for the scheme in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1757/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1537 and 1545 together.

The Local Improvement Scheme supports improvement works on private, non-public roads, to improve access for people who live or work along those roads.

There has been very little funding available for this scheme in recent years due to constraints on public expenditure. However, I was very conscious of the underlying demand for the scheme in rural areas throughout the country.

I therefore announced the provision of €10 million to Local Authorities for a Local Improvement Scheme last September. Based on demand and the capacity of Local Authorities to complete works before the end of 2017, I allocated an additional €7.4 million to Local Authorities for LIS roads at the end of November.

It is clear that there is a continuing demand for LIS funding in rural communities across Ireland, and I have therefore secured an allocation of €10 million for the scheme in my Department's Estimate for 2018. I intend to announce details of the scheme shortly.

Departmental Strategies

1538. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if his Department has published a statement of strategy; if not, when is it planned to publish such a document; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1265/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department is in the process of finalising its Statement of Strategy before submitting to Government, in the coming weeks. Arrangements to publish will be made when the Statement of Strategy has been approved by Government.

Leader Programmes Data

1539. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount approved for projects under the Leader programme in each of the years 2014 to 2020 by local action group; the amount paid out for projects to date in 2018 by local action group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1266/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): LEADER is a multi-annual EU co-funded programme to support rural development. Ireland has an allocation of €250 million under the programme over the period 2014-2020, including both national and EU funding. The programme is administered by Local Action Groups (LAGs) which deliver funding in accordance with Local Development Strategies that have been agreed for each LAG area.

Funding Agreements for the current LEADER programme were, for the most part, signed with the LAGs in the second half of 2016 and the programme effectively became operational from that date. There was no project expenditure on the new LEADER programme prior to 2017, although funding was provided to the LAGs to develop their Local Development Strategies and to prepare for the implementation phase of the programme.

As of 31st December 2017, 592 projects with a value of over €16.4 million have been approved for LEADER funding by the LAGs. The breakdown of these approvals by Local Action Group is provided at Appendix 1. A further 372 projects requesting over €16.1 million in funding are at various stages in the approval process. This funding will be drawn down as projects start to incur expenditure and submit payment claims.

Project expenditure amounting to €661,844 was incurred in 2017. Details of this expenditure by Local Action Group are also provided at Appendix 1.

While the pace of approvals varies between Local Action Groups, I am confident that the progress made by the LAGs in the second half of 2017, along with the administrative improvements which my Department introduced last year, will result in a significant increase in project approvals and payments under the LEADER programme over the coming months.

PQ 1266/18 – Appendix 1

LEADER Approvals and Payments as at 31 December 2017

Local Action Group	No of Approvals	Value of Approvals (€)	Amount Paid (€)
Carlow	11	810,556.71	50,000.00
Cavan	15	827,390.54	0.00
Clare	55	1,048,291.50	0.00
Cork North	1	149,997.94	0.00
Cork South	3	203,610.12	0.00
Cork West	3	139,990.45	0.00
Donegal	56	1,475,272.36	30,844.48
Dublin Rural	15	222,886.67	0.00
Galway East	0	0.00	0.00
Galway West	0	0.00	0.00
Kerry	103	1,710,577.99	0.00
Kildare	2	32,970.43	0.00

Local Action Group	No of Approvals	Value of Approvals (€)	Amount Paid (€)
Kilkenny	30	794,155.93	75,559.16
Laois	21	256,624.34	12,250.00
Leitrim	4	103,591.79	0.00
Limerick	8	321,090.50	0.00
Longford	6	29,025.68	0.00
Louth	19	220,775.09	12,450.00
Mayo	32	1,334,192.74	57,142.63
Meath	7	239,206.66	10,770.17
Monaghan	18	999,107.82	0.00
Offaly	42	756,146.13	64,050.70
Roscommon	9	242,291.61	0.00
Sligo	28	622,774.68	237,707.98
Tipperary	36	835,939.56	0.00
Waterford	23	1,738,098.68	111,069.23
Westmeath	21	280,434.93	0.00
Wexford	24	1,017,898.48	0.00
Wicklow	0	0.00	0.00
Total	592	16,412,899.33	661,844.35

Departmental Funding

1540. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the capital and current funding allocated to his Department for 2017; the amount spent by 31 December 2017 by subhead; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1267/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The total amount of capital funding allocated to my Department in 2017 was approximately €77 million, along with current funding of approximately €85.7 million. The allocations provided in the following table reflect the Further Revised Estimates Volume 2017. Total gross spend in 2017 was €136 million, as shown in the table below. In addition, sanction was sought and received from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to carry over €7.7 million in capital funding into 2018.

My Department will continue to work with key stakeholders including local authorities, community and voluntary groups, and dedicated agencies to support job creation, attract tourism investment and contribute to sustainable economic development in rural Ireland. My Department will ensure that maximum use is obtained from the resources allocated and that value for money is delivered in respect of the 2018 allocation.

Subhead	2017 Current Allocation €m	2017 Capital Allocation €m	2017 Current Spend €m	2017 Capital Spend €m	2017 Total Spend €m
A.1 Administration – Pay	3.3	0	3.1	0	3.1
A.2 Administration – Non Pay	0.8	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.4

Questions - Written Answers

Subhead	2017 Current Allocation €m	2017 Capital Allocation €m	2017 Current Spend €m	2017 Capital Spend €m	2017 Total Spend €m
A.3 Dormant Accounts	2.3	2	0.5	1.6	2.1
A.4 Western Development Commission	1.5	1	1.4	0	1.4
A.5 National Rural Development Schemes	3.9	11.4	2.9	11.7	14.6
A.6 LEADER	0	30	0	14.4	14.4
A.7 Tidy Towns Commission	0	0	0	0	0
A.8 Town & Village Regeneration	0	12	0	0.9	0.9
A.9 Rural Broadband	1	1	1	0.1	1.1
A.10 Local Improvement Schemes	0	10	0	17	17
B.1 Administration – Pay	2.3	0	1.8	0	1.8
B.2 Administration – Non Pay	0.4	0.1	0.3	0	0.3
B.3 Supports for Comm & Vol Sector	12.7	0	13	0	13
B.4 SICAP	42.2	0	42.5	0	42.5
B.5 LCDC Support	1.6	0	0.7	0	0.7
B.6 RAPID	1.2	3.8	1.2	3.8	5
B.7 Dormant Accounts	5.8	0	2.1	0	2.1
B.8 Programme for Peace & Reconciliation	0.1	.07	0.3	0.6	0.9
B.10 Irish Water Safety	1	0	1	0	1

Subhead	2017 Current Allocation €m	2017 Capital Allocation €m	2017 Current Spend €m	2017 Capital Spend €m	2017 Total Spend €m
B.11 Library Development and Archive Service	1.1	2.8	1.1	6.5	7.6
B.12 Community Facilities Fund	0	2	0	2	0
B.13 Other Services	0	0	0.1	0	0.1
C – Charities Regulatory Authority	4.4	0	4	0	4

Local Authority Funding

1541. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount of the €28 million prepaid to local authorities at the end of 2016 that was not spent by 31 December 2017 on projects for which it was approved by local authority and type of project; the steps being taken to either ensure that this money is spent or the money repaid to his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1276/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): As part of the Government's programme to support rural development, a number of initiatives including CLÁR, the Rural Recreation Scheme, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, and REDZ (Rural Economic Development Zones) were launched during 2016. In general, these initiatives were implemented through the Local Authorities.

Payments of approximately €28 million were made to the Local Authorities in 2016 to deliver these schemes. All funding was provided on the basis of sanction received from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and on foot of Funding Agreements signed with the Local Authorities.

The following table outlines the amount of funding provided to each Local Authority by programme in 2016 and the most up to date expenditure information available in respect of each scheme. Unless otherwise indicated, the figures reflect the position to the end of September 2017. It should be noted that not all Local Authorities applied for, or were eligible for, every scheme.

The figures show the latest expenditure information available at this time. However, my Department has requested updated information from all Local Authorities to the end of 2017. My Department is continuing to work closely with all relevant Local Authorities to ensure that any remaining funding allocated to them is spent promptly and in accordance with the original project proposals. I expect to see significant progress being made in bringing the 2016 projects to completion in the first part of 2018.

Questions - Written Answers

County	Total amount disbursed REDZ 2016	Grant Expenditure at the 29 Sep 2017	Total amount disbursed Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2016	Grant Expenditure at the 29 Sep 2017
Carlow	€200,000.00	€119,379.32	€380,000.00	€377,855.96
Cavan	€200,000.00	€72,500.00	€380,000.00	€260,229.25
Clare	€200,000.00	€28,736.00	€380,000.00	€345,157.00
Cork	€248,000.00	€172,700.00	€380,000.00	€0.00
Donegal	€298,000.00	€119,913.00	€380,000.00	€0.00
Dublin FINGAL DLR	€0.00	€0.00	€380,000.00	€307,074.00
Galway	€100,000.00	€4,995.00	€380,000.00	€228,862.00
Kerry	€150,195.00	€150,195.00	€380,000.00	€368,221.00
Kildare	€100,000.00	€79,206.00	€380,000.00	€139,263.00
Kilkenny	€200,000.00	€150,073.00	€380,000.00	€324,831.00
Laois	€200,000.00	€149,000.00	€380,000.00	€162,940.00
Leitrim	€300,000.00	€235,177.00	€380,000.00	€380,000.00
Limerick	€300,000.00	€0.00	€380,000.00	€284,507.00
Longford	€350,000.00	€263,282.00	€380,000.00	€380,000.00
Louth	€100,000.00	€58,000.00	€380,000.00	€380,000.00
Mayo	€150,000.00	€108,906.00	€380,000.00	€380,000.00
Meath	€200,000.00	€98,700.00	€380,000.00	€298,260.00
Monaghan	€290,000.00	€81,295.00	€380,000.00	€353,316.00
Offaly	€414,870.00	€29,697.31	€380,000.00	€37,890.68
Roscommon	€100,000.00	€100,000.00	€380,000.00	€276,086.00
Sligo	€800,000.00	€322,000.00	€380,000.00	€380,000.00
Tipperary	€699,221.00	€281,526.00	€380,000.00	€282,728.00
Waterford	€100,000.00	€0.00	€380,000.00	€380,000.00
Westmeath	€192,000.00	€20,745.00	€380,000.00	€301,289.00
Wexford	€100,000.00	€41,250.00	€380,000.00	€302,991.42
Wicklow	€150,556.00	€21,304.00	€380,000.00	€234,151.75
Sub Total	€6,142,842.00	€2,708,579.63	€9,880,000.00	€7,165,653.06

County	Total amount disbursed CLÁR 2016	Grant Expenditure at 29th September 2017	Total amount disbursed Rural Recreation Scheme 2016	Grant expenditure at the 29 Sep 2017 Rural Recreation 2016
Carlow	€80,000.00	€80,000.00	€67,500.00	€37,134.05
Cavan*	€498,184.00	€459,381.00	€45,567.00	€30,496.00
Clare*	€284,000.00	€230,000.00	€255,625.20	€65,000.00
Cork	€562,222.00	€214,068.92	€417,815.15	€181,153.15
Donegal	€878,632.00	€518,832.59	€67,991.00	€59,831.00

County	Total amount disbursed CLÁR 2016	Grant Expenditure at 29th September 2017	Total amount disbursed Rural Recreation Scheme 2016	Grant expenditure at the 29 Sep 2017 Rural Recreation 2016
Dublin FINGAL DLR	€0.00	€0.00	€33,666.94	€0.00
Galway	€392,000.00	€351,656.00	€248,950.00	€107,170.63
Kerry	€744,964.00	€589,910.00	€288,000.00	€107,642.00
Kildare	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00
Kilkenny*	€223,000.00	€158,762.00	€0.00	€0.00
Laois	€148,900.00	€144,500.00	€256,000.00	€200,000.00
Leitrim	€274,800.00	€255,000.00	€480,000.00	€78,645.90
Limerick	€235,000.00	€235,000.00	€291,250.00	€240,000.00
Longford	€237,560.00	€167,983.09	€190,000.00	€135,000.00
Louth	€173,520.00	€111,131.00	€0.00	€0.00
Mayo	€976,869.00	€819,117.00	€455,000.00	€373,729.00
Meath	€127,600.00	€122,546.00	€50,000.00	€50,000.00
Monaghan	€356,440.00	€339,221.00	€273,014.00	€191,153.00
Offaly	€123,398.00	€117,985.00	€172,959.00	€11,143.00
Roscommon	€406,497.00	€406,497.40	€0.00	€0.00
Sligo	€598,400.00	€530,000.00	€42,562.50	€42,562.50
Tipperary	€371,000.00	€350,561.80	€85,208.00	€30,170.00
Waterford	€261,600.00	€237,900.06	€0.00	€0.00
Westmeath*	€214,280.00	€190,135.00	€219,590.00	€49,916.00
Wexford	€0.00	€0.00	€189,455.00	€75,197.00
Wicklow	€70,000.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00
Sub Total	€8,238,866.00	€6,630,187.86	€4,130,153.79	€2,065,943.23

* Some additional expenditure under CLÁR was reported in November 2017 by the Local Authorities indicated.

Legislative Programme

1542. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the projects undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation, including the cost, the duration, the number of staff required and if this process was carried out by his Department or outsourced in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [1571/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department has not undertaken any projects to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation.

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme

1543. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the capital funding application for the Boyneside trail from the Maiden Tower at Mornington to Drogheda; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1583/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department has not received an application for funding for the section of the Boyneside trail from the Maiden Tower at Mornington to Drogheda.

However, an application for funding for the Drogheda Town section of the Boyneside Trail was recently approved for funding of €92,628 under the 2017 Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme. Louth County Council has confirmed that this section of the trail is a separate project to the one referred to by the Deputy.

I intend to launch a further round of the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme in 2018 and details of the scheme will be made available to the Local Authorities when it is announced.

Question No. 1544 answered with Question No. 1525.

Question No. 1545 answered with Question No. 1537.

Leader Programmes Data

1546. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the level expenditure by Leader in County Donegal for 2016 and 2017; the degree of underspend within the programme at present; the proposals to deal with the underspend; the details of Leader underspend funding transferred to other departmental budgets in the course of 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1759/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): LEADER is a multi-annual EU co-funded programme to support rural development. Ireland has an allocation of €250 million under the programme over the period 2014-2020, including both national and EU funding. The programme is administered by Local Action Groups (LAGs) which deliver funding in accordance with Local Development Strategies that have been agreed for each LAG area.

Funding Agreements for the current LEADER programme were, for the most part, signed with the LAGs in the second half of 2016 and the programme effectively became operational from that date. The allocation provided for each sub-regional area is provided for the duration of the Programme rather than on an annual basis. This affords the LEADER Local Action Groups greater flexibility in managing their resources and ensuring there is no underspend over the full duration of the programme.

The allocation to the Local Action Group in Donegal is €12.9 million over the lifetime of the programme.

Expenditure in Donegal in 2016 amounted to €35,362. This related to the costs of the Local Action Group in administering the programme and engaging with potential applicants following the signing of the Funding Agreement. Expenditure on administration and engagement with potential applicants in 2017 amounted to €747,483, while €30,844 was made in project payments. However, I expect project payments to increase considerably in 2018.

As of 31 December, 2017, 56 projects with a value of over €1.4 million had been approved for LEADER funding in Donegal. A further 16 projects requesting over €1.2 million in funding are at various stages of the approval process. This funding will be drawn down as projects start to incur expenditure and submit payment claims.

The original allocation for the LEADER programme in 2017 was €40 million, as reflected in the Vote for the then Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Of this €40 million allocation, €17.4 million was transferred within my Department's budget to support a new Local Improvement Scheme to improve non-public roads, while €3.8 million was transferred to increase expenditure on developing Libraries in local communities.

The transfer of funding from LEADER does not, in any way, reduce the Government's commitment to provide €250 million to LEADER over the duration of the programme. As has been the case under previous LEADER programmes, there is a natural lead-in period in the early years of the programme, followed by a significant ramping up of activity. I fully expect that the €250 million allocation will be fully drawn down over the lifetime of the programme.

Departmental Staff Data

1547. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the proportion of employees in his department or in organisations under its remit registered disabled. [1863/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Department of Rural and Community Development was established on 19th July 2017 to provide a renewed and consolidated focus on rural and community development in Ireland.

The Department is an equal opportunities employer and is fully committed to addressing the health and safety needs of all employees, including employees with disabilities. Section 47(1) (a) of the Disability Act 2005 requires public bodies to take all reasonable measures to promote and support the employment of persons with disabilities. To assist the Department in fulfilling its obligations under the Act a Departmental Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) was appointed in December 2017. The Department's DLO is a member of the Civil Service Disability Liaison Network, which promotes and disseminates best practice in relation to the employment of people with disabilities.

The role of the DLO will be to ensure that the Department meets its obligations under relevant employment legislation as well as adhering to best practice guidelines in relation to the employment of people with disabilities, including those outlined in the Code of Practice for the Employment of people with Disabilities in the Civil Service (2007).

The DLO will undertake a survey of staff in Q2 2018, to establish the proportion of staff (and those in the Agencies under our remit) with a disability.

Once identified, the DLO will take all appropriate measures to assist staff with disabilities, including the provision of training, support and guidance, as appropriate.

In addition the Department is currently participating in the WAM (Willing Able Mentoring) programme. The WAM programme offers graduates with disabilities work experience and gives practical effect to Government and Civil Service policy on improving the employment prospects for people with disabilities.

Community Services Programme

1548. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the reason new applications to the community services programme are closed; his plans to reopen the programme to new applicants; the number of persons working in the programme, by area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1882/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Responsibility for the Community Services Programme (CSP) transferred to my Department on 1 January 2018.

The CSP supports community organisations to provide local services through a social enterprise model. Funding is provided as a contribution to the cost of a manager and a specified number of full time equivalent positions. Details of funded posts by area are set out in the enclosed table.

A targeted call for proposals issued under Strand 3 of the CSP in 2017. An additional €1m was secured through the Estimates process for this purpose and I will approve new entrants to the programme in the coming weeks. The additional funding will be committed to these new entrants and there is no call for proposals open at this time.

That said, my Department and Pobal continues to accept expressions of interest under the CSP and I will consider, in light of available budgets, the possibility of opening the programme to additional new entrants during the year.

Table 1: No. of CSP funded Managers, FTE roles and Individuals 2017

County	Manager Positions	Full Time Equivalent Roles	Individuals Employed
Carlow	2	9	10
Cavan	1	13	25
Clare	7	46	97
Cork	19	110.5	196
Donegal	29	110.5	201
Dublin	48	341	563
Galway	17	71.5	126
Kerry	11	79	150
Kildare	3	17.5	42
Kilkenny	4	15.5	31
Laois	3	13	32
Leitrim	11	46.5	93
Limerick	9	48.5	86
Longford	3	20	41
Louth	5	61	117
Mayo	27	121.5	234
Meath	7	37	78
Monaghan	8	44	89
Offaly	9	39.5	79
Roscommon	14	75	148
Sligo	6	24.5	45
Tipperary	6	25.5	46
Waterford	7	31	59
Westmeath	10	41.5	78
Wexford	13	97.5	169
Wicklow	11	78	125
Total	290	1,617.5	2,960

Community Development Projects

1549. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the groups in the north Clondalkin area of west county Dublin that benefitted from the community facilities scheme in 2017; the amount that was allocated to the north Clondalkin area through this scheme; the funding being allocated to the scheme in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1883/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Communities Facilities Scheme is administered on my Department's behalf by Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) under the remit of the Local Authorities. My Department does not have access to the funding breakdown for the North Clondalkin area.

However, I have asked my officials to arrange for the relevant information to be requested from the LCDC, and the information will then be forwarded to the Deputy.

The nationwide budget for the Community Facilities Scheme in 2018 is €2m, which is equivalent to the provision in 2017. My Department is currently reviewing the scheme to facilitate improvements for 2018. This review may result in some changes to the administration of the scheme and the criteria that applied previously. Any changes will be communicated to all stakeholders on the announcement of the 2018 scheme.

RAPID Programme

1550. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount of funding allocated to the RAPID programme by area in each of the years 2014 to 2017; the funding planned for the RAPID programme in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1884/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) programme is aimed at funding projects which will enhance the lives of residents in disadvantaged urban areas.

The following table provides figures for RAPID over the years 2014 to 2016.

For the years 2014 to 2016, there was no regional allocation of funding for RAPID. A national allocation of €0.5 million was in place to honour legacy commitments. The table provides the outturn figures associated with those commitments. These cover contractual commitments under previous RAPID projects, mainly under the Sports Capital Scheme.

Year	Outturn €'000s
2014	170
2015	317
2016	32

In 2017, the total funding allocation for RAPID was €5 million. Of this, each of the 31 Local Authority areas received an allocation of €64,500, with €2.5 million ring fenced for the Dublin North East Inner City area. In addition, €0.5 million (of the €5 million total) was allocated to honour legacy commitments, as in previous years.

The budget available nationally for the 2018 programme is €2 million, which is equal to the amount for the 2017 programme. In addition to this €2 million, there are provisions in 2018 relating to the Dublin North East Inner City area and for legacy commitments relating to previ-

ous years.

My Department is currently reviewing the RAPID Programme to facilitate improvements for 2018. This review may result in some changes to the administration of the Programme and the criteria that applied previously. Any changes will be communicated to all stakeholders on the announcement of the 2018 scheme.

RAPID Programme

1551. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the projects in the north Clondalkin RAPID area that benefited from the 2017 RAPID national capital grants programme 2017; his plans to extend this programme in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1885/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Re-vitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development (RAPID) programme is administered on my Department's behalf by Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) under the remit of the Local Authorities. My Department does not have access to the funding breakdown for the North Clondalkin area.

However, I have asked my officials to arrange for the relevant information to be requested from the LCDC, and the information will then be forwarded to the Deputy.

The funding available for RAPID nationwide in 2018 is €2m, which is equivalent to the provision in 2017. My Department is currently reviewing the RAPID Programme to facilitate improvements for 2018. This review may result in some changes to the administration of the scheme and the criteria that applied previously. Any changes will be communicated to all stakeholders on the announcement of the 2018 scheme.

Action Plan for Rural Development Implementation

1552. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the extent to which he expects to be in a position to offer grand aid to rural communities involved in various projects to enhance rural life; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2035/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Action Plan for Rural Development was published in January 2017. The Plan contains 276 actions for delivery across a range of Government Departments, State agencies and other organisations to support the economic and social progress of rural Ireland. The 2017 Action Plan allocated funding of €40.4 million to 40 measures put forward by Government Departments and agencies.

The Action Plan includes a range of measures to support rural communities, enhance local services and make rural Ireland a better place to live and work. In addition to the programmes run by my Department set out below, these actions contain a range of schemes to be delivered by other Departments and agencies which will empower local communities to develop their areas and improve their quality of life, such as the built heritage investment scheme, the GLAS Traditional Farm Buildings grant scheme, the Local Agenda 21 Environmental Partnership Fund, the Better Energy Homes Scheme, the Better Energy Communities Scheme, community crime prevention schemes and the Sports Capital Programme.

In Budget 2018, my Department secured in excess of €220million giving us the foundation we need to drive both the rural and community agenda and to deliver initiatives that can foster growth right across the country.

My Department delivers a variety of schemes that provide support for the sustainable development of rural communities in line with commitments in the Programme for Partnership Government and the Action Plan for Rural Development. These schemes and programmes include flagship programmes such as the LEADER and the Social Inclusion and Community Activation (SICAP) Programmes, the Community Services Programme, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme, the CLÁR Programme, the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS), the Seniors Alert Scheme and the Communities Facilities Scheme.

My Department is also responsible for the overall administration of the Dormant Accounts Fund. The legislation governing Dormant Accounts provides the framework for the disbursement of funds to measures targeted at socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged people and people with a disability. Depending on their focus, these measures would be implemented in urban and rural areas all across the country.

All schemes are open to applications from relevant parties during the application timeframes set for each scheme or programme.

My Department will continue to work with key stakeholders including local authorities, community and voluntary groups, and dedicated agencies to support job creation, attract tourism investment and contribute to sustainable economic development in rural Ireland. The Department will ensure that maximum use is obtained from the resources allocated and that value for money is delivered in respect of the 2018 schemes.

Further information on schemes and programmes, including the Action Plan for Rural Development, can be found on my Department's website www.drcd.gov.ie.

Telecommunications Services Provision

1553. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the extent to which he expects to be in a position to assist urban or rural communities directly by way of grant aid or indirectly through the improvement of telecommunications with particular reference to the identification of particular black spots in respect of mobile phone coverage and broadband; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2036/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce was established in July 2016 to examine broadband and mobile phone coverage deficits in Ireland and identify tangible actions that can be taken to improve the quality of these services.

The Taskforce Report was published in December 2016 and set out 40 actions to alleviate barriers to mobile phone reception and broadband access. An Implementation Group was established early in 2017 to oversee the implementation of the actions in the Taskforce's report. Progress reports on the implementation of the actions are published on my Department's website on a quarterly basis.

On the issue of mobile phone blackspots, following a pilot exercise with five Local Authorities in 2017, my officials are actively engaged with Local Authorities and mobile phone operators to identify priority blackspots and take action to address this issue in 2018.

Community Development Initiatives

1554. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the extent to which he expects to become involved with offering support to local community groups involved in the arts or recreation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2037/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Action Plan for Rural Development contains 276 action for delivery across a range of Government Departments, State Agencies and other organisations to support the economic and social progress of rural Ireland.

Pillar 3 of the Action Plan for Rural Development includes a series of actions to maximise Ireland's rural tourism and recreation potential in recognition of the contribution that tourism makes to the rural economy. Actions under this Pillar are implemented across a number of Government Departments and will support sustainable jobs through targeted tourism initiatives, promoting Activity Tourism, and developing and promoting our natural and built heritage.

My Department delivers a number of initiatives that support the development of recreational infrastructure, including the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme and the Walks Scheme. My Department will continue to deliver these initiatives into 2018. While these schemes are delivered mainly through the Local Authorities, they involve local communities and groups as part of the project development and implementation process.

Pillar 4 of the Action Plan commits to Fostering Culture and Creativity in Rural Communities and sets the objectives of increasing access to the arts, further developing and enhancing culture and creativity in rural Ireland through the Creative Ireland programme, and promoting the Irish language as a key resource. The Action Plan outlines 29 specific actions to be progressed to achieve these objectives. The relevant actions are led by a range of Government Departments and agencies including the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, the Arts Council and Local Authorities.

Progress Reports on the Action Plan for Rural Development are published on a six-monthly basis and published on my Department's website. The second Progress Report, covering the second half of 2017, is currently being compiled and will be published shortly.

Departmental Funding

1555. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the extent to which he has received applications for assistance from various groups throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2038/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department operates a number of funding programmes and schemes, ranging from the Seniors Alert Scheme and LEADER programme to other rural and community initiatives. All schemes are open to applications from relevant parties during the application timeframes set for each scheme/programme.

Further information on funding programmes and schemes is available on my Department's website www.drccd.gov.ie.

Departmental Consultations

1556. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the extent to which he has had discussions with voluntary or statutory bodies throughout the country with particular reference to the need to identify the best way in which he will tackle the issues relevant to his Department. [2039/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department is in ongoing contact with voluntary and statutory bodies under its aegis to identify the most appropriate actions in regard to all issues relevant to the work of the Department. All such bodies were also consulted with, in recent months, as part of the process of drafting my Department's Statement of Strategy.

Rural Development Policy

1557. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the steps he will take to address issues of rural isolation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2040/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Government's Action Plan for Rural Development includes a range of measures which will contribute significantly to addressing isolation and social inclusion in rural areas. Specific examples of actions in the Plan which will help those who feel isolated or vulnerable in rural areas include:

- Significant investment in the Seniors Alert Scheme, which facilitates valuable community-based support for vulnerable older people living alone. I allocated €2.7 million to this scheme in 2017.

- Investment of €46 million in Garda fleet to ensure that Gardaí are mobile, visible and responsive to prevent and tackle crime.

- Support for 450 Men's Sheds across rural Ireland which provide a safe space where men can gather and participate in their communities, develop social networks and potentially gain new skills and access information. I recently provided a small grant to the Irish Men's Sheds Association to support them with the expansion of their network.

- Maintaining the network of senior helplines in operation throughout the country, which offer a listening service for older people to help address issues such as loneliness and isolation in rural areas.

- Continued support and prioritisation of community crime prevention through schemes such as Neighbourhood Watch and Text Alert.

Implementation of the Action Plan for Rural Development is now well under way and the first 6 monthly progress report which was published in August 2017 showed that 220 actions out of 227 due to be reported on were either completed or ongoing.

The second progress report on the Action Plan is currently in preparation and will be published shortly.

Leader Programmes Funding

1558. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his plans for the disbursement of funds through the Leader programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2043/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): LEADER is a multi-annual programme for the period 2014-2020 which has a total budget of €250 million over the programming period. LEADER is administered by Local Action Groups (LAGs) which deliver funding in accordance with Local Development Strategies that have been agreed for each LAG area.

€220 million of the available funding has already been allocated to the 28 LEADER sub-regional areas throughout the country. The table provided at Appendix 1 provides details of these allocations. The allocation for each sub-regional area is provided for the duration of the programme rather than on an annual basis. This provides greater flexibility to the LAGs in managing their resources.

Each LAG is responsible for deciding how their allocation is distributed to LEADER projects over the duration of the programme, based on the objectives in their Local Development Strategies. The allocation also includes a provision to cover the running costs of the LAGs.

The balance of €30 million in funding which has not yet been allocated under LEADER is available for schemes which will be selected at a national level based on submissions from the Local Action Groups. This includes a specific scheme to fund food projects which will be launched in the coming months, and funding to support LAGs that come together to jointly deliver a LEADER project.

As of 31 December 2017, 592 projects with a value of over €16 million had been approved for LEADER funding by the LAGs and €661,844 in project payments had been made. A further 372 projects requesting over €16 million in funding are at various stages in the approval process. This funding will be drawn down as projects start to incur expenditure and submit payment claims.

I anticipate that there will be a significant increase in project expenditure over the course of 2018 based on the progress which has been made by the LAGs in approving projects in recent months. My Department has also introduced a number of administrative improvements to the LEADER programme which will also assist LAGs and project promoters in their delivery of the programme.

Appendix 1

LEADER 2014-2020 Programme – Allocations

County	Programme Allocation (€)
Carlow	6,416,803.43
Cavan	8,522,285.84
Clare	8,920,224.65
Cork North	5,091,845.72
Cork South	3,831,303.31
Cork West	5,015,674.18
Donegal	12,913,877.86
Dublin	6,370,438.43

County	Programme Allocation (€)
Galway East	7,655,850.61
Galway West	4,540,033.00
Kerry	10,219,868.29
Kildare	5,261,600.01
Kilkenny	7,791,572.91
Laois	7,124,586.86
Leitrim	5,998,474.74
Limerick	9,276,593.96
Longford	7,597,623.07
Louth	6,101,862.01
Mayo	11,121,431.88
Meath	6,903,123.57
Monaghan	7,592,719.51
Offaly	8,036,763.90
Roscommon	8,852,659.22
Sligo	7,655,647.81
Tipperary	10,103,443.28
Waterford	7,522,796.18
Westmeath	7,384,206.22
Wexford	9,840,140.56
Wicklow	6,336,549.00
TOTAL	€220,000,000

Dormant Accounts Fund

1559. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the extent to which the Dormant Account Fund has fluctuated over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2044/18]

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 Dormant Accounts Fund legislation also provides for the disbursement of monies from the Fund for programmes and projects which benefit specific disadvantaged groups. The Disbursement Scheme for these projects is coordinated across Government by my Department.

The most recent information available with regard to the value of the Dormant Accounts Fund is for the end of September 2017, when the total value of the Fund stood at €291.9 million. This has increased from a total value of €185.5 million in 2013.

While the total value of the Fund stood at €291.9 million at the end of September 2017, the net value of uncommitted Dormant Accounts funds stood at €124.8 million when account is taken of a reserve of €80.6 million for future reclaims by account holders, and a provision of €86.5 million for funds which remain to be disbursed by the NTMA on foot of cumulative ap-

provals made through Disbursement Schemes.

Further information on balances in the Dormant Accounts Fund since 2003 are available on my Department's website at: <http://drcd.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/Value-of-Dormant-Accounts-Fund-at-30-Sept-2017.pdf>.

Water Safety

1560. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the extent to which he plans to engage with Irish Water Safety in order to deliver an improved quality of service to the public; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2045/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Irish Water Safety is the statutory body established to promote water safety in Ireland. Its role is to educate people in water safety best practices. It develops public awareness campaigns to promote necessary attitudes, rescue skills and behaviour to prevent drownings and water related accidents. I will continue to support the vital work of Irish Water Safety.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

1561. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the extent to which he plans to develop the town and village renewal scheme in order to improve and enhance the standard of living for persons in rural areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2046/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Revitalising our rural towns and villages is a key objective of the Government's Action Plan for Rural Development. The Action Plan contains a number of measures which have the objective of rejuvenating Ireland's rural towns and villages to make them more attractive places in which to live and work, and to increase their tourism potential.

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme was launched in 2016 and provided €10 million that year through the former Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to support 170 projects throughout the country.

Building on the 2016 scheme, an enhanced Town and Village Renewal Scheme was launched in 2017, with a focus on projects which could stimulate and encourage economic activity in our towns and villages. Following a competitive process, in October 2017 I announced the allocation of €21.6 million to 281 projects in towns and villages across rural Ireland. These projects cover many initiatives which will support economic development and employment creation, including through the establishment of enterprise centres and digital hubs.

I plan to launch another round of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme in 2018, with a continued focus on projects that can make the best impact on supporting local economies and job creation, and improving the quality of life for people who live in rural towns, villages and their surrounding areas.

Departmental Communications

1562. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Develop-

ment if his Department uses anti-profanity software on its email systems and online contact forms; if so, the level of human oversight that is applied to the monitoring of this software and its effectiveness; his views on whether persons' legitimate right to petition Government may be blocked unintentionally by errors in the use of such software in determining that which qualifies as profanity being communicated in email and-or online contact forms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2092/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Department was established on 19 July 2017, bringing together functions from the Department of Culture, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, and the Department of Housing, Community and Local Government. In advance of moving the Department's HQ to its permanent location, IT services are currently being provided by the two Departments on our behalf. As a consequence, the Department does not maintain any email systems. In addition, the Department's website is maintained by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer as part of the 'Build to Share' suite of IT tools.

Departmental Strategies

1563. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the Government's initiatives in his Department in 2017 that promoted State services or welfare payments, public awareness of regulatory changes and public consultations that involved advertising and promotion on television, radio, newspapers and online, in tabular form; and the level of expenditure for each such initiative. [2267/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The following table contains the relevant information regarding any Government initiatives promoting State services and public consultations run by my Department in 2017, that involved advertising and promotion:

Service/Initiative	Expenditure
Launch of Seniors Alert Scheme	€ 676.50
Notifying nationwide public consultation on new Public Library Strategy 2018-2022	€ 11,024.00
Call for submissions for Department Statement of Strategy	€ 1,687.82

Poverty Impact Assessment

1564. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the main areas of policy making and policy programmes for which the three poverty measures contained in the CSO's SILC are used, that is, the at risk of poverty rate, deprivation rate and consistent poverty rate; and the main areas of policy making and policy. [54433/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The most up to date data on poverty in Ireland is contained in the CSO's annual Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) results. The latest statistical data available from the CSO Survey on Income and Living Conditions (and from Eurostat) are used to analyse trends in official poverty measures and other supporting indicators. The official Government approved poverty measure used in Ireland is 'consistent poverty'. This indicator is the overlap of two component indicators, at-risk-of-poverty and basic deprivation.

The Government's strategy for tackling poverty and social exclusion is set out in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion. The plan prioritises 14 high level goals in relation to children, people of working age, older people and communities across Departments and agencies with a remit in social policy. The overall poverty reduction goal in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion is the National Social Target for Poverty Reduction (NSTPR). The NSTPR aims to reduce consistent poverty to 2% or less by 2020, from a baseline rate of 6.3% in 2010 with an interim target of to 4% by 2016.

Two components of the NSTPR are:

- The Irish contribution to the Europe 2020 poverty target is to reduce by a minimum of 200,000 the population in 'combined poverty' (i.e. consistent poverty, at-risk-of-poverty or basic deprivation) between 2010 and 2020.

- The child-specific poverty target is to lift over 70,000 children (aged 0-17 years) out of consistent poverty by 2020, a reduction of at least two-thirds on the 2011 level.

Progress towards the National Social Target for Poverty Reduction, including the sub-target on child poverty and Ireland's contribution to the Europe 2020 poverty target is reported annually in the Social Inclusion Monitor.

Community Employment Schemes Eligibility

1565. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if community employment workers and supervisors will be included in plans to extend the working age for public sector workers to 70 years of age; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54548/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The interim revised retirement arrangements announced recently by the Government affect public servants only and have been introduced to enable those reaching 65 years of age to remain in place, if they so wish, until they reach the age of eligibility for the contributory State Pension (age 66 at present).

Community Employment (CE) participants and supervisors are employees of private companies in the community and voluntary sector. My Department is not the employer of CE participants or supervisors and such employees are not public servants but are employees of the sponsoring organisations.

The age limit for participation on CE is linked to the age at which the State Pension becomes available to persons as follows:

- 66 for those born before 1 January 1955;
- 67 for those born on or after 1 January 1955; and
- 68 for those born on or after 1 January 1961

In general, participants, who meet the participation limits, can remain on CE until the working day before their birthday at which they reach State Pension age. In addition, a CE supervisor can remain on CE until the working day before their birthday at which they reach State Pension age.

Therefore, there are currently no plans to make any changes to the retirement of CE partici-

pants or supervisors as, in general, they are already allowed to remain until the current State Pension age i.e. 66 years at present.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

1566. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will address a matter regarding a pension in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1405/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Social welfare legislation provides that where an applicant for state pension (contributory) who had previously been employed, became a self-employed contributor on 6 April 1988, the date on which the person first entered insurance, or the date of 6 April 1988, whichever is the more favourable, shall be regarded as their date of entry into insurance for pension eligibility purposes.

As the person concerned was not a self-employed contributor on 6 April 1988, the date of entry into insurance used is 19 February 1968. According to the current records of the Department, the person has a total of 1,288 reckonable paid and credited contributions from that date to the end of December 2016 (the last complete contribution year prior to reaching pension age). This gives the person a yearly average of 26, resulting in a reduced-rate state pension (contributory) entitlement with effect from 29 November 2017.

The person's employment record for the period 1969 to 1973 is currently being examined. My Department's Central Records Section has written to the person concerned on 2 January 2018, requesting documentary evidence of their employment during this period.

If the person's insurance record is updated following the outcome of this examination, the pension entitlement of the person concerned will be re-assessed and they will be notified of the outcome without delay.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Staff Data

1567. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of departmental staff employed in Drogheda per departmental premises and in statutory bodies within her remit; and the grades of each. [54352/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The total number of Departmental staff, by premises and grade, working for my Department in Drogheda is summarised in the following table.

Department Premises	Assistant Principal	Higher Executive Officer	Executive Officer	Clerical Officer	Temporary Clerical Officer	Service Officer	TOTAL	Remarks
Intreo Custom House Quay, Drogheda	1	8.8	16.1	22.5	1	1	50.4	Includes 1 x EO vacancy
Intreo Dyer St, Drogheda	0	6	2	4.8	2	0	14.8	
SIU	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	
Total	1	15.8	19.1	27.3	3	1	67.2	

(Work-Sharing patterns included in the figures above)

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Appeals Status

1568. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54390/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an oral hearing of the appeal of the person concerned took place on 21 November 2017. At the oral hearing, the appellant was asked to submit additional documentation which has been received. The Appeals Officer is now considering the appeal in the light of all of the evidence submitted, including that adduced at the oral hearing. The person concerned will be notified of the Appeals Officer's decision when the appeal has been determined.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for 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.

Carer's Allowance Applications

1569. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will issue on a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54401/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): An application for carer's allowance (CA) was received from the person concerned on 2 November 2017.

The application was awarded to the person concerned on 9 January 2018 and the first payment will issue to her nominated post office on 18 January 2018.

Arrears of allowance due from 2 November 2017 to 8 January 2018 have also issued.

The person concerned was notified on 9 January 2018 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Services for People with Disabilities

1570. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the funding both allocated and drawn down for the reasonable accommodation fund in each of the years 2010 to 2017, in tabular form. [54412/17]

1634. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the expenditure on the reasonable accommodation fund in each of the years 2012 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1241/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1570 and 1634 together.

The reasonable accommodation fund for the employment of people with disabilities assists employers in the private sector to take appropriate measures to enable a person with a disability/impairment to have access to employment by providing a range of grants. These grants and supports include:

- the workplace equipment and adaptation grant,
- the personal reader grant,
- the job interview interpreter grant, and
- the employee retention grant.

The reasonable accommodation fund is a demand led scheme in that expenditure arises in response to applications received. Given the small scale of this programme, a separate estimate for each of these grants is not set out in the revised estimates volume and only actual expenditure data is available. The data available is set out in the following table. Data in respect of 2010 and 2011 is not available as this scheme transferred from FÁS into this Department in 2012. No expenditure has been recorded to date in respect of 2018.

Table: Expenditure on the Reasonable Accommodation Fund for People with Disabilities

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Workplace equipment and adaptation grant	€71,176	€81,724	€61,776	€58,108	€54,041	€69,254
Personal reader grant	€27,274	€27,526	€14,499	€11,866	€16,537	€31,619

Questions - Written Answers

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Job in- terview interpreter grant	€6,355	€2,767	€1,589	€3,950	€7,244	€5,714
Employee retention grant	€4,320	€0	€0	€0	€0	€0
Total	€109,125	€112,017	€77,864	€73,925	€77,822	€106,587

Social Welfare Benefits

1571. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of increasing family allowances (details supplied) by 1%; and the percentage impact this would have on the at risk of poverty rate for persons living in households with children. [54443/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The cost of increasing the rates specified by the Deputy by 1% is €53.2 million in a full year. The breakdown of this cost is detailed in the following table:

Scheme	Cost €m
Maternity Benefit	2.5
Adoptive Benefit	0.0
Child Benefit	20.45
Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance	0.5
Working Family Payment (formerly Family Income Supplement)	14.1
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	1.6
Carer's Allowance	6.9
Carer's Benefit	0.3
One-Parent Family Payment	4.0
Deserted Wife's Benefit	0.7
Deserted Wife's Allowance	0.01
OIB Orphan's Payment	0.0
Carer's Support Grant	1.91
Diet Supplement	0.02
Health and Safety Benefit	0.0
Guardian's Payment (Non Contributory)	0.05
Guardian's Payment (Contributory)	0.1
Paternity Benefit	0.1
Overall Total	53.2

It should be noted that there is no specific rate for Diet Supplement and, accordingly, the cost provided above reflects a 1% increase in overall expenditure in the scheme.

The costs shown above are on a full year basis and are based on the estimated number of

recipients in 2018. It should also be noted that these costings include proportionate increases for qualified adults and for those on reduced rates of payment, where relevant. For the Working Family Payment, the cost is estimated by increasing each income threshold by 1%.

Using the tax/welfare microsimulation model SWITCH (which was developed by the ESRI and estimates the likely effects of policies on household incomes, families and poverty), there was no significant impact (less than 0.1%) on either the at-risk-of-poverty rate for the population overall or for children specifically.

There are a number of caveats which should be noted in relation to this finding. Firstly, the current SWITCH model is based on data from the Survey of Income and Living Conditions, where the income referenced is from January 2015 to December 2016. In addition, it was not possible to include all of the rate increases in the model, as the number of individuals nationally receiving payments under some schemes (such as Adoptive Benefit and Health & Safety Benefit) is quite small (and care is taken to ensure that the data are aggregated to avoid the indirect identification of respondents). Furthermore, the Paternity Benefit scheme had not yet been included in the model as this scheme came into effect in September 2016. In this regard, care must be taken in interpreting this result.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

1572. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason a person (details supplied) who submitted a carer's allowance appeal on 2 August 2017 has not had a decision on this appeal; the reason the file was not submitted to the appeals office until October 2017; the expected date that this file will be allocated to a deciding officer for decision; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54444/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned was notified of the decision to disallow his Carer's Allowance application on 18 July 2017 and given the right of review or appeal. The person concerned appealed this decision to the Social Welfare Appeals Office. A notice of appeal was received by Carer's Allowance Section on 14 August 2017 requesting a statement from the Deciding Officer showing the extent to which the facts and contentions advanced by the appellant were admitted or disputed.

At this stage, a different Deciding Officer reviewed in full the original decision which was under appeal together with any additional information/contentions received with the appeal. Having completed the review, the original decision remained unchanged. A submission was then forwarded to the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 12 October 2017 for determination by an Appeals Officer.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who has decided to convene an oral hearing in this case.

Every effort will be made to hear the case as quickly as possible and the appellant will be informed when arrangements for the oral hearing have been made.

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

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Invalidity Pension Eligibility

1573. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the extent to which a person (details supplied) is in receipt of full entitlements attributable to invalidity pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54464/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Invalidity pension (IP) is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions.

The gentleman concerned is in receipt of IP at the maximum weekly personal rate since 05 March 2015. In addition, he receives an increase for a qualified adult payable at the maximum rate and an increase for a qualified child and is in receipt of a travel pass.

The National Fuel Scheme applies to persons in receipt of long term Social Welfare payments. The allowance is subject to a means test and is paid only to those who live alone or with certain exempted people. Full details of the qualifying criteria for the scheme are available on the Department's website www.welfare.ie. A Deciding Officer of the department wrote to the gentleman concerned on the 07 November 2017 requesting information relevant to his fuel allowance claim. However, as he failed to reply to this correspondence, his fuel allowance has been stopped with effect from 18 January 2018 as continued eligibility cannot be determined.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Appointments to State Boards

1574. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if candidates interviewed for the post of chief executive of the Citizens Information Board were asked to outline proposals to dismantle and replace or otherwise restructure entities, such as citizens information services and MABS, funded and supported by the board (details supplied); if this took place in advance of a board decision on the future corporate governance of those entities; if so, the reason for the sequencing; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54466/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): A recruitment process to fill the post of Chief Executive Officer of the Citizens Information Board (CIB), vacated on 25 August, 2014, was conducted by the Public Appointments Service (PAS). The selection process implemented by PAS was in accordance with the Commission for Public Service Appointment's relevant Code of Practice.

On completion of the selection process, PAS made a recommendation for appointment to the post to the Board of CIB. The consent of my predecessor, as Minister, was sought in accordance with section 13 (3) of the Comhairle Act 2000. On receipt, the Board of CIB approved the appointment of the new Chief Executive at its meeting of 14 October 2014.

The need to undertake a fundamental comprehensive review of service delivery was set out in CIB's Strategic Plan as far back as 2009. As part of the implementation of CIB's 2012 – 2015 Strategic Plan, a feasibility study to identify options for organisational integration of service delivery partners was carried out in 2014. A lengthy process of analysis of options and consultation with all stakeholders followed. The decision on the final governance model was taken by the Board of CIB in February 2017.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

1575. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the position regarding a domiciliary care allowance appeal by a person (details supplied) in County Kildare. [54479/17]

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 referred to an Appeals Officer on 4 January 2018, who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for 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.

State Pension (Contributory) Applications

1576. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the position regarding a State pension (contributory) application by a person (details supplied) in County Kildare. [54480/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned was awarded the maximum rate of state pension (contributory) from their 66th birthday.

The applicant was notified of this decision in writing on 30 November 2017. Due arrears of pension issued to the person concerned on 5 January 2018.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy. *Question No. 1577 withdrawn.*

State Pension (Contributory) Applications

1578. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a State pension (non-contributory) by a person (details supplied). [54487/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The customer was awarded a reduced rate of State pension contributory from 14th February, 2014 and also an allowance was awarded for his wife as a qualified adult which is a means tested component of the award. He subsequently applied for the means tested State pension non-contributory in his own right on 6 September 2017 and following investigation of the claim this was awarded with effect from 10th January, 2018. At the time of the award of the reduced rate of pension the customer was advised that he could apply for the non-contributory pension.

The prescribed time for making a claim for State pension non-contributory is three months prior to the applicant reaching age 66. In the case of a late claim, where there is good cause shown for a delay in making the claim, consideration can be given to backdating an award for

up to six months. Further backdating may be considered where the delay in applying for pension was due to incorrect information having been given by the Department or where (medically evidenced) incapacity of the applicant was such that it prevented them from claiming at the due time. While the specific reason for the delayed application in this case has not been established, a Deciding Officer has to consider the possibility that such delays can be due to means factors that no longer exist or a condition of entitlement that was not possible for the customer to fulfil at the time of an earlier application.

In this case the Deciding Officer using their discretion, backdated the award of the State pension non-contributory to 7th July 2017 in line with the award date of the person's spouse's claim for State pension non-contributory and they were notified of this decision and their right of appeal.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

1579. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the review of a State pension (contributory) for a person (details supplied); when a decision will be issued; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54530/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person's state pension (contributory) entitlement was reviewed and the person concerned was notified in writing of the outcome on 19 December 2017. The inclusion of additional low-rate voluntary contributions paid for the tax year 1973/74 did not alter the person's state pension (contributory) weekly rate of entitlement.

The person's entitlement to a mixed insurance pro-rata state pension (contributory) was also re-examined. The person concerned was informed that they are financially better off to remain on their current rate of standard state pension (contributory).

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Drug Rehabilitation Projects

1580. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the annual cost for the community employment drug rehab projects under the social inclusion framework, excluding all participant allowances but including supervisor and assistant supervisor grants, materials grants, training grants and so on. [54531/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The focus of the Community Employment (CE) drug schemes is on rehabilitation, personal/social development and training for progression and re-integration into community and working life. The delivery of the dedicated drug rehabilitation programme framework requires an integrated approach involving multi-agency co-operation with the HSE; Local Education and Training Boards (LETBs); community; voluntary and Task Force engagement. This framework is essential for the achievement of successful outcomes of participants.

At the end of December 2016, the cost to the DEASP of the Community Employment Drug Rehabilitation projects, excluding all participant allowances but including Supervisor and Assistant Supervisor grants, materials grants and training grants was €5.785 m. The 2017 statistics are currently being finalised.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Eligibility

1581. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her views on a matter raised in correspondence (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54544/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As the Deputy is aware, one of the eligibility requirements to participate on Community Employment (CE) is that a person must be in receipt of a qualifying payment from my Department for a minimum period of 12 months. People who do not qualify for a social welfare payment but are signing for credited PRSI contributions (credits), do not meet the current eligibility requirements for participation on CE. However, such people may be eligible for other programmes or support to help them return to work, for example VTOS courses provided by ETBs, Skillnet courses funded through the Department of Education and Skills or Momentum courses provided by SOLAS. It is also possible to participate in voluntary work, once this has been agreed with your local Department Intreo office.

My Department also provides other services to people who are not in receipt of a social welfare payment such as advice on job-search activities and the use of online job search tools. These services are available to people who are registered with my Department's Intreo offices. Any person in need of help or support is advised to contact their local Intreo Centre where a case officer will be available to discuss the employment and training options that are open to them.

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

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory) Appeals

1582. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a pension appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54549/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that in appeals for State Pension (Contributory), where it appears that the reason for the Deciding Officer's decision may not have been fully understood, the letter of appeal is referred to the State Pension (Contributory) Section requesting that the decision be clarified to the person concerned.

In the case of the person concerned I understand that a letter clarifying the Deciding Officer's decision was issued on 09th January 2018. If, following receipt of the clarification the person concerned is still not satisfied with the Department's decision, they should confirm this in writing to the Social Welfare Appeals Office stating clearly their complete and up to date grounds of appeal. On receipt of this an appeal will be formally registered and processed.

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 on

social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme

1583. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons by county that have availed of the back to work enterprise allowance in each of the years 2015 to 2017. [54613/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The information requested by the Deputy is detailed in the tabular statement.

Recipients of the back to work enterprise allowance at 31 December in each of the years 2015 to 2017

County	2015	2016	2017
Carlow	185	204	165
Cavan	280	250	245
Clare	420	424	339
Cork	795	755	747
Donegal	421	410	390
Dublin	2,926	2,501	2,212
Galway	664	580	486
Kerry	392	374	316
Kildare	471	405	337
Kilkenny	317	259	238
Laois	230	225	210
Leitrim	123	163	164
Limerick	418	390	307
Longford	153	179	173
Louth	524	485	400
Mayo	385	375	327
Meath	513	427	353
Monaghan	167	177	140
Offaly	207	206	201
Roscommon	153	154	151
Sligo	216	156	124
Tipperary	389	394	338
Waterford	386	386	366
Westmeath	228	243	228
Wexford	353	364	310
Wicklow	565	492	388
Total	11,881	10,978	9,655

Invalidity Pension Applications

1584. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for an invalidity pension by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54645/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The gentleman referred to has been awarded invalidity pension with effect from the 14 December 2017. Payment will issue to his nominated bank account on the 25 January 2018. Any arrears due from 14 December 2017 to 24 January 2018 (less any overlapping social welfare payment and/or outstanding overpayment) will issue in due course. The gentleman in question was notified of this decision on the 10 January 2018.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Rent Supplement Scheme Payments

1585. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 522 of 12 December 2017, the documentation requested on 6 September 2017 in the case of a person (details supplied) in respect of their rent supplement claim; the basis upon which it was requested; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54709/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): On 6/9/17 the person concerned was requested to provide the Department with a SWA 3A Rent Supplement Review Form. This was requested as part of a review of their Rent Supplement entitlement. According to the records of the Department this form has not, to-date, been received. On receipt of outstanding documentation, entitlement will be re-assessed.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Funding

1586. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the name and number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from her Department 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 amount of money that they have spent on this particular campaign during that time; the number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from her Department that have expended resources seeking the retention of the eighth amendment; the amount of funding these organisations have received from the State in the past five years; and the amount of money that they have spent on this particular campaign during that time. [54765/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department provides funding to organisations for the undertaking of specific tasks. No funding has been provided by my Department to organisations in relation to the repeal or retention of the Eight Amendment.

Funding provided by my Department is paid in accordance with public financial procedures.

Invalidity Pension Eligibility

1587. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the timeframe for changes to the social welfare system which would allow self employed persons to apply for an invalidity or disability payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54796/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Self-employed workers are eligible to apply for invalidity pension from December 2017. This is a major reform as, for the first time; self-employed people will have access to the safety-net of State income supports, without having to go through a means test, if they become permanently incapable of work as a result of an illness or disability. Self-employed workers who do not satisfy the medical or social insurance conditionality for invalidity pension may apply for the means tested disability allowance.

Furthermore, 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 hearings aids. It is estimated that some 450,000 self-employed contributors including their dependant spouses will be eligible for treatment benefit for the first time as a result of this change.

Treatment benefit entitlements have also been extended from October 2017 to provide further dental and optical benefits for both the self-employed and employees. Over 3 million insured customers, including their adult dependants, will benefit from these additional benefits.

Disability Allowance Applications

1588. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a disability allowance will issue in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54802/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): I confirm that my department received an application for disability allowance from this gentleman on 10 November 2017.

The application has been referred to a Social Welfare Inspector (SWI) for a report on the person's means and circumstances. A request for additional information was also sent to this gentleman on 1 December 2017. This information was received by this department on 12th December 2017.

Once the SWI has submitted his/her report to DA section, a decision will be made on the application and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Rural Social Scheme

1589. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to grant extra leave to rural social scheme supervisors that have worked as supervisors on the scheme for a long time; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54809/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The

Rural Social Scheme (RSS) is managed by 35 Local Development Companies (LDCs) and by Údarás Na Gaeltachta. As the Deputy will be aware, many rural areas are benefitting from the services provided by the RSS and the scheme has a positive impact on the livelihoods of farming families and rural communities.

Supervisors are employed to support RSS participants and have a contract of employment with the LDC, in line with statutory entitlements. The particular terms and conditions of the supervisors' employment are a matter for their employer, the LDC.

I hope this clarifies the position for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits

1590. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the payments she expects to be covered by class S PRSI payments in the future; the expected timeframe for same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54933/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): 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 was extended to the self-employed from 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 8.6% on weekly earnings up to and including €376 or at the rate of 10.85% where weekly earnings exceed €376. Accordingly the combined rate of PRSI rate paid in respect of Class A employees is 12.6% or 14.85%, depending on the level of weekly earnings. These Class A employees are entitled to the full range of social insurance benefits.

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 the 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 were to 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 the 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.

The findings of the review will play an important role in informing the overall debate on policy developments in relation to the SIF in the years ahead including the financial sustainability of the Fund given the expected demographic challenges and consideration of extending the scope of benefits for workers generally, including the self-employed.

Departmental Staff

1591. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her Department is due to increase the number of staff based in Drogheda in addition to those currently employed; the grades that will be assigned to these positions; and the dates on which they will be recruited or allocated. [54956/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): There are no plans at this point in time to increase the staffing levels of staff based in Drogheda.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Appeals Status

1592. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress to date in the determination of an appeal in the case of a person (detail supplied) in respect of an alleged overpayment; if an oral hearing will be facilitated in this case; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54968/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am

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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

1593. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 251 of 7 December 2017, if she will review eligibility for disability allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) in view of the fact that they were incorrectly refused on medical grounds and are in constant chronic pain; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54977/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): This lady submitted an application for disability allowance on 28 July 2017.

The application, based upon the evidence submitted, was refused on medical grounds and she was notified in writing of this decision on 23 November 2017. The person was also notified of her right to a review of this decision or to appeal it to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office.

To date no request for an appeal or review has been received. It is open for this lady to reapply for DA.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the deputy. *Question No. 1594 withdrawn.*

Invalidity Pension Appeals

1595. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress to date in the determination of an appeal for invalidity pension in the case of a person (details supplied); if an oral hearing can be facilitated in this instance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55084/17]

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. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officer's decision.

Oral appeal hearings are granted at the discretion of an Appeals Officer usually in circumstances where there is conflict in the evidence presented by the parties. The appeal of the person concerned was dealt with by way of summary decision as it was considered that an oral hearing would be of no benefit in this case.

Invalidity Pension is a weekly payment made to persons who are unable to work because of a long-term illness or disability and who satisfy statutory PRSI qualifying conditions. The person concerned does not satisfy the PRSI qualifying conditions.

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.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

1596. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if those in receipt of a carer's allowance are eligible for a contributory State pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55092/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Entitlement is assessed in line with the relevant legislative provisions regarding eligibility for state pension (contributory) on the date a person reaches pension age and the applicant's social insurance record.

State pension (contributory) and carer's allowance can be paid concurrently where the qualifying conditions for both schemes are satisfied. Where an applicant qualifies for both schemes concurrently, the applicant's entitlement to carer's allowance is paid at half the applicable weekly rate.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Back to Education Allowance Eligibility

1597. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a person that is required to carry out a paid internship for a certain period of time over the academic year as part of their college course could lose their back to education allowance; if this income will mean that the back to education allowance and rent supplement would be reviewed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55093/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) is a scheme that allows persons in receipt of long-term social welfare payments the opportunity to pursue a course of study and receive income support subject to satisfying a number of conditions.

BTEA participants who receive payment for an integral/mandatory/compulsory work placement will have their earnings assessed as means in accordance with their primary scheme rules for payment. However, the condition of entitlement that a person must be unemployed for 4 days in any consecutive 7 days in order to receive Jobseeker's Allowance does not apply for the period of BTEA entitlement. As a result, the participant will maintain an entitlement to BTEA subject to a means assessment.

This ensures that participants who continue to satisfy the eligibility criteria of their primary scheme will continue to receive income support under the BTEA and that resources are directed at those most in need of assistance.

Overall, the priority for my Department is that the BTEA scheme will be focused, targeted and suitable for the needs of jobseekers and of the future skills needs of the economy.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

1598. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an application for disability allowance by a person (details supplied) will be reviewed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55162/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Based on the evidence supplied in support of this person's application, her application for disability allowance was disallowed on the grounds that the medical qualifying condition was not satisfied. The person in question was notified in writing of this decision on 11 September 2017.

They requested a review of the decision by a deciding officer (DO) and submitted additional medical evidence for consideration on 27 October 2017.

On 12 January 2018 they were asked to supply further supporting documentation required by the deciding officer in order to make a decision on her eligibility. On receipt of this information a decision will be made and she will be notified of the outcome.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Fuel Allowance Applications

1599. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason an application for fuel allowance by a person (details supplied) was refused; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55175/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department's Fuel Allowance Scheme was introduced in 1988. The scheme is intended to assist qualified households in receipt of certain social welfare payments with seasonal heating costs. It may be payable to persons who are dependent on certain long-term social welfare payments such as a pension, or means-tested payments such as One-Parent Family Payment or Jobseeker's Allowance.

The person concerned is in receipt of Working Family Payment (formerly known as Family Income Supplement) which is not a qualifying payment for receipt of Fuel Allowance.

If the person concerned has a spouse, civil partner or cohabitant who is in receipt of a qualifying payment, they should contact the relevant office of the Department to establish whether they are entitled to Fuel Allowance.

Carer's Allowance Applications

1600. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for carer's allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55193/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care.

I confirm that my department received an application for CA from the person concerned on

the 22 November 2017.

Additional information was requested from the person concerned on 8 January 2018. Once the information is received the application will be processed without delay and he will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Operation

1601. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her Department funds the paying of holiday pay for those on community employment schemes that pass away while working on the scheme and that have built up a holiday entitlement. [55196/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Community Employment participants, similar to other workers, are subject to the rules of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997. It is the responsibility of the employers (CE Sponsors) to ensure that if a participant passes away while on a CE Scheme, any entitlement due in lieu of untaken annual leave is paid to the personal representative of the deceased in line with the Working Time Act. Appropriate funding will be provided by my Department.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Proposed Legislation

1602. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to initiate legislation to regulate tip sharing arrangements in the service industry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55201/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Employees in Ireland enjoy a robust suite of employment rights including one of the highest national minimum wages in the EU. Employees who believe an unlawful deduction has been made from their wages by their employer may pursue a case under the *Payment of Wages Act 1991* to the Workplace Relations Commission. The matter can be dealt with by way of mediation or adjudication leading to a decision enforceable through the District Court.

I understand that tips are generally in addition to an employee's wages. How tips are treated in a particular employment should be a matter for agreement between the employees and their employer if the matter is not addressed as part of the employment contract. I have no plans to regulate tip sharing arrangements in the service industry.

Departmental Properties

1603. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the vacant properties and land not in use, owned, rented or leased by her Department or by bodies and agencies under the aegis of her Department by square footage for buildings and acres for land, in tabular form; the address and location of these properties; and the last date of occupancy or use of these properties. [55211/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department currently has approximately 300 premises under its remit.

One of these premises, in Damastown Industrial Estate Mulhuddart Dublin 15, is unoccupied since March 2016. The building is leased and is 532 square meters in size. Part of it is in use as a file storage facility for Departmental files. It is expected that this premises will be occupied in the future.

The statutory bodies operating under the aegis of my Department are the Citizens Information Board, the Low Pay Commission, the Pensions Authority, the Pensions Council and the Social Welfare Tribunal. Of these only the Citizen's Information Board has property that is vacant. See the table.

Property name/location	Ground Floor, Knappagh, Strandhill Road, Sligo
Owned/rented/leased	Owned
Square footage	142.72 square metres
Date of occupancy	Property unoccupied for several years. Note currently being prepared seeking Minister's formal consent for disposal as per DPER Circular 17/2016.

Jobseeker's Allowance Applications

1604. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an application for jobseeker's allowance will be reopened in case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55236/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): According to our records the person concerned submitted a claim for jobseekers allowance in September 2017 but did not provide the required information and the claim was closed. On 22/12/17 the person concerned re-opened the jobseekers allowance claim and relevant documentation was requested in order to complete a means test. To-date the required information has not been received by this Department.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy. *Question No. 1605 withdrawn.*

Community Employment Schemes Eligibility

1606. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 500 of 12 December 2017, the international evidence that justifies the six and seven year lifetime limit for those on work programmes such as the community employment scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55282/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department published a report in April 2017 – *An Analysis of the Community Employment Programme*. This report highlighted research undertaken by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which promotes policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world and provide a forum in which governments can work together to share experiences and seek solutions to common problems. Their research suggests that in order for government funded labour market policies, such as CE, to be effective

they should be temporary and should not become a form of subsidised permanent employment.

Participation on Community Employment (CE) and other work programmes is intended to be for a temporary fixed-term. These placements are not full-time sustainable jobs. Overall participation limits are in place to ensure that as many unemployed people as possible are able to benefit from the scheme. My Department's priority in supporting work programmes is to provide access to good quality work experience and training qualifications to support the progression into employment of job seekers and other vulnerable groups.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

1607. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application to transfer a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1004/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I confirm that my department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 18 December 2017.

The application was awarded to the person concerned on 12 January 2018 with effect from 18 January 2018. First payment will issue to her nominated bank account on 18 January 2018.

The person concerned was notified on 12 January 2018 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

The spouse of the person concerned was in receipt of CA in respect of the care recipient and was notified on 9 January 2018 that his entitlement to CA will cease from 17 January 2018 as he is now no longer providing full time care and attention.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

1608. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when payment will issue to a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1028/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): This lady was notified on the 4th January 2018 that her domiciliary care allowance was awarded on appeal from the 1st March 2017. Arrears due for this period will issue with the January 2018 payment on the 16th January 2018.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

1609. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when payment will issue to a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1029/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment, made to persons who are providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care.

Under social welfare legislation, CA for the care of a care recipient who is aged less than 16 years can only be successful where domiciliary care allowance (DCA) is awarded.

An application for carer's allowance was received from the person concerned on 15 March 2017.

As DCA was not awarded in respect of the care recipient, the application was disallowed. The person concerned was notified on 5 April 2017 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

Following a successful DCA appeal, the person concerned requested a review of this decision on 4 January 2018. The review is currently being processed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Fuel Allowance Data

1610. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of households in receipt of the fuel allowance at the end of 2017; and the cost to the Exchequer of this benefit for each of the past three years. [1032/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The following table provides details of the spending by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection on Fuel Allowance in the years 2015 to 2017, inclusive, and the number of households in receipt of Fuel Allowance in these years.

Fuel Allowance	2015 Outturn	2016 Outturn	2017 Provisional Outturn*
Number of Households	405,098	385,978	358,744
Expenditure (€000)	216,223	234,812	226,184

* 2017 figures are provisional and subject to change.

Invalidity Pension Eligibility

1611. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an application for an invalidity pension now under review will be expedited and approved in the case of a person (details supplied). [1035/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Invalidation 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 an application for IP for the gentleman concerned on 18 Septem-

ber 2017. His application was disallowed IP on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. He was notified on the 05 December 2017 of this decision, the reasons for it and of his right of review and appeal to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO).

The gentleman concerned has requested a review of the decision and has submitted additional medical evidence in support of his application. The review will be processed as quickly as possible and when a decision is made he will be notified directly of the outcome. If the outcome of the review is to confirm the decision to disallow, he will retain the right to appeal to the SWAO.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

1612. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if long-term benefit payments will be put in place for a person (details supplied). [1037/18]

1650. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if long-term benefit payments will be put in place for a person (details supplied); and if the correspondence submitted by this Deputy relative to the case prior to Christmas will be examined and a response issued to the person. [1403/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1612 and 1650 together.

The person concerned has been requested by her local Intreo Centre to engage with them to discuss her current payment but, as of yet, she has failed to do so. If the person concerned wishes to, she is welcome to contact her local Intreo Centre to discuss the payment options that are available to her.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Partial Capacity Benefit Scheme Applications

1613. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the partial capacity benefit application by a person (details supplied); when a decision will be made; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1040/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Partial Capacity Benefit (PCB) is a Social Welfare scheme which allows a person who has been in receipt of Illness Benefit for six months and who may not have full capacity for work, to return to employment and continue to receive a partial or full payment from my Department. An Illness Benefit customer who applies for PCB will, in the first instance, be assessed by a Medical Assessor who will review the restriction, if any, on their capacity for work. A person assessed with a moderate level of work incapacity will receive 50% of their current payment, a person assessed with a severe level will receive 75% of their payment and a person assessed with a profound level will get full payment.

The person concerned currently has a claim for Illness Benefit and has made an application for Partial Capacity Benefit (PCB). This application was received on 29 November 2017. The

application has been referred to a Medical Assessor for an opinion on the level of work restriction. On receipt of this opinion a decision will be made on the case and the person concerned will be notified of the position. Every effort is being made to expedite the matter.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Invalidity Pension Eligibility

1614. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of returning a person (details supplied) to invalidity pension from partial capacity benefit now that the requested information has been submitted; when a decision will be issued; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1043/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Partial Capacity Benefit (PCB) is a social welfare scheme which allows a person return to employment if they have reduced capacity for work, and to continue to receive a payment from my Department. A person who applies for PCB will, in the first instance, be assessed by a Medical Assessor who expresses an opinion on the degree of partial capacity. A person assessed with a moderate restriction on capacity for work gets 50% of their personal rate of payment plus any increases due in respect of an adult dependant and children; a person assessed with a severe work restriction gets 75% and a person assessed with a profound level gets 100%.

We have received the documentation submitted with regard to returning to Invalidity Pension from Partial Capacity Benefit.

Partial Capacity Benefit will be stopped and Invalidity Pension will be restored with effect from 26 October 2017. Any arrears due will also issue to the person concerned.

Invalidity Pension Applications

1615. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1082/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The gentleman referred to has been awarded invalidity pension with effect from the 14 December 2017. Payment including arrears due from 14 December 2017 will issue to his nominated bank account on the 18 January 2018. The gentleman in question was notified of this decision on the 11 January 2018.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Insurance Payments

1616. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full-year cost of increasing all social insurance payments by amounts (details supplied), in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1222/18]

1617. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Pro-

tection the full-year cost of increasing all social assistance payments by amounts (details supplied), in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1223/18]

1619. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full-year cost of increasing the living alone allowance by amounts (details supplied), in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1225/18]

1620. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full-year cost of increasing the fuel allowance by one, two, three, four, five and six weeks, respectively, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1226/18]

1625. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the cost of increasing the carer’s support grant by amounts (details supplied), in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1232/18]

1628. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full-year cost of the household benefits package; the full-year cost of increasing the monthly electricity allowance and the natural gas allowance by €5 and €10, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1235/18]

1632. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full-year cost of extending the Christmas bonus to persons in receipt of the invalidity pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1239/18]

1637. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the cost of increasing disability allowance, carer’s allowance, blind pension and invalidity pension by €5, €10, €15 and €20 respectively, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1245/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1616, 1617, 1619, 1620, 1625, 1628, 1632 and 1637 together.

The costings sought by Deputy O’Dea are detailed in the following series of tables.

Table 1: Full year cost of varying amounts in all weekly social insurance payments

Schemes	€5 increase	€10 increase	€15 increase	€20 increase	€25 increase
	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m
Social Insurance Schemes	181.26	362.52	543.78	725.04	906.3

Table 2: Full year cost of varying amounts in all weekly social assistance payments

Schemes	€5 increase	€10 increase	€15 increase	€20 increase	€25 increase
	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m
Social Assistance Schemes	159.1	318.2	477.3	636.4	795.5

Table 3: Full year cost of increasing the Living Alone Allowance by varying amounts

Weekly Increase	Cost€m
€2.00	20.87

Weekly Increase	Cost€m
€3.00	31.31
€4.00	41.74
€5.00	52.18
€6.00	62.61
€7.00	73.05
€8.00	83.48
€9.00	93.92
€10.00	104.35

Table 4: Full year cost of increasing the duration of the Fuel Allowance by varying numbers of weeks

Number of weeks	Cost in 2018]€m
1 week	8.58
2 weeks	17.16
3 weeks	25.74
4 weeks	34.32
5 weeks	42.90
6 weeks	51.47

Table 5: Full year cost of increasing the Carer's Support Grant by varying amounts

Annual Increase	Cost in 2018€m
€50.00	5.63
€100.00	11.26
€150.00	16.89
€200.00	22.53
€250.00	28.16

Table 6: Full year cost of increasing the monthly electricity allowance and the natural gas allowance by varying amounts

Monthly Electricity Allowance		Monthly Natural Gas Allowance	
Monthly Increase	Cost€m	Monthly Increase	Cost€m
€5.00	23.30	€5.00	2.84
€10.00	46.61	€10.00	5.70

The 2018 Revised Estimates for Public Services provides €246.8 million in 2018 for the household benefits package.

Table 7: Full year cost of increasing Disability Allowance, Carer's Allowance, Blind Pension and Invalidity Pension by varying amounts

Scheme	€5 increase €m	€10 increase €m	€15 increase €m	€20 increase €m
Disability Allowance	37.5	75.1	112.6	150.2
Carer's Allowance	10.9	21.8	32.6	43.5

Scheme	€5 increase €m	€10 increase €m	€15 increase €m	€20 increase €m
Blind Pension	0.3	0.7	1.0	1.4
Invalidity Pen- sion	17.2	34.3	51.5	68.6

An 85% Christmas bonus was paid in December 2017 to over 1.2 million long-term social welfare recipients, including all recipients of invalidity pension. The cost of the Christmas Bonus paid to invalidity pension recipients is estimated at €11.1 million.

The costs shown above are on a full year basis and are based on the estimated number of recipients in 2018. It should also be noted that these costings include proportionate increases for qualified adults and for those on reduced rates of payment, where relevant.

State Pensions

1618. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full-year cost of reversing the changes made in 2012 to the bands for the contributory pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1224/18]

1648. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will address concerns with regard to pensions (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1370/18]

1667. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to reverse the 2012 changes to the State pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1794/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1618, 1648 and 1667 together.

The changes made to State Pension (contributory) rate bands in Budget 2012, affected those pensioners who had a yearly average of 39 or less weekly social insurance contributions over the course of their working life.

The current rate bands were introduced from September 2012, replacing previous rates introduced in 2000. The rate bands in place between 2000 and 2012 were more generous than those in place before and after that period, and 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 were maintained. Instead of reducing those payments, which many vulnerable pensioners were solely reliant upon, the rates paid to new pensioners who both have additional means and lesser PRSI contribution records were reduced.

It should be noted that, for a person with a yearly average of 20 contributions, the new rate of payment introduced in 2012 was still higher than the maximum rate that was in place at the start of 2006. The rate for such pensioners, while 85% of the maximum rate in place now, is higher, in real terms, than was in place at that time, even after inflation is taken into account. Given the economic context of what happened in the following years, this has been a significant achievement.

Also, it should be noted that in most if not all countries, in Europe and beyond, pension

reforms have been introduced to make them more sustainable, and these will generally result in people having different payments depending upon when they reach pension age. The only way to avoid this would be to introduce the reforms for existing pensioners, and decrease the incomes some pensioners have become dependent upon.

The 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 better than proportionate with their level of contribution. A person with only 20 years of contributions over nearly 50 years will still get an 85% pension, which compares favourably with contributory pensions in other EU countries.

It is estimated that to revert to the previous bands from January 2018 would result in an annual cost of well over €70 million extra in 2018, and this annual cost would increase by an estimated €10 to €12 million extra each following year.

My Department has examined in depth various options that would provide some relief to those who would have a higher contributory pension, had the ratebands not been amended in 2012. A report is being finalised on this matter which I intend to bring to cabinet committee shortly and subsequently to Government for consideration.

The National Pensions Framework proposed that a total contribution approach should replace the yearly average approach to the calculation of the State Pension (contributory). A discussion paper is being drafted by my Department and it is hoped to start the consultation process with relevant stakeholders including interest groups, representative bodies and the Oireachtas shortly. Following the consultation period, a proposal to Government will be submitted seeking approval of the new approach.

The main aim of Government policy on pensions is to make sure that pensions are affordable, sustainable and keep their value in the coming years. The reforms that are planned will result in a more inclusive and fairer pension system for all citizens.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputies.

Questions Nos. 1619 and 1620 answered with Question No. 1616.

Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance Scheme

1621. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full year cost of increasing the back to school clothing and footwear allowance by amounts (details supplied), in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1227/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The back to school clothing and footwear allowance (BSCFA) scheme provides a once-off payment to eligible families to assist with the extra costs when children start school each autumn.

End of year records show that under the 2017 BSCFA scheme, payments were made to 151,000 families in respect of over 275,000 children at a cost of €49 million. The rate of payment in 2017 was increased by 25% to €125 in respect of children aged 4 to 11 and €250 for children aged 12 years and over in second level education.

Using the total number of children covered by the scheme in 2017 as a basis, the additional cost to increase the BSCFA rates by the amounts listed is set out in the attached tabular state-

ment. Changes to increase the rate of payment of any scheme administered by my Department would have to be considered in a budgetary context.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Estimated Full -Year Additional Cost to Increase BSCFA rates by amounts listed:

Amount of increase	Cost
€5	€1,375,000
€10	€2,750,000
€15	€4,125,000
€20	€5,500,000
€25	€6,875,000

One-Parent Family Payment

1622. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full-year cost of reversing changes made to the one-parent family payment in 2012, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1228/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The full year cost of reversing changes made to the One-Parent Family Payment (OFP) in 2012 would be very difficult to estimate with any accuracy.

There are three significant barriers to undertaking such an exercise. Firstly, a reversal of the amendments made to the OFP scheme could result in a cohort of lone parents that are currently not in receipt of a social welfare payment becoming eligible and therefore moving onto a social welfare payment. As members of this cohort are not currently in receipt of a social welfare payment it would be difficult to for the Department to estimate the numbers involved.

Secondly, some customers could seek to move from alternative payments such as Jobseekers Allowance (JA), the Jobseeker’s Transitional Payment (JST) and the Back to Work Family Dividend (BTWFD) back to the OFP. Again, it would be difficult for the Department to estimate the magnitude of this flow between schemes with any degree of accuracy.

Finally, reversing the changes to the OFP would also increase the incidence of dual payments of OFP and the Working Family Payment (WFP) (formerly FIS). It would not be possible to estimate the degree to which Working Family Payments might reduce, without having detailed knowledge of individuals’ working patterns and the degree to which these might change.

These unknown factors are critical to providing a reliable costing. The Department is therefore not in a position to provide the costing requested.

Jobseeker’s Payments

1623. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full-year cost of extending jobseeker’s payments to the self employed, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1229/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The jobseeker’s schemes provide income support for people who have lost work and are unable to find alternative full-time employment. The 2018 Estimates for my Department provide for

expenditure this year on the jobseeker's schemes of €2.17 billion.

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 the 18th October 2017. As part of the review the independent consultants were required to project the additional expenditure if a number of additional benefits, including jobseeker's benefit, 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 the 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.

The table below shows, the projected cost of the jobseeker's benefit scheme under the current qualification criteria; the aggregate projected cost under a scenario whereby jobseeker's benefit is extended to Class S self-employed contributors from 2018 onward; and the difference between the two which reflects the cost of extending the payment to Class S contributors. For example, the cost in 2018 as per the table below would be €45 million, rising to €81 million in 2025.

Year	Jobseeker's Benefit Expenditure (€ millions)		
	Total JB expenditure reflecting those currently entitled only	Total JB expenditure reflecting class S in addition	Incremental JB expenditure due to extension
2018	301	346	45
2019	282	340	58
2020	291	351	60
2021	304	367	63
2022	318	385	67
2023	336	407	71
2024	354	429	75
2025	375	455	81
2030	410	500	91
2035	453	556	103
2040	500	613	112
2045	547	670	123
2050	581	705	125
2055	624	758	134
2060	671	815	144
2065	737	895	158
2070	820	1,000	179
2071	840	1,025	185

The projected expenditure on jobseeker's benefit assumes the same incidence rate as prevails in the employed (PRSI Class A) population and that the same scheme rules would apply were the scheme extended to the self-employed.

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% for all additional benefits, or by 14% in respect of jobseeker's benefit, under a scenario of no subvention from the Exchequer.

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.

It is important to note that the jobseeker's allowance scheme, which is a means-tested payment, is available to all jobseekers, including employees and those in self-employment.

Working Family Payment

1624. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full-year cost of increasing the income thresholds for family income supplement by amounts (details supplied), in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1230/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): In the context of Budget 2018 it was decided to re-designate the Family Income Supplement (FIS) scheme as the Working Family Payment (WFP). The Working Family Payment is an in-work support, which provides an income top-up for employees on low earnings with children and offers a financial incentive to take-up employment. There are currently over 57,000 families with nearly 129,939 children in receipt of the WFP. The estimated spend on WFP this year is approximately €431 million.

The estimated full year cost in 2018 of increasing the income thresholds of the Working Family payment by €5, €10, €15, €20 and €25 is as follows:

Increase	Estimated Full Year Additional Cost
€5	€11.7
€10	€21.9
€15	€31.5
€20	€43.2
€25	€53.6

It is worth noting that Budget 2018 increased the income thresholds by €10 for families with up to three children. This change will take effect from 29 March 2018; it is likely that as a result of this increase additional families who are not currently in receipt of the WFP will become eligible for the scheme. The figures above include an estimate of this additional inflow. Any further changes to the WFP income thresholds would have significant cost implications and would have to be considered in an overall budgetary context.

Question No. 1625 answered with Question No. 1616.

State Pensions

1626. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full-year cost of reinstating the State transition pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1233/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011 provided that State pension age will be increased gradually to 68 years. This began in January 2014 with the abolition of the State pension (transition) which was available to people aged 65 who satisfied the qualifying conditions. This measure standardised the State pension age for all at 66 years. This will increase to 67 in 2021 and to 68 in 2028.

We are all aware that people are living for much longer. Life expectancy at birth has increased significantly over the years – and is now at 78.4 years for men and 82.8 years for women. This is very positive. As a result of this demographic change, the number of State pension recipients is increasing year on year. This has significant implications for the future costs of State pension provision which are currently increasing by approx. €1 billion every 5 years. The purpose of changes to the State pension age is to make the pension system more sustainable in the context of increasing life expectancy. This sustainability is vital, if the current workers, who fund State pension payments through their PRSI, are to receive a pension themselves when they reach retirement age.

In 2013, the cost of the State pension (transition) was €137 million. Its abolition was not expected to save that amount of expenditure in full, as some people who were affected would alternatively claim working age payments such as Jobseeker's Benefit (although at a lower rate than the rate of the State pension), or claim an Increase for a Qualified Adult in respect of their spouse's pension. However, it is anticipated that well over half of that cost has been saved each year as a result of this measure, and this would be expected to increase as (a) the number of 65 year olds increases, (b) the change results in a higher percentage of people working while aged 65, and (c) there have been a number of Budget increases in the rate of the State pension since then. It is estimated that the net saving in 2017 was likely to be in the region of over €80 million, and this is expected to increase over time.

The Deputy should note that there is no legally mandated 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. While such a contract may have been entered into with a retirement date of 65, in the context of the previous State pension arrangements, there is no legal impediment to the employer and employee agreeing to increase the duration of employment for one or more years, if both parties wish to do so.

Where this is not possible, there are specific measures which apply to someone claiming Jobseeker's Benefit from a date after their 65th birthday. Where qualified, these recipients may continue to be eligible for that payment until reaching pension age.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Bereavement Grant

1627. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full-year cost of reinstating the bereavement grant at a rate of €850; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1234/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): During the economic downturn, my Department protected primary social welfare rates and in recent years, as the economy recovered, the Government has concentrated resources in improving the core rates of payments, particularly for pensioners. Abolishing the bereavement grant provided a significant annual saving and allowed my Department to protect other core social

welfare payments such as the State pension.

The number of bereavement grant claims in 2013 was 23,716, and this represented an increase of approximately 4% on 2012. Based on a similar yearly increase each year since 2013, it is estimated that the number of bereavement grant claims that might arise in 2018, were the scheme to be re-introduced, would be in the region of 28,854, and the number would be expected to increase in future years. Accordingly, if there were 28,854 such grants made in 2018, at a rate of €850 each, the cost would be approx. €24.53 million.

Any decision to reinstate the Bereavement Grant would have to be considered in the context of overall budgetary negotiations.

It is worth noting that there are a range of supports available for people following bereavement which provide more significant support than the grant. These include weekly paid widow's, widower's or surviving civil partner's (contributory and non-contributory) pensions, which are based on contributions or a means test, and a once-off widowed or surviving civil partner grant of €6,000 where there is a dependent child. A number of social welfare payments, including State pension, continue in payment for six weeks following a death. In Budget 2016, the Government increased the payment after death period to 12 weeks for carer's allowance. Guardian payments are available where someone cares for an orphaned child. A special funeral grant of €850 is paid where a person dies because of an accident at work or occupational disease.

Additionally, the supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) scheme provides assistance to eligible people in the State whose means are insufficient to meet their needs and those of their dependants. Under the SWA scheme, the Department of Social Protection may make a single exceptional needs payment (ENP) to help meet essential, once-off and unforeseen expenditure which a person could not reasonably be expected to meet from their weekly income, which may include help with funeral and burial expenses.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Question No. 1628 answered with Question No. 1616.

Child Benefit Expenditure

1629. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full-year cost of increasing child benefit by amounts (details supplied), in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1236/18]

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 around 627,432 families in respect of some 1.2 million children, with an estimated expenditure of over €2 billion in 2018.

The estimated full year cost of increasing Child Benefit from its current rate of €140 per month by €5, €10, €15, €20 and €25 in 2018 as follows:

Increase	Estimated Additional Full Year Cost
€5	€71.8m
€10	€143.7m

Increase	Estimated Additional Full Year Cost
€15	€215.6m
€20	€287.5m
€25	€359.4m

Given that Child Benefit is a universal payment this would not be a targeted approach. As can be seen from the figures provided such increases would have very significant cost implications and would have to be considered in an overall budgetary context.

Maternity Benefit Expenditure

1630. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full-year cost of increasing maternity benefit by one, two, three, four, five and six weeks, respectively, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1237/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Maternity Benefit is paid by my Department and is based on payment of PRSI contributions while working. The current entitlement to paid maternity leave is 26 weeks. The following table estimates the cost of increasing the duration for which maternity benefit is paid by one to six weeks.

These estimates are based on the cost for a full year and assume that any increase in duration is implemented from the beginning of the year. The estimated additional cost of extending the duration of maternity benefit is approximately €10.3 million for each extra week, at the current rate of €235 per week. It should be noted that Budget 2018 provides for the rate of maternity benefit to be increased by €5 per week from 26 March 2018.

Estimated annual cost of increasing the duration of maternity benefit based on current rate of €235 (2017 rates)

No. of additional weeks	Estimated cost (€m)
1	10.3
2	20.6
3	30.9
4	41.2
5	50.5
6	60.8

It should be noted that this costing is subject to change in the context of emerging trends and associated revision of the estimated numbers of recipients for 2017. It should also be noted that there are additional costs to the Exchequer as these estimates do not include the costs of salary top-ups for public/civil servants.

Paternity Benefit

1631. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full-year cost of increasing paternity benefit by one, two, three, four, five and six weeks, respectively, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1238/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Paternity Leave and Benefit Act 2016 which was enacted in July 2016 introduced a new scheme of paternity leave and an associated social welfare payment of paternity benefit from the 1st

September 2016. Since the commencement of the scheme on 1 September 2016, 32,784 paternity benefit claims have been awarded to 31 December 2017.

The estimated additional cost of extending the duration of paternity benefit is approximately €5.5 million for each extra week. The following table estimates the additional cost of increasing the duration of paternity benefit above its current 2 week duration at the current weekly rate of €235. It should be noted that Budget 2018 provides for the weekly rate of payment to be increased by €5 per week from 26 March 2018.

Estimated annual cost of increasing the duration of Paternity Benefit based on 2017 rates

No. of additional weeks	Estimated cost (€m)
1	5.5
2	11.0
3	16.5
4	22.0
5	27.5
6	33.0

These estimates are based on the cost for a full year and assume that any increase in duration is implemented from the beginning of the year. The cost in the first year would depend on the implementation date that the increase in duration would take effect. This cost would be proportional to the full year cost.

It should be noted that this costing is subject to change in the context of emerging trends and associated revision of the estimated numbers of recipients for 2017. It should also be noted that there are also costs to the Exchequer as these estimates do not include the costs of salary top-ups for public/civil servants.

Question No. 1632 answered with Question No. 1616.

Free Travel Scheme

1633. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full-year cost of operating the free travel scheme; the cost of increasing expenditure by 10%; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1240/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The free travel scheme provides free travel on the main public and private transport services for those eligible under the scheme. These include road, rail and ferry services provided by companies such as Bus Átha Cliath, Bus Éireann and Iarnród Éireann, as well as Luas and services provided by over 80 private transport operators. There are currently approx. 900,000 customers with direct eligibility. The scheme is available to all people aged over 66 living permanently in the State. To qualify for the scheme, applicants who are under age 66 must be in receipt of a qualifying payment. These are invalidity pension, blind pension, disability allowance, carer’s allowance or an equivalent social security payment from a country covered by EC Regulations or one with which Ireland has a Bilateral Social Security Agreement.

In order to maintain service at existing levels, and to facilitate new entrants/services to the scheme, funding to the free travel scheme was increased by €10 million in Budget 2018, an increase of 12.5%.

The estimated expenditure on free travel in 2018 is €90 million. To increase the cost by 10% would require an additional €9 million bringing the total expenditure for the scheme up to €99 million.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Question No. 1634 answered with Question No. 1570.

Departmental Staff Training

1635. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if all Intreo staff have received disability awareness training; the cost of training staff who have not undergone such training to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1243/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection fully recognises the need to support staff and promote disability awareness and has been very proactive in the provision of training and supports in this area in recent years, with a very positive response from staff.

The Department supports its staff by offering a suite of disability awareness training including Mental Health and Deaf Awareness, Dealing with Blind Customers and general Disability Awareness. The Department also offers courses in SafeTALK suicide awareness, ASIST suicide prevention and Stress Awareness. These are available to all staff in the Department, including staff in Intreo Centres. Since 2013, over 2,900 staff have attended training courses in these areas. In addition, e-learning courses developed for front line public servants by the National Disability Authority (NDA) and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) are freely available online to all staff via the Department’s Staff Development intranet site. Bespoke, ad hoc training can also be procured where required utilising an External Training Budget.

In conjunction with Mental Health Ireland (MHI) and the Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS), Mental Health Awareness workshops have been held in a variety of locations since 2013. The workshops provided tools and strategies to enhance mental health and well-being, increase awareness and understanding, and promote the range of formal and informal supports and resources available.

My Department has a dedicated Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) to support our staff with disabilities and their managers. The DLO offers support and promotes awareness of disability issues and services amongst staff, while also facilitating the Department’s active participation in the Irish Association for Supported Employment’s Job Shadow Initiative and AHEAD’s Willing Able Mentoring Programme. This Officer has attended AsIAM Public Sector Training Programme on Autism-Friendly Practices, NDA Seminar on “Alternative & Inclusive Routes to Employment for People with Disabilities” and NCBI Seminar on “Bridging the Information Gap” and has disseminated information from these sources to Departmental staff. The Department also provides translation, interpretive and Irish Sign Language services as required and is committed to the provision of information in alternative formats where feasible, as outlined in our Customer Charter.

Induction and Orientation training highlights the range of Departmental supports and grant-aid available for both staff and clients with disabilities. These include employment supports for jobseekers with disabilities such as the Wage Subsidy Scheme, EmployAbility Services and the Reasonable Accommodation Fund, in addition to the Civil Service Employee Assistance

Service (CSEAS).

During 2016, in the context of Departmental commitments under Pathways to Work 2016-2020 to extend and intensify proactive engagement with people with a disability, 67 dedicated Case Officers were nominated across the Intreo network. My Department's Staff Development Unit provided a Disability Awareness Seminar in March 2016 for these Case Officers, with speakers from the National Disability Authority and Epilepsy Ireland. This was supplemented by tailored instructor-led training nationally in Employment Supports for People with Disabilities and this curriculum is now incorporated as standard into an accredited programme for Case Officers, Level 8 Certificate in Professional Practice in Employability Services, in conjunction with the National College of Ireland (NCI).

Ongoing liaison, via the Department's Disability & Illness Policy Unit, with the National Disability Authority (NDA) and the Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) ensures that information on relevant events and seminars is communicated to Departmental staff.

The Department will continue with its extensive training and awareness in this area. It is estimated that the cost of providing disability awareness training to all staff in Intreo Centres in the Department would be approximately €90,000.

Wage Subsidy Scheme

1636. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full-year cost of extending the wage subsidy scheme for persons in receipt of partial capacity benefit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1244/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The partial capacity benefit (PCB) scheme is designed for people who are on illness benefit, for at least six months, or on invalidity pension and who have retained some capacity for work and wish to work. If awarded, PCB will allow them to continue to receive, in addition to their earnings from employment, a percentage of their illness benefit or invalidity pension payment while working.

The wage subsidy scheme (WSS) is an employment support to private sector employers, the objective of which is to encourage employers to employ people with disabilities and thereby increase the numbers of people with disabilities participating in the open labour market. The scheme provides financial incentives to private sector employers to hire people with a disability for between 21 and 39 hours per week under a contract of employment.

Extending eligibility for the WSS to employers who employ people in receipt of PCB is estimated to cost €2.6 million in a full year. The costing here relates to new PCB participants only, as a WSS payment can only be made where an individual is entering a new job or is in that job for less than 12 months.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Question No. 1637 answered with Question No. 1616.

Departmental Staff Data

1638. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of staff working in the social welfare appeals office; the full-year cost of

increasing the number of staff by 10%; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1246/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): There are currently 84 staff (80.15 full-time equivalent) working in the Social Welfare Appeals Office.

The full year cost of increasing the staff complement by 10% would amount to approximately €458,000.

Pensions Reform

1639. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans for an auto-enrolment pension system; if a report has been or is being prepared on same; the expected publication date of same; the date this new system is expected to come into operation; the full-year cost of implementing such a system; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1247/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Pensions reform is a Government priority and I can confirm an intention to publish and commence the implementation of a pensions reform plan in the near future. Perhaps the most fundamental reform measure which will be contained within this plan will relate to the development of a new auto enrolment supplementary retirement savings system for employees without pensions coverage.

Auto enrolment would see a transition from the current and purely voluntary supplementary pension system to one which will, subject to certain parameters, automatically enrol employees into a quality assured retirement savings system. This reform, where the saver will maintain the freedom of choice to opt-out, will encourage long term saving and asset accumulation amongst those who may otherwise suffer a reduction in living standards at retirement. It will increase the wellbeing, financial security and independence of future retirees.

Subject to any Government decision regarding the manner in which this project should be progressed, it is my objective that first members would be enrolled in the new system in 2021. This project timeframe reflects the scale of such a programme and its importance as being the most fundamental reform of the Irish supplementary pension system in generations.

Following publication of the reform plan, I intend that the detailed evidence building and consultation required to deliver an automatic enrolment system will be undertaken over an initial project planning phase. This will include an investigation of the potential organisational models for delivery and identify the likely costs involved. This information will be used to inform Government in selecting any preferred automatic enrolment operational structure and organisational governance. Decisions around main design parameters such as target membership, minimum contribution rates, financial incentives etc. will also impact on expenditure requirements. Correctly positioning/designing each of these parameters will be fundamental to the success of any system.

Until this work is complete and a preferred model chosen, it would not be possible to accurately detail the costs of designing and implementing the automatic enrolment system.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Eligibility

1640. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when carer's allowance will be restored in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1252/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment, made to persons who are providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care.

CA was in payment to the person concerned from 2 January 2014. Once claims are in payment, the Department periodically reviews them to ensure that there is continued entitlement. Depending on the circumstances in each case and to make best use of resources, a review may only concentrate on a specific condition of entitlement.

A review commenced in this case in 2017. As part of this review the matter was referred to a social welfare inspector (SWI).

During the course of the investigation, it was discovered that the person concerned had not fully disclosed their means to the Department.

The person concerned was notified on 27 October 2017 that because of this her payment was being suspended from 2 November 2017.

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

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Free Travel Scheme Eligibility

1641. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to extend entitlement to the free travel pass to persons who suffer from epilepsy and are medically unfit to drive as a consequence; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1272/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The current free travel scheme provides free travel on the main public and private transport services for those eligible under the scheme. These include road, rail and ferry services provided by companies such as Bus Átha Cliath, Bus Éireann and Iarnród Éireann, as well as Luas and services provided by almost 80 private transport operators. There are approximately 900,000 customers in receipt of free travel.

Persons resident in Ireland who are over 66 and persons in receipt of certain social welfare payments are eligible for the scheme. The social welfare payments that allow persons aged under 66 to a free travel pass include disability allowance, invalidity pension, carer's allowance and partial capacity benefit. Disability allowance and invalidity pension are both long term illness payments, and so people in receipt of those payments will already have eligibility.

There are no plans to change the eligibility criteria of the free travel scheme to include persons who are not paid a benefit by my department.

If the free travel scheme was to be extended to people who are not eligible for a qualify-

ing payment, an assessment process would be required for all such applications, changing the nature of the scheme. Successive Governments have instead used existing underlying entitlements to confer eligibility for this scheme.

In addition, any decision to extend the free travel scheme to persons who are not in receipt of a primary qualifying payment would have to be considered in the context of overall budgetary negotiations.

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

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Appeals

1642. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1299/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Following a successful appeal, the person concerned has been awarded disability allowance with effect from 17 May 2017. The first payment will be made by his chosen payment method on 31 January 2018.

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 any outstanding overpayments (if applicable).

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Payments

1643. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a full disability allowance will be awarded to a person (details supplied) following recent changes to the system affecting those who were self-employed. [1314/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): I can confirm this gentleman has been in receipt of disability allowance (DA) since 17 July 2013. The most recent means assessment on his DA was carried out on 14 December 2016 and he was deemed to have means from his Spouse's employment.

There has been no recent change to the assessment of means for the DA scheme and therefore we would not be reviewing this gentleman's means at present.

It is open to him to request a review of his DA should he feel that he is not in receipt of the correct rate of payment or should he have any new information since his last means assessment.

I trust this clarifies the situation for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Appeals

1644. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a disability allowance will be awarded to a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1317/18]

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 including that adduced at the oral hearing, has decided to disallow the appeal of the person concerned. 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.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance Applications

1645. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a supplementary payment will issue to a person (details supplied); if the payment will issue in the near future; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1318/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): According to the records of this Department the person concerned has not recently made an application for supplementary welfare allowance. An officer of the Department sent a supplementary welfare allowance application to the person concerned on 15/01/18.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Jobseeker's Allowance Applications

1646. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a jobseeker's allowance will be issued in the case of a person (details supplied); if payment will be made in the near future due to the hardship being experienced by this family; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1319/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): There is no record of an application for a Jobseeker's payment having been received by the Department from the person concerned.

In order to make an application for a Jobseeker's payment, either Jobseeker's Benefit or Jobseeker Allowance, the person concerned should be advised to present to their local Intreo Centre or Social Welfare Branch Office and complete the required application forms, after which a Deciding Officer will be in a position to make a decision on their claim.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy

Disability Allowance Applications

1647. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if disability allowance will be approved for a person (details supplied). [1350/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): I can confirm that my department received an application for disability allowance (DA) from this gentleman on 23 October 2017.

On 3 January 2018 the person concerned was requested to supply supporting documentation required by the deciding officer in order to make a decision on his eligibility for DA. On receipt of this information a decision will be made on his DA application and the person concerned will be notified of the outcome.

This gentleman was disallowed a supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) while awaiting his DA decision because the family's income was deemed to be in excess of the SWA rate. This was due to his Spouse's income from employment. A refusal letter was issued to him on the 19th December 2017.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Question No. 1648 answered with Question No. 1618.

Carer's Allowance Applications

1649. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1372/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance is a means-tested social assistance payment, made to persons who are providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care.

An application for carers allowance was received from the person concerned on 21 August 2017.

The application was awarded on 10 January 2018 and first payment will issue to their nominated bank account on 18 January 2018.

Arrears of allowance due from 4 February 2016 to 17 January 2018 will issue shortly.

The person concerned was notified on 10 January 2018 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Question No. 1650 answered with Question No. 1612.

Social Welfare Code

1651. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to examine a scheme (details supplied); and if she will make a statement

on the matter. [1479/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):

There is an increasing awareness and evidence of abuse of the elderly and research has shown that one of the areas of significant abuse can be financial abuse. I believe, however, that the majority of persons acting as agents collecting social welfare payments for customers unable to do so themselves, do so out of a genuine caring disposition and act in good faith.

The existing legislative provisions in the Social Welfare Consolidation Act, 2005 empower the Minister to make regulations to appoint a person to act on behalf of a recipient or beneficiary of social welfare payments in circumstances where the recipient/beneficiary is certified by a registered medical practitioner to be a person who is, or is likely soon to become, unable for the time being to manage his or her own financial affairs.

There is a legal obligation on those already acting as agent, for the purposes of collecting a customer's pension, to advise the Department if the circumstances of that customer change including if the customer no longer has the capacity to deal with their own financial affairs.

My Department has established a working group to examine and make recommendations on the adequacy of the current procedures and processes for:

- appointing agents for social welfare payments;
- reviewing existing agent arrangements;
- dealing with specific complaints regarding named agents when they arise (with the involvement of relevant external agencies as necessary); and
- continuing to raise the awareness of staff on safeguarding and protection of vulnerable adults, with a particular emphasis on financial abuse.

The group is also assessing the implications for its agent arrangements in the context of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 when it is commenced and the codes of practice being developed by the National Disability Authority under the Act, and will make recommendations for any changes necessary in order for the Department to comply with that legislation.

I would ask the Deputy if he has specific concerns regarding individual customers to bring those matters directly to the attention of the relevant scheme area of my Department and this will be investigated without delay.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Inspections

1652. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the average length of time it takes social welfare inspectors to process cases in each county or district, in tabular form. [1488/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department administers over 70 schemes and services. It processes in excess of 1.7 million applications per annum and issues 81 million payments per year to 2.1 million customers and their families.

It is not possible to give a definitive breakdown of the average length of time it takes social

welfare inspectors to process cases in each county, given the range of services and activities carried out by social welfare inspectors across the schemes.

The approach taken in each investigation is determined by the social welfare inspector and the nature of the case. Investigations may involve desk assessments, written and verbal enquiries, site and employer visits, office interviews and home visits. The length of time taken to process a case will vary depending on the scheme involved and the specific circumstances of each case.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Payments

1653. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when payment to a person (details supplied) will begin, if it will be backdated to include the Christmas bonus and living alone allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1497/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Following a decision by an Appeals Officer appeal, this gentleman has been awarded disability allowance (DA) with effect from 01 March 2017. He has also been awarded living alone allowance (LAA) and free fuel allowance (FFA) from that date. The first payment will be made by his chosen payment method on 31 January 2018.

Arrears of payment due, including the Christmas Bonus, will issue as soon as possible once any necessary adjustment are 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.

Legislative Programme

1654. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the projects undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation, including the cost, the duration and the number of staff required, and if this process was carried out by her Department or outsourced in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [1564/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department is responsible for the legislation underpinning the social welfare code and for a number of other areas of legislation, as follows:

- Occupational and Private Pensions
- Civil Registration and Gender Recognition
- Redundancy and Employer's Insolvency
- Citizens Information Board (Comhairle)
- Employment and Labour Law

The main provisions of the Social Welfare code are contained in the various Social Welfare

Acts that are enacted each year. The provisions of these Acts were consolidated in 2005 as the Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act 2005.

In 2007 the Social Welfare (Consolidated Occupational Injuries) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 102 of 2007), the Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 142 of 2007) and the Social Welfare (Consolidated Supplementary Welfare Allowance) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 412 of 2007) were published.

These consolidations were conducted by staff of my Department as part of their normal duties. There was no requirement to outsource any of the work associated with these consolidations. There were no additional costs incurred by my Department as a result of the work undertaken.

No other projects to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation have been undertaken by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection within the relevant timeframe. However, some preliminary scoping work is currently under way with a view to preparing a new consolidation of the Social Welfare Acts.

Social Welfare Benefits Applications

1655. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1601/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): An application for increase for qualified adult in respect of the person concerned has been received and is currently being processed. As increase for qualified adult payment is a means-tested payment, further information has been requested to facilitate the Deciding Officer to determine entitlement.

On receipt of the requested information, the application will be considered and written notification of the decision will issue without delay.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Payments Administration

1656. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the way in which social welfare payments (details supplied) are paid; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1669/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): This Government continues to be committed to maintaining the post office network and for An Post to remain a strong and viable company in a position to provide a high quality postal service and maintain a nationwide customer focussed network of post offices in the community. My Department's support for An Post is equally apparent. We have again renewed the contract for cash payment services with the company for another year. This contract is worth approximately €50m per annum to An Post.

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection provides two main options for payment methods for its customers: payments in cash at post offices or payments direct to customer accounts in financial institutions. The Department intends, where possible, to con-

tinue to offer its many clients the choice of being paid in cash at the post office or directly into an account in a financial institution.

Persons under 65 years of age, who are in receipt of a Jobseeker's payment, are required to be available for full-time employment and genuinely seeking work. In addition, they must comply, when requested to do so, with the Department's activation measures. Certain compulsory criteria in these measures are relaxed for persons aged 62 and over, for example they are placed on yearly signing and they are given the option of being paid directly into their bank account where this option has not been available for them heretofore. This has been the Department's policy since 1 January 2014.

Accordingly, those in receipt of a Jobseeker's payment who are fully unemployed are contacted when they reach the age of 62 and offered the option of being paid directly into their bank account or continuing to be paid at the post office.

Customer wishes are facilitated where they choose to receive their social welfare payment at their local post office. It is not proposed to limit the freedom of social welfare customers to be paid directly into a financial institution if they so choose. This is in line with wider Departmental policy where the focus is on ensuring that social welfare customers are paid by the most convenient method possible.

Back to Education Allowance

1657. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the BTEA criteria will be reviewed again with regard to the progress in educational qualifications (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1671/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) is a scheme that allows persons in receipt of certain social welfare payments the opportunity to pursue a course of study, while still maintaining their income support, subject to satisfying a number of conditions. The conditions include progressing in the level of education held by the client with reference to the national framework of qualifications.

The student universal support Ireland (SUSI) grant payable by the Department of Education and Skills represents the primary support for persons pursuing education. The BTEA was never intended to be an alternative form of funding for people entering or re-entering the third level education system.

Applicants holding a qualification at tertiary education level (certificate, diploma, primary degree or post graduate qualification) are not approved under the BTEA to pursue a course at a similar or lower qualification level. However, the BTEA may be approved if a person holds a HETAC level 8 Honours degree and wishes to pursue a Higher Diploma at HETAC Level 8 as this is considered progression.

There are a small number of situations where the progression rule is not applied. For instance, as you reference, where a person only holds a FETAC Level 5 or FETAC Level 6, the progression rule can be waived if their previous qualification was obtained three years prior to re-entry into education and provided the person was in employment for a period of at least three years since commencement of employment. The course must also be deemed to enhance a person's job prospects and the participant must satisfy all other eligibility criteria.

Additionally, Springboard is an initiative to enable jobseekers to upskill or reskill in areas

where there are employment opportunities. The BTEA can be approved for a person who holds a qualification equivalent to or higher than the qualification for which the BTEA application has been received for Springboard full-time courses. For example, if a participant already holds a level 8 qualification, they may pursue a level 8 Springboard course.

Overall, it is important to note that the purpose of the BTEA is to raise educational and skill levels so as to improve a welfare recipient's employment prospects. Progression in education is an important condition of the support provided. I have no plans to change these provisions.

I hope this clarified the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Benefit Applications

1658. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an application for carer's benefit by a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1673/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's benefit (CARB) is a payment made to insured people who leave the workforce to care for a person(s) in need of full-time care and attention.

An application for CARB was received from the person concerned on 29 September 2017.

In order to qualify for CARB both the applicant and the care recipient must have a Personal Public Service (PPS) Number. As the care recipient, who lives in Poland did not have a PPS Number, the CARB claim could not be processed until an application had been made and a PPS Number allocated to her.

The processing of the application for CARB will now proceed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Operation

1659. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to allow flexibility for employees on community employment schemes who have reached 65 years of age to remain in employment in those schemes even though they may have completed six years of employment in order that they can continue in employment until they become eligible for pension. [1693/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): At present, there is an initiative in place which allows Community Employment (CE) participants aged 62 or over to apply to extend their participation on CE beyond the standard lifetime participation limits, providing the CE eligibility conditions are met. Participants are allowed to participate on a continuous basis up to the State Pension age, subject to satisfactory performance on the scheme and to annual approval by my Department. The places allocated for these participants, within each individual CE scheme, are limited to 7% of each scheme's overall budgeted places. This initiative is available nationwide.

I am currently reviewing the rules governing this initiative and I expect this review to be completed shortly.

If a particular participant wants to avail of this initiative, they should contact their local DEASP Intreo office for more information.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Insurance

1660. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason a retired person under 66 years of age in receipt of income from an approved retirement fund must pay PRSI on this income whereas a person under 66 years of age in receipt of a pension annuity is not subject to PRSI on same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1696/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Policy in respect of treatment of annuities and approved retirement funds for tax and social insurance is a matter for the Minister for Finance.

The current position is that approved retirement funds or ARFs are funds managed by a qualifying fund manager into which an individual may invest the proceeds of their pension fund when they retire. The income and gains of such funds are exempt from tax within the fund. Any amounts withdrawn from an ARF are referred to as a distribution. A distribution is treated as income from an employment. It is subject to income tax and the fund manager must operate the PAYE system on it.

Under social welfare legislation any payments received by way of pension are not regarded as reckonable emoluments for the purposes of self-employed pay related social insurance (PRSI). However, unlike annuity products, ARFs are not pensions but are treated as assets. As such distributions from ARFs fall within the charge to Class S self-employed PRSI, or if the recipient of the distribution is a modified class contributor, Class K. Class K PRSI contributions do not give entitlements to any social insurance benefits.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Insurance

1661. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of backdating to 1973 social insurance coverage for members of religious orders who were excluded prior to the introduction of the Social Welfare (Insurance Inclusions and Exclusions) Regulations, 1988; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1704/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Clergy and other religious were excluded from Social Insurance on its introduction. In 1974, however, the Social Welfare Act made provision that ministers of religion engaged solely on pastoral works for which remuneration was received, could be admitted to social insurance on the application of the appropriate representative body or authority. This access was subject to an application to (and the agreement of) the then Minister for Social Welfare by an appropriate authority or body acting on behalf of the relevant ministers representing to him or her that the services performed and conditions of appointment were analogous to other occupations which were already covered for social insurance purposes. The provisions of the 1974 Act meant that all religious authorities or bodies had, if they so wished, the opportunity to apply for social insurance access for their employed members and, therefore, did not discriminate in any way

against or in favour of any particular congregations.

Only the Church of Ireland availed of this provision. The position for other Ministers of Religion, including those employed as teachers or nurses and remunerated as such, were not covered by social insurance.

In 1986, the Commission on Social Welfare published a range of proposals aimed at developing and enhancing the structure and operation of the social insurance system.

The exclusion of clergy and other religious denominations from social insurance coverage was examined and in this context, it was not considered appropriate to continue to exclude from the system those who are employed in what might be termed secular employment as employees under a contract of service. The categories involved were religious who are mainly employed in schools, hospitals and other institutions. They came within the social protection system as employees, insurable at the ordinary or modified rate, as appropriate to their particular circumstances from 1988. The effect of this is that clergy and people of other religious denominations who are employed in public or private sector employment – i.e. in schools, hospitals and other public/social institutions – are afforded the same level of coverage as other employees in those sectors and generally insurable at PRSI Class A or D, as appropriate. Those involved in pastoral care only are generally insured as self-employed workers provided they meet the minimum income threshold.

Social insurance contributions (Class S PRSI) were introduced for self-employed people on 6th April 1988. These contributions currently provide cover for self-employed people for benefits such as State pension (contributory), widows/widowers or surviving civil partner's pension (contributory), guardian's payment (contributory), maternity benefit, adoptive benefit, paternity benefit, and treatment benefit. Entitlement to invalidity pension was extended to the self-employed from December 2017.

It is not possible to cost the backdating of social insurance to the members of religious orders because of various unknown factors, for example, the various contingencies that could have arisen for those members in the intervening period, the question of whether any such backdating should be at the higher or lower rates of payment and the recoument of contributions for the period in question.

The PRSI system is based on “weeks of insurable employment” - in terms of both the calculation of PRSI contributions and the award of social insurance contributions. These contributions are recorded to determine future entitlements to social welfare benefits. This link between contributions awarded and entitlement to benefit is referred to as the contributory principle. In order to qualify for a social insurance benefit the insured person must have built up an entitlement through the payment of social insurance contributions. As such, there are no plans to backdate social insurance benefits to those who were excluded from social insurance in the past.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

1662. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1708/18]

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 con-

cerned on the 24 November 2017.

Carer's allowance is a means-tested social assistance payment, made to persons who are providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care.

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.

Carer's Allowance Applications

1663. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the carer's allowance application of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1742/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment, made to persons who are providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care.

I confirm that my department received an application for CA from the person concerned on the 29 September 2017.

Additional information was requested from the person concerned on 11 January 2018. Once the information is received the application will be processed without delay and she will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

1664. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the carer's allowance application of a person (details supplied) [1743/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care.

I confirm that my department received an application for CA from the person concerned on the 8 November 2017.

Additional information was requested from the person concerned on 12 January 2018. Once the information is received the application will be processed without delay and he will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Appeals

1665. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1744/18]

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 2 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 Employment Affairs and Social Protection. These papers have been received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 19 December 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 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.

Fuel Allowance Eligibility

1666. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the issue of persons who transfer from homeless payments to jobseeker's payments after being housed and who do not technically fit the criteria to qualify for fuel allowance will be examined (details supplied). [1778/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): In order to be eligible for fuel allowance, a person in receipt of jobseeker's allowance must be in receipt of payment for 390 days, satisfy a household means test and live alone or only with certain other qualified people. Where a person does not satisfy these conditions they will not be entitled to the fuel allowance. Unfortunately, the person referred to by the Deputy does not have the required 390 days in receipt of jobseeker's allowance. He had previously been in receipt of Supplementary Welfare Allowance but the period of time spent on that payment does not count towards the 390 day requirement.

The fuel allowance is a means tested payment to assist householders on long-term social welfare payments to provide for their heating needs. The payment is not intended to meet those costs in full but rather subsidise a person's fuel costs and only one allowance is paid per household.

The jobseeker's schemes provide income support for people who have lost work and are unable to find alternative full-time employment.

In addition to the jobseeker's allowance and jobseeker's benefit schemes my Department offers other supports including the Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) scheme which provides assistance to eligible people in the State whose means are insufficient to meet their needs and those of their dependants. The main purpose of the scheme is to provide immediate and flexible assistance for those in need who do not qualify for payment under other State schemes.

Supports provided under the SWA scheme can consist of a basic weekly payment and/or a weekly/monthly supplement in respect of certain expenses, including rent, fuel as well as single

exceptional needs payments (ENP) and urgent needs payments (UNP).

I have no plans to change the qualifying conditions for the fuel allowance scheme at present.

Question No. 1667 answered with Question No. 1618.

Departmental Staff Data

1668. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the proportion of employees in her Department or in organisations under its remit registered as disabled. [1856/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005 sets out the legal obligations of public service bodies to promote and support the employment of people with disabilities, comply with any statutory Code of Practice, meet a target of 3% of employees with disabilities and report every year on achievement of these obligations. The National Disability Authority (NDA) reports on compliance with the 3% target.

The figures for 2017 are not yet available. These figures are required to be provided to the NDA by the end of March 2018.

The last figures available on the proportion of employees who had disclosed a disability and registered disabled in my Department, as reported to the NDA for 2016, was 5.1%.

These figures were based on a Staff Census taken at end of 2016 and based on a voluntarily declaration of disability status by all new employees joining the Department. The nature of the disability is not disclosed.

In relation to the three agencies under the aegis of my Department, the last figures available on the proportion of employees registered disabled, as reported to the NDA for 2016, were:

- Citizens Information Board - 9.64%,
- Office of the Pensions Ombudsman - 16.67%, and
- Pensions Authority - 3.92%.

Carer’s Allowance Data

1669. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of applications for carer’s allowance received in each of the past five years to date in 2018; the number approved initially; the number refused and-or referred for appeal; the number on appeal subsequently granted and-or refused in the same period; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1873/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The information requested (where available) by the Deputy is detailed in the tabular statements.

Carer’s Allowance claims registered and awarded or rejected in each year 2013 to 2017

	Registered	Awarded	Rejected
2013	12,060	16,011	9,881

	Registered	Awarded	Rejected
2014	17,759	12,560	7,708
2015	18,929	14,378	7,920
2016	22,722	19,308	11,144
2017	23,800	17,292	8,599

Outcome of Carer's Allowance Appeals 2013– 2017

	Appeal Receipts	Favourable Decisions			Appeals Disallowed	Withdrawn
		Revised Deciding Officers- Decisions	Appeals Allowed	Appeals Partly Allowed		
2013	3,869	1,040	990	131	1,505	56
2014	2,907	463	1,240	177	1,451	55
2015	3,188	579	1,352	155	1,355	50
2016	3,887	815	1,375	145	1,237	52
2017	3,200	780	1,204	161	1,199	72

Jobseeker's Allowance Payments

1670. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the appropriate level of jobseeker's allowance payable in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1874/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned is currently in receipt of a jobseeker's payment and is also working on a part time basis. The weekly rate of payment she receives from the Department is calculated with regard to the number of days per week she is employed coupled with the level of income she receives from that employment.

Based on the current information provided to the Department, by the person concerned, her weekly payment is correct and in accordance with Social Welfare guidelines.

However, if there have been any changes in her circumstances, that she has not yet advised the Department of, that may affect the rate of payment she is receiving, the person concerned should present to her local Intreo Centre or Social Welfare Branch Office and provide the relevant information that would allow a review of her claim entitlement to be completed.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy

One-Parent Family Payment

1671. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the steps she has taken to correct the anomaly whereby the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005, which gives the State the right to demand a contribution from the other parent, refers only to the lone parent allowance and no other social welfare payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1886/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Family Law Acts, which are under the remit of the Department of Justice and Equality (D/JE),

place a legal obligation on parents to maintain their children. In cases where the family unit has broken down these obligations continue to apply and relevant maintenance payments can be arranged either directly between the couple or through supports like the Family Mediation Service, the Legal Aid Board and the Courts. The arrangement of maintenance is therefore a matter between both parents regardless of whether or not either parent is in receipt of a social welfare payment.

The liability to maintain family provisions contained in social welfare legislation are separate to, and do not negate or supersede, parents' obligations under Family Law. Where a lone parent is in receipt of the One-Parent Family Payment (OFP), the liability to maintain family provisions provide my Department with a legislative basis to carry out an assessment against the other parent and issue a Determination Order for them to pay a contribution either to the Department or the lone parent.

My Department has previously indicated its intention to review the current maintenance and liable relative procedures in light of the changes to the one-parent family payment scheme, and work had commenced on this review. Since April 2017, however, work on the review of the one-parent family payment, which was required to be completed over a short timeframe, took priority given the statutory nature of the review.

That review (the Indecon Report) was completed in October 2017 and the Report was laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas. Work has now re-commenced on the review of maintenance as it relates to my Department.

This review will necessitate my Department liaising with the Department of Justice and Equality as the Family Law Acts, which place a legal obligation on parents to maintain their children, are under the remit of that Department.

This is a complex area however I expect to have a paper from my officials on this shortly.

Social Welfare Code

1672. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the time limits for backdating all social welfare payments under the remit of her Department, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1923/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The primary legislation governing claims and late claims is set out in Sections 241, 342 and 342A of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005, as amended. The legislation requires that persons must claim their entitlements within a specific period from the date their entitlement arises - this is referred to as the 'prescribed time'. The prescribed times for each payment are set out in the table. Once a claim is made within the prescribed time for that particular payment, it is automatically backdated to the date of entitlement.

Where a claim is made after the prescribed time, a statutory disqualification or disallowance is incurred. However, the legislation gives the deciding officer some discretion to backdate the payment, where the claim is received after the prescribed time, in exceptional circumstances and where the relevant regulations allow. These regulations allow for circumstances where the claimant establishes there was 'good cause' for delay, or that they were inadvertently misinformed by an officer of the Department, or incapacitated and unable to make the claim on time.

The table sets out the prescribed times for making a claim for each scheme and the provisions to backdate payments where appropriate.

Each late claim is assessed by Deciding Officers and is based on the contentions put forward by the applicant and evaluating the available evidence. The deciding officer may decide to backdate the payment, within the limits set out in the table, depending on the circumstances and according to legislative provisions pertaining to each scheme.

The legislation allows a Deciding Officer the discretion to back date the payment for up to 6 months where he/she is satisfied that the claimant had 'good cause' for failing to apply within the prescribed time, provided of course that the claimant was eligible during the 6 months. This limitation does not apply in the case of Child Benefit.

Backdating of a late claim beyond 6 months can be considered only in specific circumstances whereby the failure to claim arose as the result of either incorrect information being supplied by the Department or the claimant's incapacity due to illness or infirmity.

Where the failure to claim within the prescribed time arose as a result of erroneous information supplied by staff of the Department, the claim may be backdated to the date of commencement of entitlement.

All decisions with regard to entitlement under these provisions are made by deciding officers, and can therefore be appealed to the Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO).

The Department has published information on Claims and Late Claims on www.welfare.ie.

Table: Prescribed time for making a claim and possible period(s) for backdating payments in specified conditions, for each scheme

Type of claim	Prescribed time for making a claim	Max possible period of backdate
Adoptive Benefit	First date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
Back to Work Family Dividend	Within 3 months of first date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
Bereavement Grant	Within 3 months of death of deceased	Backdate max. 6 months
Blind Pension	First date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
Carer's Allowance	First date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
Carer's Benefit	8 weeks before & after first date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
Carers Support Grant	8 weeks before the date grant payable ending on 31 Dec. of the year immediately following the year in which the grant is payable	
Child Benefit **	Within 12 months of first date of entitlement	** Back payment from date entitlement would have first existed if the claim had been made at the correct time.
Constant Attendance Allowance (OIB)	Within 3 months of first date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
Continued Payment for Qualified children	Within 13 weeks of commencing employment	Backdate max. 6 months
Death Benefit (OIB)	Within 3 months of death of deceased	Backdate max. 6 months

Type of claim	Prescribed time for making a claim	Max possible period of backdate
Disability Allowance	Within 7 days of first date entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
Disablement Benefit (OIB)	Within 3 months of first date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
Domiciliary Care Allowance	First date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
Family Income Supplement	Within 3 months of first date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
Farm Assist	First date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
Guardian's Payment (Contributory)	Within 3 months of first date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
Guardian's Payment (Non-Contributory)	Within 3 months of first date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
Health and Safety Benefit	First date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
Illness Benefit	Within 7 days of becoming unable to work	Backdate max. 6 months
Incapacity Supplement (OIB)	Within 3 months of first date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
Invalidity Pension	Within 3 months of first entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
Jobseeker's Allowance	First date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
Jobseeker's Benefit	First date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
Maternity Benefit	First date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
Medical Care	Within 6 wks of commencement of such care	Backdate max. 12 months
Occupational Injury Benefit (OIB)	Within 21 days of first day of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
One Parent Family Payment	Within 3 months of first date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
Paternity Benefit	First date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
State Pension (Contributory)	Within 3 months of first date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	First date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
Widow's Widower's or Surviving Civil Partners (Contributory)	Within 3 months of first date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months
Widow's Widower's or Surviving Civil Partners (Non-Contributory)	First date of entitlement	Backdate max. 6 months

Social Welfare Fraud Data

1673. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of sanctions issued by her Department in each of the years 2012 to 2017 as a result of non-compliance or non-engagement, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1924/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Penalty rates were introduced as a means of encouraging jobseekers to engage with activation measures and co-operate with efforts of the Department to assist them in securing employment. The Department is committed, under Pathways to Work, to incentivise the take-up of activation opportunities, including implementing sanctions for failure to engage.

The legislation underpinning the application of penalty rates is provided for in Social Welfare legislation. The application of the penalty provisions can only be applied in specific circumstances and the decision to impose a penalty can only be made by a Deciding Officer of the Department. If dissatisfied with that decision it is open to the Jobseeker to appeal to the Social Welfare Appeals Office.

Details of the numbers of penalty rates applied in the specific years up to end 2017, as sought by the Deputy, can be found below.

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total:
PR	359	1,519	3,395	5,325	6,743	10,867	16,451	45,013

JobPath Data

1674: **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons, by age and length of unemployment, who have participated in JobPath in each year since it commenced in 2013, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1925/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As the Deputy will be aware, JobPath is an employment 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 was rolled out on a phased basis over the period mid-2015 to July 2016. The numbers referred initially were low but this has increased with almost 141,000 Jobseekers having commenced with the service by the end of December 2017.

For the purposes of the JobPath service all long-term unemployed jobseekers on the Live Register are categorised into groups based on their duration of unemployment (e.g. 1- 2 years, 2 – 3 years, 3 years plus etc.).

The duration of a person’s Jobseeker’s Allowance claim is recorded in terms of days of unemployment. Jobseeker Allowance claims are made up of continuous periods of unemployment. Any two such periods not separated by more than 52 weeks is considered to be the same continuous period of unemployment - this is known as linking the claims. Long-term jobseekers that may have left the live register to go into employment for less than a year are still considered to be long-term if they reopen their claim within that period: as a result, Jobseekers retain certain entitlements (for example, no waiting days and other supplemental benefits) and are available for selection for support through the departments activation services.

The table shows the age and length of unemployment of the circa 141,000 jobseekers who have engaged with the service as of the end of December 2017, of these in excess of 52% were over 3 years unemployed.

		Client age at Referral					
Year	Duration on LR	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	55+	Total
	1-2 Years on LR	298	531	436	312	134	1711
	2-3 Years on LR	130	365	336	294	129	1254
2015	> 3 Years on LR	200	1006	958	969	490	3623
2015 Total		628	1902	1730	1575	753	6588
	Passing 12 Months on LR	466	562	445	306	124	1903
	1-2 Years on LR	3112	4290	3515	2841	1201	14959
	2-3 Years on LR	1529	2497	2160	1978	889	9053
	> 3 Years on LR	2774	10395	10139	9734	5249	38291
2016	Working Part Time on LR (>1 year)	21	235	295	271	162	984
2016 Total		7902	17979	16554	15130	7625	65190
	Passing 12 Months on LR	412	397	290	228	96	1423
	1-2 Years on LR	4315	4434	3499	2576	961	15785
	2-3 Years on LR	1683	1986	1613	1234	469	6985
	> 3 Years on LR	3254	9711	8187	7554	3321	32027
2017	Working Part Time on LR (>1 year)	628	3467	3691	3475	1612	12873
2017 Total		10292	19995	17280	15067	6459	69093

		Client age at Referral					
Year	Duration on LR	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	55+	Total
Grand Total		18822	39876	35564	31772	14837	140871

Jobseeker's Payments

1675. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons aged 45 years of age and above in receipt of jobseeker's payments, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1926/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The information requested by the Deputy is detailed in the tabular statement.

Recipients of a Jobseeker's Payment or signing for Jobseeker's Credits aged 45 years or over at 31 December 2017

-	Amount
Jobseeker's Allowance	69,785
Jobseeker's Benefit	16,309
Jobseeker's Credits Only	25,472
Total	111,836

Wage Subsidy Scheme

1676. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the wage subsidy scheme can be offered to a person (details supplied); if there are other supports available to the employer; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1940/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The wage subsidy scheme (WSS) is a targeted wage support designed to incentivise the employment of people with disabilities in the private sector. The objective of this programme is to encourage private sector employers to employ people with disabilities and so increase the numbers of people with disabilities participating in the open labour market. This is achieved by compensating employers through grant assistance where a person's disability restricts their productivity to 80% or less when compared to their peers.

The participation of potential employees on the scheme is contingent on a person having a disability and who has the capacity to work from 21 hours to 39 hours per week. For those individuals who are already in employment, the WSS may only be considered where the individual is less than 12 months in that employment. When the employee is over 12 months in the job and where a productivity shortfall on their part is putting that particular employment in jeopardy, the employee retention grant scheme (ERGS) should be applied for.

The purpose of the ERGS is to assist employers to retain employees who acquire an illness, condition or impairment which impacts on their ability to carry out their job. The scheme is structured in two stages, comprising the development and implementation of a retention strategy. The total amount available under this grant scheme is €15,000 per applicant.

The ERGS is one of the grants provided by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection under the reasonable accommodation fund. This fund assists private sector

employers to take appropriate measures to enable a person with a disability/impairment to have access to employment. The scheme's other grants include:

- Workplace Equipment/Adaptation Grant
- Personal Reader Grant
- Job Interview Interpreter Grant

Further information on the range of employment supports for people with disabilities, including application forms, can be found on the Department's website: https://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Workplace-Supports_holder.aspx

If the Deputy can provide details directly to the Department on the individual referred to a more tailored response can be provided.

Departmental Reports

1677. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when she will publish the report into access to social welfare payments by seasonal workers in County Donegal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1942/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department's main social welfare schemes for unemployed persons are the jobseeker's allowance and the jobseekers benefit schemes. Both schemes provide significant support to individuals so that they can work up to 3 days a week and still retain access to a reduced jobseeker's payment. The 2018 Estimates for my Department provide for expenditure this year on the jobseeker's schemes of €2.17 billion.

At present an individual can earn a little over €19,760 per year and still retain a small jobseeker's allowance payment, while the equivalent threshold for an individual with a qualified adult is almost €33,975 if they are both working. Where a person's part time employment ceases they can apply for jobseekers allowance which is a means tested payment or if they have the required number of contributions they may have an entitlement to jobseekers benefit.

An Taoiseach, in his previous role as Minister for Social Protection, gave a commitment at Dáil report stage of the Social Welfare Bill 2016 that he would ask officials to examine the issue of jobseeker's benefit and the treatment of part-time and seasonal workers, including those categorised as having subsidiary employment. My officials have recently completed this report on these issues which I will consider in detail.

My Department is currently collating data in relation to those who qualify for Jobseekers Benefit and who are in subsidiary employment. We will have 12 months of data gathered by May 2018 at which point I will be in a better position to make an informed decision on this issue.

Fuel Allowance Eligibility

1678. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if all employees on rural social schemes are entitled to fuel allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1954/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The fuel allowance is a payment of €22.50 per week from October to April each year to low income households to assist them with their energy costs. The allowance represents a contribution towards the energy costs of a household. It is not intended to meet those costs in full and only one allowance is paid per household.

Participants on the Rural Social Scheme (RSS) can be paid the fuel allowance where they applied for, and were awarded, the fuel allowance prior to commencing on the scheme and where they satisfy or continue to satisfy the conditions. Entitlement to the fuel allowance cannot be established after a person commences on the RSS. Not all participants on the RSS have an entitlement to the fuel allowance as they may not satisfy the fuel scheme conditions.

Where an RSS participant has an underlying entitlement to the fuel allowance - but is not in receipt of the allowance because another member of the household is receiving it - and if there is a change in circumstances e.g. the fuel allowance recipient is no longer residing at the address, then it is open to the RSS participant to apply for the fuel allowance. In these circumstances, the fuel entitlement can be reviewed and awarded provided the participant satisfies all conditions for receipt of fuel allowance.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory)

1679. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if persons previously self-employed who become carers do not receive credited contributions towards their pension entitlements, unlike PAYE employees; if she will address this anomaly, which may be affecting many self-employed persons and others who become carers; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1959/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The purpose of credited contributions (credits) is to protect social insurance entitlements by bridging gaps in an employee's social insurance record, where they are not in a position to pay PRSI, such as for period of unemployment, illness or in receipt of certain payments, including carer's allowance.

In isolation, credits do not give entitlement to social insurance benefits. In combination with paid PRSI contributions, credits can assist employees qualifying for short-term schemes such as jobseeker's benefit. Credits may also enhance the level of benefit for long-term schemes such as the level of payment of State pension contributory (SPC), but only where the individual has already met the condition relating to the minimum number of paid contributions.

To qualify for credits an individual must satisfy entitlement to the credits scheme. While there are no self-employed credits, individuals who were previously employed can access the scheme in the same manner as other workers, subject to meeting the conditions of the scheme. In general credits can only be awarded where an individual has had a recent attachment to the workforce as an employee i.e. within the last 2 years. Therefore credits are not automatically awarded to all recipients of carer's allowance.

Individuals who are caring on a full-time basis, including those in receipt of carer's allowance may, however, qualify for the homemaker's scheme. The homemaker's scheme is designed to help homemakers and carers to protect their SPC entitlement, and applies to home-making periods since 6 April 1994. It applies to the self-employed on the same basis as it does to other workers.

The homemaker's scheme provides that years spent working in the home while caring on a full-time basis for a child up to 12 years of age or an incapacitated person age 12 or over will be disregarded in calculating a person's yearly average number of contributions for the purposes of determining the rate of their entitlement to SPC. In this way the homemaker's scheme ensures that an individual's entitlement to SPC is protected during periods spent caring.

Carer's Allowance Applications

1680. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied). [1974/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment, made to persons who are providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care.

My department received an application for CA from the person concerned on the 24 November 2017.

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

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

1681. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1978/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): Following a decision of a Social Welfare Appeals Officer, the person concerned has been awarded disability allowance (DA) with effect from 4 May 2016. The first payment will be made on 31 January 2018.

Arrears of payment due will issue as soon as possible once any necessary adjustments are 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.

Disability Allowance Applications

1682. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1980/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): I confirm that an application from this lady for disability allowance (DA) was received by the Department in June 2017.

The application has been referred to a Social Welfare Inspector (SWI) for a report on the person's means and circumstances. Once the SWI has submitted his/her report to DA section, a decision will be made on the application and this lady will be notified directly of the outcome. It is expected this report will be submitted in the coming days and a decision will be made as soon as possible on this case.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

1683. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1982/18]

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

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for 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.

State Pension (Contributory) Data

1684. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of requests made by her Department to the Revenue Commissioners in each of the past five years in respect of self-employed persons applying for the contributory old age pension regarding their payment of PRSI and taxation liabilities; the number of contributory old age pensions that have not been approved as a result of the information in the same time period; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1985/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Entitlement to state pension (contributory) is assessed on the basis of an applicant's complete social insurance record and satisfaction of the eligibility conditions for the scheme applicable on the date the applicant reaches pension age.

Social welfare legislation provides that a self-employed contributor shall not be regarded as satisfying the qualifying conditions for state pension (contributory) unless all outstanding self-employment contributions have been paid. Where outstanding self-employment contributions are paid subsequent to an applicant's reaching pension age, state pension (contributory) entitlement is payable from the date on which self-employment liability has been fully discharged.

At applicant stage, the contribution records of all applicants are examined. Where there are gaps in the record of a self-employed contributor, investigation is required to ensure that all liabilities have been paid in full to the Revenue Commissioners and the date from which outstanding liabilities have been paid in full.

The following table shows the number of cases referred to Client Eligibility Services for investigation:

Year	Number of SPC enquiries [Class S cases]
2013	7,863
2014	8,267
2015	9,874
2016	10,295
2017	6,999

The most recent available figures for the number of state pension (contributory) applications disallowed for outstanding liability reasons in each of the past five years is shown in the table below. The table also shows the number of applicants who remain disallowed to date. (These figures may include applicants who have subsequently died.)

Year	Disallowed: outstanding liability for contributory pension	Remains disallowed(not subsequently awarded)
2013	983	57
2014	758	38
2015	744	51
2016	642	74
2017	521	104 (as at end October 2017)
Total	3,648	324

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Information and Communications Technology

1685. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her Department uses anti-profanity software on its email systems and online contact forms; if so, the level of human oversight that is applied to the monitoring of these softwares and their effectiveness; her views on whether persons' legitimate right to petition the Government may be blocked unintentionally by errors in the use of such softwares in determining that which qualifies as profanity being communicated in email and-or online contact forms; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2085/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department invests on an ongoing basis in traditional, defence-in-depth deployments of preventative controls like firewalls, email gateways, endpoint protection and advanced threat detection tools. My Department employs security technology that, together with a dedicated ICT security team and well defined processes, continually monitors the Department's network and services. My Department uses a number of different security systems and technologies to protect the ICT systems and data. This includes filtering systems to detect and block malware and virus attack. None of these security systems blocks or hinders communications between my Department's customers and officers of my Department. My Department does not specifically use anti-profanity software or intentionally carry out automated profanity checking on its online systems or online contact forms.

Government Information Service

1686. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protec-

tion the Government's initiatives in her Department in 2017 that promoted State services or welfare payments, public awareness on regulatory changes and public consultations that involved advertising and promotion on television, radio, newspapers and online, in tabular form; and the level of expenditure for each such initiative. [2261/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection(Deputy Regina Doherty): Details of the Department's expenditure on public awareness campaigns in 2017 are set out in the following table.

Public Awareness Campaign Costs 2017 (Includes Design)

Date	Campaign Name	Cost (VAT Inclusive)
March	MyGovID	€83,674
April	Welfare Cheats	€201,625
April	Treatment Benefit: Open to self employed	€107,889
July	Back to School Clothing & Footwear	€68,152
July	Paternity Benefit	€131,392
September	Jobsweek 2017	€3,871
September	Fuel Allowance – New Lump Sum option (Part 1)	€51,876
October	Treatment Benefit : Extension of dental, optical etc benefits	€97,031
November	Fuel Allowance – Part 2	€65,083
November	Invalidity Pension – extension to the self employed	€92,422
December	National Minimum Wage	€57,192

Foreshore Licence Applications

1687. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of foreshore licences issued in each of the years 2012 to 2017 for Lough Foyle; the persons or bodies they were issued to; the geographical location of the licences; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54463/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): My Department issued a licence to Donegal County Council in 2012, 2013 and 2014 approving the installation of temporary pontoons in Greencastle Harbour.

Commercial Rates

1688. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if an analysis has been conducted as to the impact of the commercial rates revaluation that occurred in County Waterford in 2013 on businesses in the county; and if rates collection levels by the combined Waterford local authority have improved as a result. [54614/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Commissioner of Valuation is independent in carrying out his functions under the Valuation

Acts 2001 to 2015 and my Department has no role in this regard.

The revaluation provisions in the Valuation Acts 2001-2015 provide for the revaluation of all rateable property within a rating authority area so as to reflect changes in value due to economic factors such as business turnover, differential movements in property values or other external factors and changes in the local business environment. Revaluation is an important instrument in addressing historical anomalies in relation to commercial rates for both urban and rural properties and between particular classes of property within a local authority area.

The general outcome of the revaluations conducted to date by the Valuation Office has been that about 60% of ratepayers have had their liability for rates reduced following a revaluation and about 40% had an increase.

The amount of rates payable in any calendar year is a product of the valuation set by the Commissioner of Valuation, multiplied by the Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV) decided annually by the elected members of each local authority.

It is not the purpose of a revaluation to increase or decrease the total amount of commercial rates collected by local authorities but rather to ensure that the valuations used for rating purposes are up-to-date and reflect current market conditions. Section 56 of the Valuation Acts 2001 to 2015, as amended by section 8 of the Local Government (Business Improvement Districts) Act 2006, provides that I, as Minister, can make an order directing a rating authority to limit the overall amount of income it could raise through rates in the year following a revaluation to the total amount of rates liable to be paid to it in the previous year, adjusted for inflation. Rate Limitation Orders were made for the 2014 financial year in respect of the revaluation of Waterford local authorities.

Rates income data are published by local authorities in their Annual Financial Statements, which are published as a matter of course on local authority websites. As with all local charges, the invoicing and collection of due amounts is a matter for the local authority concerned to manage in light of prevailing circumstances and in accordance with normal accountancy procedures.

Information in respect of percentage of rates collected in Waterford in the years 2013 to 2016 is set out in the following table. 2016 is the latest year for which audited local authority Annual Financial Statement data are available.

Year	Local Authority	Percentage of Rates Collected
2013	Waterford City Council	75%
	Waterford County Council	67%
	Dungarvan Town Council	47%
2014	Waterford City and County Council	72%
2015	Waterford City and County Council	79%
2016	Waterford City and County Council	81%

Water Charges Exemptions

1689. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to introduce an exemption for water charges for sports clubs, community groups and registered charities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54776/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): With effect from 1 January 2014, Irish Water is responsible for public water services. The Water Services (No. 2) Act 2013, as amended, provides that Irish Water shall collect charges from its customers in receipt of water services provided by it. The Act also provides that responsibility for the independent economic regulation of the water sector is assigned to the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) and the CRU has been given statutory responsibility for protecting the interests of customers. All non-domestic customers, including sports clubs, community groups and charities, were transferred to Irish Water under the existing charging regime of each local authority with no changes, as instructed by the CRU.

From 2001, national water pricing policy required local authorities to recover the costs of providing water services from all non-domestic users of these services, which includes sports clubs, community groups and charities. This policy provided for charges based on actual metered consumption and is consistent with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive. The existing arrangements for all non-domestic customers are remaining in place with no changes for the time being.

I understand that the CRU is progressing a review of all aspects of non-domestic water tariffs and in conjunction with Irish Water will establish an enduring non-domestic tariff framework. Information Notes are published by the CRU from time to time to inform and update stakeholders on the broad approach being pursued and setting out the proposed timeframe for the overall project and outlining details of papers to be published by the CRU for public consultation and corresponding timelines.

Irish Water Administration

1690. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding Irish Water; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54909/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Since 1 January 2014, Irish Water has statutory responsibility for all aspects of water services planning, delivery and operation at national, regional and local levels. Contracts with Irish Water are an operational matter for the utility and I have no function in such matters.

Irish Water has established a dedicated team to deal with representations and queries from public representatives. The team can be contacted via email at oireachtasmembers@water.ie or by telephone on a dedicated number, 1890 578 578.

Standards in Public Office Commission

1691. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to amend the SIPO law on foreign donations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55013/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): The Electoral Act 1997 (as amended) provides the statutory framework for dealing with political donations and sets out the regulatory regime covering a wide range of issues such as the funding of political parties; the reimbursement of election expenses; the establishment of election expenditure limits; the disclosure of election expenditure; the setting of limits on permissible donations; the prohibition of certain donations; the disclosure of donations and the registration of third parties who accept donations given for political purposes which exceed €100. The Act also provides for the independent supervision of this regime by the Standards in Public Office Commission.

Under the Act, political donations given by foreign individuals or organisations are expressly prohibited irrespective of the amount of the donation.

I have no proposals to amend the Electoral Acts in relation to foreign donations at this point in time. However, electoral law, including the provisions of the Electoral Act 1997, is subject to ongoing review in order to ensure that a robust and modern legal framework is maintained as a cornerstone in support of the operation of our democratic system.

Presidential Elections

1692. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the models being considered in terms of extending voting rights in presidential elections to citizens abroad; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1109/18]

1693. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the expected date proposals to extend voting rights in presidential elections to citizens abroad will be finalised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1110/18]

1694. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he has had meetings with his European and international counterparts to discuss the proposals to extend voting rights in presidential elections to citizens living abroad; if he has discussed with his European and international counterparts the way in which similar policies operate in their own countries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1111/18]

1695. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if proposals to extend voting rights in presidential elections to citizens living abroad, including citizens resident in Northern Ireland, will be fully costed, including the increased administrative cost and the cost of additional staff that may be required; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1112/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1692 to 1695, inclusive, together.

In response to the evolving needs of Irish society and its relationship with the wider Irish diaspora, the Government agreed in March 2017 to accept in principle the main recommendation in the Fifth Report of the Convention on the Constitution that Irish citizens resident outside the State, including citizens resident in Northern Ireland, should have the right to vote at Presidential elections and that a referendum would be held to amend the Constitution to give effect to this.

In order to inform public discourse on this significant policy change, an Options Paper was published on 22 March 2017 by my Department and the Department of Foreign Affairs and

Trade. This Options Paper, which is available on my Department's website at <http://www.housing.gov.ie/local-government/voting/presidential-elections/voting-presidential-elections-citizens-resident>, sets out a broad range of options for the extension of voting rights, international comparisons, the estimated costs involved and related resource issues as well as many of the legal, policy and logistical challenges associated with extending voting rights to Irish citizens resident outside the State.

In particular, the Options Paper addresses:

- in section 2, the options for consideration in relation to the proposal that voting rights at presidential elections be extended to citizens resident outside the State;

- in section 6, the estimated costs and resource-related issues associated with extending the right to vote at presidential elections to citizens resident outside the State; and

- in appendix 1, the position in Europe and elsewhere with regard to voting for such citizens resident overseas.

In addition, the Options Paper provided a basis for the discussion on voting rights which took place at the second Global Irish Civic Forum in Dublin on 5 May 2017. This second Forum attracted significant attention with more than 220 individuals, representing over 150 organisations, attending over the two day period. The discussions at the Forum will inform the Government's decision on a preferred option to be put to the people in a referendum.

The Government announced on 26 September 2017 that it has agreed indicative dates for the holding of referendums in 2018 and 2019, subject to the timely passage of Constitution Amendment Bills by each House of the Oireachtas. Included in the list is the proposed referendum on extending the franchise at presidential elections to Irish citizens resident outside the State which it is intended will be held on the date of the local and European elections in June 2019.

My Department will, in consultation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, bring forward an appropriate Constitution Amendment Bill on extending the franchise at Presidential elections to Irish citizens resident outside the State in good time for the holding of the referendum.

Planning Issues

1696. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of planning permissions accepted or granted for waste recycling facilities without an environmental impact statement between 1 January 2010 and 31 December 2017 in counties Mayo, Galway and Roscommon. [1533/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Planning statistics are compiled by each planning authority on an annual basis for collation and publication on my Department's website. The statistics collected relate to the total numbers of:

- Invalid applications received,
- Applications received for outline permission and full permission,
- Decisions to grant/refuse permission,
- Decisions issued within the statutory eight-week period,

- Decisions deferred, and
- Percentages for grants/refusals, decisions made within eight weeks and decisions deferred.

However, these planning statistics are not broken down by the type of development involved and so the specific information sought in the Question is, therefore, not available in my Department.

Non-Principal Private Residence Charge Exemptions

1697. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the position regarding persons who were resident abroad but own a house here and are now selling the house and have been informed that they must pay the non-principal private residence charge, which is approximately €7,200 including penalties, in view of the fact that such persons never knew that such a charge existed due to the fact they did not live here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1720/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): The Local Government (Charges) Act 2009, as amended, provides the legislative basis for the Non Principal Private Residence (NPPR) Charge. The NPPR Charge, which has since been discontinued, applied in the years 2009 to 2013 to any residential property in which the owner did not reside as their normal place of residence.

A residential property that was not in use by an owner as his or her sole or main residence is liable for the Charge. This may not necessarily be a second home; a person may have vacated a property and have been living in rented accommodation elsewhere for work or other reasons, for example, and, in such a case, the property that the owner was no longer living in is liable for the Charge, even if it was the only residential property that person owned. It is a matter for an owner, whether resident in Ireland or elsewhere, to determine if he or she has a liability and, if so, to declare that liability and pay the Charge and any late payment fees applicable.

The self-assessed Charge is set at €200 per annum and liability for it falls, in the main, on owners of rental, holiday and vacant properties. Section 6 of the 2009 Act, as amended, provides that the owner of a liable property who fails to pay the charge, in addition to him or her being liable to pay the Charge, is liable to pay to the relevant local authority a €20 late payment fee in respect of each month or part of a month in which the Charge, any late payment fee, or any part of such Charge or fee, remains unpaid.

Part 12 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 also deals with the collection of undischarged liabilities relating to the NPPR Charge. The Act provided for a period from 2 March 2014 to 31 August 2014 during which time no new late penalties were applied to existing liabilities. If payment was not made in full or if settlement terms were not agreed by the end of that period, an additional late payment fee of €120 per liability date applied on 1 September 2014. As the Charge applied in each of the years from 2009 to 2013, there were five liability dates – 31 July 2009 and 31 March for each of the years 2010 to 2013. In addition to this late payment fee to be applied per liability date, the entire NPPR liability is then increased by a factor of 50% and frozen.

Under the Act, it is a function of a local authority to collect NPPR charges and late payment fees due to it, and all charges and late payment fees imposed and payable to a local authority are under the care and management of the local authority concerned. In this regard, application of the legislation in particular circumstances is a matter for the relevant local authority.

A number of exemptions from the charge are set out in section 4 of the 2009 Act and section 4(6) provides for an exemption from the charge in a situation where a residential property is occupied rent-free as the sole or main residence of a relative of the owner and the sole or main residence of the owner is either on the same property or within two kilometres of it.

The NPPR Project Board, in conjunction with individual local authorities, undertook a media campaign in 2014 aimed at reminding non-compliant owners that additional late payment penalties applied after 31 August 2014. The extensive radio and print media campaign reminded non-compliant owners of their obligations to come forward to regularise their affairs and to take advantage of this once-off grace period. While it is a necessary principle of law that all citizens are required to be aware of relevant legal obligations and duties in respect of such charges, as is the case in other jurisdictions, it remains my view that reasonable efforts have been made to ensure that property owners have been aware of the Charge and liability dates.

Under section 77 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, my Department issued guidance to local authorities concerning matters relating to arrears of the NPPR Charge and late payment fees to ensure that a consistent national approach is adopted. The guidelines, which are available at <http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/LocalGovernment/Administration/FileDownload,37899,en.pdf>, encourage local authorities to take a proactive approach to ensure that any outstanding NPPR liabilities are discharged in the most equitable, efficient and economically beneficial manner and include guidance in respect of dealing with hardship cases. It is expected, in the majority of cases, that local authorities will collect the full NPPR Charge liability from owners. In some cases, this may be by means of arrangement by instalment. All non-compliant owners or owners with queries should log on to www.nppr.ie or, alternatively, contact their local authority to discuss any matters they wish to clarify and to make any outstanding payments.

Solar Energy Guidelines

1698. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 261 of 13 December 2017, the status of the ongoing review. [1810/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I refer to the reply to Questions Numbers 259, 260 and 261 of 13 December 2017. The position remains unchanged. *Question No. 1699 withdrawn.*

Local Government Reform

1700. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to reinstate former borough councils in County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54308/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): The Programme for a Partnership Government sets out a number of requirements in relation to local government reform. This involves the submission of a report to Government and the Oireachtas on potential measures to boost local government leadership and accountability, and to ensure that local government funding, structures and responsibilities strengthen local democracy.

The Programme also references some specific issues to be considered such as the concept

of directly elected mayors in cities, devolution of new powers to local authorities, reducing the size of local electoral areas, and town council status.

The issue raised in the Question will be addressed in this report which will be submitted to Government shortly.

Ministerial Meetings

1701. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when he last met with Louth County Council regarding the delivery of social housing. [54309/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department is in regular contact with Louth County Council regarding the delivery of their social housing programme. I will be meeting with all Local Authority Chief Executives, including Louth County Council, at the Housing Summit on 22 January 2018. Furthermore, my Department will be meeting with all Local Authority Directors of Housing on 7 February 2018 in order to accelerate and progress the social housing delivery programme.

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

1702. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to introduce an affordable housing scheme in County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54310/17]

1731. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of affordable homes provided in County Louth in 2017; the anticipated number of affordable homes to be delivered in 2018 and 2019, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54781/17]

1838. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when he plans to publish the details of the establishment of a new affordable housing scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2107/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1702, 1731 and 1838 together.

Recognising that housing affordability is a major issue for some households, several important initiatives have already been implemented under Rebuilding Ireland to stimulate housing supply at more affordable prices and rents. Such initiatives include:

- planning reforms to provide flexibility and certainty in delivering viable housing schemes and apartment developments in the right locations,

- funding of €226 million to open up 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, including funding of over €4.5 million for two strategic projects in Newtown, Drogheda and Mount Avenue, Dundalk that collectively can deliver over 400 homes by 2021, and

- the introduction of Rent Pressures Zones to moderate the rise in rents in the parts of the country where rents are highest and rising. Drogheda was designated a Rent Pressure Zone in

September 2017.

Other significant measures to promote the building of more homes, more quickly, and at more affordable prices, were also introduced in Budget 2018 through:

- Investing more in direct house-building by the State, with investment of €6 billion committed, to increase the overall delivery to 50,000 new social homes by 2021;
- Removing the Capital Gains Tax incentive to hold on to residential land;
- Escalating penalties for land hoarding;
- Providing a new, more affordable finance vehicle for builders through House Building Finance Ireland (HBFI);
- Changes to planning guidelines in relation to apartment development.

While these actions are having an impact and will have a greater impact in time, I consider that a further package of targeted measures focussed on addressing affordability is needed to enable low- to moderate-income households, that do not qualify for social housing supports, to purchase or rent homes, particularly in Dublin and other major urban areas. This will include, but will not be limited to, the deployment of €25 million Exchequer funding, over 2018 and 2019, to unlock local authority-owned lands specifically for affordable housing and further measures in relation to improving the viability of apartment development. I expect to make an announcement with regard to this further package of affordability measures in the very near future.

National Planning Framework

1703. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the way in which towns and regions will be selected for inclusion within the national planning framework; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54311/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The National Planning Framework (NPF) is intended to set a new long-term strategic planning and investment context for Ireland over the next 20 years. It will outline a high-level, national vision for Ireland for 2040, and will provide the framework and principles to manage future population and economic growth over the next 20 years (catering for 1 million extra people, 600,000 extra jobs and 500,000 extra homes).

As a national level document, the NPF will set out broad policies and proposals in relation to Ireland's major urban centres, the regions and rural areas that are essential to manage our country's strategic development over the next twenty years rather than selecting individual towns for development.

Moreover, the broad policies and proposals set out under the NPF will be further articulated at regional and local levels by the forthcoming Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs), the preparation of which has begun in each of the three regions (for completion by end-2018) and, ultimately, in City and County Development Plans.

The Regional Assemblies were established under the Local Government Act 2014 to co-ordinate the plans, including statutory development plans, and programmes of local authorities in the light of national policy and accordingly the new RSEs and the local authority statutory development plan processes will be the vehicles through which policies and proposals in rela-

tion to specific places will be elaborated in more detail.

Social and Affordable Housing Eligibility

1704. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the net income limits can be changed in the social housing assessment regulations to take into account the housing shortages across the country and the fact that many persons are now commuting longer distances for work (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54344/17]

1728. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to revise the thresholds for inclusion on the social housing list as a matter of urgency in view of the fact that current thresholds are unrealistic (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54755/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1704 and 1728 together.

The Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011 prescribe maximum net income limits for each housing authority, in different bands according to the area, with income being defined and assessed according to a standard Household Means Policy.

The income bands and the authority area assigned to each band are based on an assessment of the income needed to provide for a household's basic needs, plus a comparative analysis of the local rental cost of housing accommodation across the country. The limits also reflect a blanket increase of €5,000 introduced prior to the new system coming into operation, in order to broaden the base from which social housing tenants are drawn and thereby promote sustainable communities.

As part of the broader social housing reform agenda, a review of the income eligibility limits for social housing supports has commenced. I would expect the results of this review to be available for publication later this year.

Commercial Rates Exemptions

1705. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the legal impediment prohibiting the removal of the obligation for commercial rates payment for private providers of early years child care services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54345/17]

1717. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the commercial rates obligation for early child care providers can be removed; if consideration has been given to introducing an equalisation grant for private providers offsetting the cost of commercial rates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54564/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1705 and 1717 together.

Local authorities are under a statutory obligation to levy rates on any property used for commercial purposes in accordance with the details entered in the valuation lists prepared by the Commissioner of Valuation under the Valuation Acts 2001 to 2015. The Commissioner of Valuation has responsibility for valuation matters, including determination of relevant property

under the Acts for the purposes of rates. The levying and collection of rates are matters for each individual local authority.

The Valuation Act 2001, as amended by the Valuation (Amendment) Act 2015, provides that all buildings used or developed for any purpose, including constructions affixed thereto, are rateable unless expressly exempted under Schedule 4 of the Act. Such exempt buildings would principally include those used for public worship, education and health care provided on a not-for-profit basis, and charitable purposes. Included in the exemptions under Schedule 4 are properties occupied by parties that provide early childhood care and education on a not-for-profit basis, and properties that only provide the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme. In general, the Acts maintain the long-standing position that all properties of occupiers that operate with the intention of making a profit are rateable, including all private childcare facilities. There are no proposals under consideration for an equalisation grant in this regard.

The Acts are quite specific about the range of exemptions that can be allowed by the Commissioner of Valuation, who has no discretionary latitude to grant exemptions not covered by Schedule 4.

There are a number of avenues of redress for an occupier of rateable property who is dissatisfied with a determination of valuation made under the provisions of the Acts. Firstly, before a determination is made, there is a right to make representations to the Valuation Office in relation to a proposed valuation. If the occupier is still dissatisfied with the determination, there is a right of appeal to the Valuation Tribunal, which is an independent body set up for the purpose of hearing appeals against determinations of the Valuation Office. Also, there is a right of appeal to the Courts on a point of law.

Mortgage to Rent Scheme Data

1706. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of mortgage-to-rent applications that were made in 2016 and 2017; the number that have been approved; the banks that were involved with the successful approvals; the number that were approved in cases in which local authority mortgages were in place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54402/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Housing Agency publishes, on a quarterly basis, detailed statistical information on the operation of the MTR scheme, including the number of completed transactions by lender. This information is available on the Agency's website at the following link:

<https://www.housingagency.ie/our-services/housing-supply-services/mortgage-to-rent.aspx>.

Following a Review of the Mortgage to Rent (MTR) Scheme, published on 8 February 2017, a range of amendments to the eligibility criteria and administration of the MTR scheme came into effect to enable more properties to qualify and to make the scheme more flexible and accessible to borrowers. The Review, available at the following link: *<http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/changes-in-mortgage-to-rent-scheme/>*, explored the impediments to participation in the scheme and recommended a number of actions to make the scheme work better for borrowers.

My Department and the Housing Agency are working with all stakeholders to ensure that the actions set out in the Review are being effectively implemented to benefit a greater number of households. I am providing an additional €5m for the MTR scheme this year, which will support at least 250 additional MTR cases to be completed by Approved Housing Bodies work-

ing together with lenders using the existing MTR scheme.

The MTR Review also concluded that the current financial model of the MTR scheme may not, in its current configuration, be capable of delivering the scale of successful cases that could benefit from the scheme over time. In order to test the operability of alternative funding models for the scheme, the Housing Agency has been working with a number of financial entities who have expressed an interest in working with the MTR scheme to progress a number of alternative long-term lease arrangements. In advance of these pilots and to establish the operability of an alternative financing approach, a targeted market testing exercise has been undertaken by the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA), to test the suitability of the proposed enhanced leasing arrangements to ascertain if they would be viable for a MTR cohort, taking account of the necessity to provide a long-term stable solution for eligible households.

The responses to the market testing exercise have been reviewed by the Housing Agency and my Department. A call for Expressions of Interest from bodies interested in pursuing pilot operating models was initiated by the Housing Agency on 26 October 2017. Once the Expressions of Interest process is concluded - the extended deadline for receipt of submissions is 31 January 2018 - the Housing Agency will make recommendations to my Department as to the make-up of the pilots, which can then be initiated.

Information in relation to the Local Authority Mortgage to Rent (LAMTR) Scheme for local authority borrowers is available on my Department's website at the following link:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/house-prices-loans-and-profile-borrowers/local-authority-loan-activity>.

From the scheme's inception in 2013 to the end of 2017, a total of 370 households had benefitted from the LAMTR Scheme and all applications received by my Department from local authorities were processed.

Rent Pressure Zones

1707. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if consideration has been given to applying a rent pressure zone to Dundalk (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54406/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Residential Tenancies Acts 2004 to 2016 sets out the process through which Rent Pressure Zones can be designated. It provides that the Housing Agency, in consultation with housing authorities, may make a proposal to the Minister that an area should be considered as a Rent Pressure Zone. Following receipt of such a proposal, the Minister requests the Director of the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) to conduct an assessment of the area to establish whether or not it meets the criteria for designation and to report to the Minister on whether the area should be designated as a Rent Pressure Zone.

For an area to be designated a Rent Pressure Zone, it must satisfy the following criteria set out in section 24A(4) of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 to 2016:

(i) The annual rate of rent inflation in the area must have been 7% or more in four of the last six quarters; and

(ii) The average rent for tenancies registered in the area with the RTB in the last quarter must be above the average national rent (the National Standardised Rent in the RTB's Rent Index

Report) in the last quarter (€1,056 per month).

On 20 December 2017, the RTB published the Rent Index Report in relation to Quarter 3 2017, which includes a summary of the data used as the criteria for designating Rent Pressure Zones in relation to all Local Electoral Areas in the country. This allows all interested parties to see exactly where their area stands in relation to average rent levels and increases and possible designation. The data from the Rent Index Report relating to Dundalk are detailed in the following table:

Local Electoral Area	Quarters > 7%	Average 2017 Q3 (€)
Dundalk Carlingford	5	723.91
Dundalk South	5	881.17

While in 5 of the last 6 quarters rent inflation in Dundalk has been 7% or greater, the average monthly rent in the local electoral area of Dundalk Carlingford is €723.91 and in Dundalk South is €881.17, which are both below the average national standardised rent of €1,056 per month. Therefore, the Local Electoral Areas in Dundalk do not meet the criteria for designation at this time.

Under the Act, I have no further role or discretion in proposing areas for designation as Rent Pressure Zones or in deciding whether they should be designated. The designation process is independent and based on clear objective criteria and quantifiable evidence.

The Housing Agency will continue to monitor the rental market and may recommend further areas for designation. Where, following the procedures set out in the Act, it is found at a future date that additional areas meet the criteria, they will be designated as Rent Pressure Zones.

Water Supply Leakages

1708. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if a person in a house with an identified leak must have a water meter installed to avail of the first fix repair under the policy of Irish Water known as first fix; and if so, his views on whether this is a fair system for Irish Water customers. [54420/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): With effect from 1 January 2014, Irish Water is responsible for delivering public water services. Irish Water is also responsible for water services infrastructure including water supply pipes or drainage pipes extending from a waterworks or wastewater works to the curtilage of a private property.

Under sections 43 and 54 of the Water Services Act 2007, responsibility for maintenance and replacement of any water or wastewater pipes, connections or distribution systems that are located within the boundary of a private property rests with the owner. This was the position that pertained prior to the establishment of Irish Water, when individual local authorities held responsibility for public water services and infrastructure.

In line with broader water conservation policy objectives, Irish Water developed proposals for a First Fix Leak Repair scheme and these proposals were approved by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities or CRU (formerly known as the Commission for Energy Regulation) on 5 August 2015. The relevant policy document, Irish Water First Fix Leak Repair Scheme for Domestic Water Customers, was subsequently published by Irish Water and is available at the following weblink - <https://www.water.ie/for-home/first-fix/first-fix-leak-repair-scheme.pdf>.

I understand that to date the First Fix scheme has resulted in repairs capable of delivering savings equivalent to a combined total of 86 million litres of water a day. Under the scheme, Irish Water is assisting customers by notifying them when suspected leakage is occurring within the boundary of their property. I understand that utilising meter read data to identify the most significant leaks has proven to be key to efficient operation of the scheme. The “continuous flow alarms” generated by the water meters are the trigger to identify and initiate the First Fix repair scheme process and this allows the more significant leaks to be prioritised.

Conservation of water supplies in general continues to be a policy priority. The Report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Future Funding of Domestic Water Services (April 2017) recommended that the First Fix scheme remain in place and that further options or schemes be explored in order to address the issue of leaks within the boundaries of the users’ property. In this regard, I understand that Irish Water will be engaging with the CRU early in 2018 to assess how the benefits of the First Fix scheme may be applied to leaks on the customer side of unmetered properties.

Seaweed Harvesting Licences

1709. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the monitoring plan under consideration in his Department in respect of an application to harvest seaweed in Bantry Bay; if his attention has been drawn to concerns of local residents about this harvesting plan; if he will meet with representatives of a group (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54476/17]

1718. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the licensing of mechanical harvesting of seaweed and kelp in Bantry Bay; if he has approved the monitoring plan and associated baseline study; if so, the reason therefore; if he consulted and met with the relevant stakeholders before approving the baseline study; if this is the last remaining step before harvesting begins by the company in question; and if an environmental impact assessment was carried out regarding the proposed licence in question. [54571/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1709 and 1718 together.

The Foreshore licence in this case was approved in principle in 2011 by the then Minister. The legal documents giving effect to the licence were finalised in 2014 by the then Minister. This licence allows for the harvest of specific seaweeds in specific areas of Bantry Bay by mechanical means. In accordance with the conditions attaching to the licence in 2011, prior to the commencement of works, the licensee was required to submit a detailed monitoring plan for approval by my Department. The plan and associated baseline report were approved on 30th November last after taking into account the expert views of members of the Marine Licence Vetting Committee. Further detail of the monitoring plan and report can be found on my Department’s website at <http://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/foreshore/applications/bioatlantis-ltd>. The company is now free to commence harvesting under the terms of the licence finalised in 2014.

With regard to the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (EIA), the EIA Directive applies to a wide range of public and private projects. It is a mandatory requirement for project types listed in Annex I of the Directive, e.g. the construction of motorways and airports or the construction of installations for the disposal of hazardous waste. For project types listed in Annex II, it is up to the consenting authority to determine if an EIS is required by carrying out

EIA screening based on criteria set out in the Directive. Examples of Annex II projects include intensive fish farming, reclamation of land from the sea, extractive mining, fossil fuel storage or metal processing. An EIA may also be required where the thresholds set out in the Directive are not met (sub-threshold EIA) or where the project or activity is proposed to be carried out in a Natura 2000 site.

If the consenting authority determines that the EIA Directive applies to a project it requires that an applicant must prepare and submit an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), following which the consent authority would carry out EIA. In the case referred to, the proposed project is not within a Natura 2000 site, it is not of a class set out in Annex I of the Directive nor does it fall into Annex II; therefore, an EIS was not required. I should, however, point out that the Marine Licence Vetting Committee considered all material pertaining to the application and concluded that subject to compliance with specific conditions, the proposed harvesting was not likely to have a significant negative impact on the marine environment. In the case of this licence those conditions included a detailed monitoring report and an associated baseline study.

Representatives of the named group met with officials on 28th November 2017. They have requested a further meeting and I have agreed to meet with a delegation.

Water and Sewerage Schemes

1710. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he has concluded his negotiations with a group (details supplied) on the issue of increasing the subventions to the schemes; and if so, his plans to include the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government in this discussion prior to finalising changes to the existing scheme. [54477/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): In late 2017, my Department conducted a review of group water schemes' subsidies. The review involved discussions with the National Federation of Group Water Schemes, the representative body of the group water sector. Discussions concluded in December when I approved the revised subsidy levels. The new subsidy arrangements, endorsed by a special delegate conference of the Federation on 13 December 2017, came into effect on 1 January 2018.

The changes implement the recommendation contained in the report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Future Funding of Domestic Water Services, endorsed by both Houses of the Oireachtas in April 2017, that there be equity of treatment and equivalent financial support between households using public water services and those availing of private water services.

The revised subsidy levels are as follows:

1) For the annual subsidy towards the operation and maintenance costs of group water schemes providing a supply of water for domestic purposes (known as 'Subsidy A'):

The maximum subsidy per house in private group water schemes has increased from €140 per household to €231. An increased maximum subsidy of €281 per household is available for small schemes of less than 100 houses that are willing, in the interests of providing in the long-term a more sustainable water supply to their members, to progress towards rationalisation or amalgamation with other schemes.

The maximum subsidy per house for public group water schemes has increased from €70 per household to €115. These are schemes that supply their members with water that is provided by Irish Water.

The portion of costs than can be recouped by group water schemes has also increased. Typically up to 60% of costs have been covered by the subsidy payments. This has increased to 85%. There are also changes and simplifications to how these costs are assessed.

2) For the additional subsidy that is paid towards the costs of group water schemes that have long-term Operation and Maintenance Contracts (for example, as part of a Design Build Operate project) for the delivery of water (known as ‘Subsidy B’):

There has been an increase in the level of volumetric costs incurred by group water schemes operating under these contracts that is recoupable, from 60% to 85%. This will allow for a greater portion of costs to be included within the subsidy payment.

Residential Tenancies Board Data

1711. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of determination orders made by the Residential Tenancies Board in the past five years on registered tenancies; the figures on determination orders for tenancies in County Mayo for the past five years; the number of determination orders made for overholding and rental arrears for the country and County Mayo, respectively, in the past five years, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54504/17]

1712. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the average waiting times for the processing of a dispute from the initial submission to an adjudication of the dispute and from the adjudication to the issuing of a determination order for the past five years; the number of appeals that have been made to adjudication orders in the past five years for the country and County Mayo, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54505/17]

1713. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of requests for the Residential Tenancies Board to pursue enforcement orders; the number of enforcement orders that were pursued by the board in the past five years; the average wait time for a decision by the board undertaking to seek an enforcement order; the criteria considered by the board in determining whether to seek an enforcement order in a matter; the budget allocated to cover the costs to the board of seeking such enforcement orders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54506/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1711 to 1713, inclusive, together.

Details of determination orders, dispute processing times, appeals and requests for enforcement to the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) over the past five years, are not held by my Department.

Each year, the RTB publishes information on its activities in its annual report, including disputes and enforcement related activities. Full details of expenditure incurred by the RTB in the performance of its activities are also contained in its annual accounts. The RTB annual reports are available on the Board’s website at

<http://www.rtb.ie/media-research/publications/annual-reports>.

Insofar as the remaining information requested by the Deputy is available from the RTB, 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, Members of the Oireachtas seeking information relating to the RTB can email their queries to the dedicated email address of the RTB, at OireachtasMembersQueries@rtb.ie.

Election Management System

1714. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to link PPS numbers to the voter registration process in order that those turning 18 years of age are automatically on the voting register; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54515/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): The preparation of the register of electors is a matter for each local authority, as a registration authority. It is the duty of registration authorities to ensure, as far as possible and with the cooperation of the public, the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the register. Electoral law provides for an entitlement rather than an obligation to be registered as an elector when eligibility criteria, including reaching the age of 18 years, are met.

Work has, however, commenced on the modernisation of the voter registration process, in the context of the potential need to facilitate the registration of voters resident outside the State, in the event of an extension of the franchise at Presidential elections being approved by the people in a referendum. This will deliver benefits by providing for the registration of all voters in an efficient and user-friendly manner, while also, vitally, protecting the integrity of the system. All aspects of voter registration, including the legal provisions, will be reviewed as part of this project.

Local Authority Housing Funding

1715. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 245 of 22 November 2017, if he will address a series of queries (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54528/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department has ongoing engagement with all the local authorities regarding the delivery of social housing through all funding streams. This includes quarterly meetings of the technical staff, of both my Department and the local authorities, to review progress on all projects. These engagements can also involve site visits to review project activity at first hand. These quarterly meetings and the other ongoing contacts between the local authorities and my Department confirm delivery of projects and identify delays where these arise. As with all construction activity, a range of issues can give rise to delays with construction projects and in such cases, actions to avoid or minimise delays are explored between the technical staff.

In addition to my Department's direct engagement with the local authorities, they also make quarterly statistical returns to my Department on their social housing delivery, including details of the construction schemes started and finished in their areas, as well as the number of new homes completed by the local authorities and approved housing bodies. These returns are collated and published on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision>.

Statistics on the social housing delivery for the three local authority areas referenced by the Deputy are included in these statistics, from 2010 to the end of Quarter 3 of 2017. Information

on Quarter 4 of 2017 is currently being finalised for publication.

The linking of delivery to the capital funding provided to the local authorities, is straightforward: funding to the local authorities from my Department is provided based directly on the costs incurred in the delivery of social housing. For example, the funding drawn down by a local authority over the course of a construction project is directly in line with the progress in the construction activity. For a housing acquisition, a local authority draws down funding when it has acquired the property.

My Department now publishes a quarterly Social Housing Construction Status Report, which lists all such projects that are on site, are undergoing planning and design, or have been completed since the commencement of Rebuilding Ireland. The latest Status Report is for Quarter 3, 2017 and is available on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/rebuilding-ireland/minister-murphy-announces-additional-eu100m-housing-and-homelessness-2017>.

Homeless Persons Data

1716. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of homeless persons reported by his Department in County Wicklow (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54563/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department publishes data on a monthly basis regarding the number of homeless persons accommodated in all forms of emergency accommodation funded and overseen by housing authorities. These reports are based on data provided by housing authorities and are produced through the Pathway Accommodation & Support System (PASS), the single integrated national data information system on State-funded emergency accommodation arrangements overseen by housing authorities. The monthly reports outline the number of individuals accommodated in emergency accommodation over a designated survey week, including a breakdown by local authority. The reports are published on my Department's website and can be accessed using the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/homelessness/other/homelessness-data>.

The long-term solution to homelessness is to increase the supply of new homes and the provision of social housing supports as envisioned in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness. During the course of 2017 almost 26,000 social housing solutions were provided via housing authorities. My Department, local authorities and approved housing bodies will continue to work closely, quickly and proactively to identify further solutions and increase social housing solutions so that we can continue to give those experiencing homelessness the support they need.

Question No. 1717 answered with Question No. 1705.

Question No. 1718 answered with Question No. 1709.

An Bord Pleanála Applications

1719. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the reason for the delay by An Bord Pleanála in dealing with applications from quarries and other entities for substitute consent, with some cases taking more than two years to decide; if he has received a request from An Bord Pleanála for further resources to clear this backlog of

cases in view of the fact these delays are hampering economic development in many areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54575/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Substitute consent is essentially a form of retrospective development consent for development requiring environmental impact assessment (EIA), screening for EIA or appropriate assessment (AA). The substitute consent procedure is set out in Part XA of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and related provisions specifically for quarries are set out in section 261A of that Act. These provisions were inserted into the 2000 Act, following a 2008 Judgment of the European Court of Justice, which found that, generally speaking, provisions of the 2000 Act permitting applications for planning permission to retain existing developments requiring environmental impact assessment (EIA) or appropriate assessment (AA) were contrary to EU law.

The substitute consent process involves the preparation of a remedial environmental impact statement or a remedial Natura impact statement, or both as appropriate, stating the significant effects of the development on the environment or the European site concerned, the remedial or mitigation measures taken or proposed to be taken in relation to those effects and a timescale for the taking of such proposed measures.

Since the introduction of these provisions, the Board has received a total of 141 substitute consent applications of which 131 have been determined, leaving a total of 10 such cases on hand at the end of 2017. Nine of these cases relate to quarry developments and one relates to temporary holiday accommodation. The fact that 8 cases on hands have been extended beyond the statutory objective period for a decision is indicative of the generally complex nature of these applications, involving EIA or AA, or both, and often complex site-specific circumstances. In certain cases, this has resulted in the Board seeking further information from applicants and engaging in correspondence with relevant participants in the cases.

The Board is now focused on making a determination on the remaining substitute consent cases as soon as possible and I am satisfied that it has sufficient resources in this regard.

Local Authority Finances

1720. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the progress made in implementing the high level intervention recommended in the 2013 report of the Waterford reorganisation implementation group (details supplied). [54601/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): It is a matter for each local authority to determine its own spending priorities in the context of the annual budgetary process having regard to both locally identified needs and available resources. The elected members of a local authority have direct responsibility in law for all reserved functions of the authority, which includes adopting the annual budget, and are democratically accountable for all expenditure by the local authority.

Prior to unification, at the end of 2013, the combined revenue deficit of Waterford County Council, Dungarvan Town Council and Waterford City Council stood at €8.86m. The audited 2016 annual financial statement of Waterford City and County Council shows a revenue deficit of €7.62m, an improvement of €1.24m.

Prior to unification, at the end of 2013, the combined borrowings of the three authorities stood at €135m. The audited 2016 annual financial statement of Waterford City and County Council shows total borrowings of €125m, a reduction of €10m.

Savings from the reformed structures introduced in 2014 cannot be measured solely in terms of a reduction of overall expenditure or savings. The reforms have resulted in many non-financial benefits due to the single administrative structure across each county which has reduced duplication with improved services, which will bring about cost reduction over time.

Local Authority Housing Data

1721. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of local authority dwellings that have been built in each housing authority area in the past 20 years; and the number of these that were acquired under the tenant purchase scheme, by council area, for this period. [54602/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Through the supports made available from my Department, 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 built and purchased 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 four of 2017 will be published once finalised.

Information on sale of local authority houses up to 2016 is also available by local authority on my Department's website at the following link:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/social-and-affordable/other-local-authority-housing-scheme-statistics>.

Local Authority Housing Data

1722. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the stock of social housing in each of the years 2010 to 2017, by local authority; and the stock owned by local authorities and approved housing bodies respectively, in tabular form. [54642/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Statistics in relation to the social housing stock of local authorities are gathered by the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC), in their annual reports on Performance Indicators in Local Authorities. These reports provide a range of information in relation to social housing stock, including the total number of dwellings in each local authority area.

The most recent NOAC report covers the 2015 period and is available at the following link: <http://noac.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/2015-PI-Report.pdf>. Prior to NOAC's work in this area, the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) published Performance Indicator Reports from 2004 to 2014, which are available on their website at the following link: <http://www.lgma.ie/en/serviceindicators/2004to2013>.

My Department does not record details of the number of houses owned by approved housing bodies. However, details on the number of accommodation units delivered by approved

housing bodies under my Department's Capital Assistance Scheme, Capital Advance Leasing Facility and the Capital Loan and Subsidy Scheme since 2010 are available on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordble/overall-social-housing-provision>.

Local Authority Boundaries

1723. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if consideration will be given to allow the Sligo borough boundary to be increased (details supplied) in view of the fact the borough boundary has not been increased in line with spatial growth; the way in which this could be done to take into effect the true population of the Sligo urban area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54722/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): The Borough District of Sligo was determined in the County of Sligo Local Electoral Areas and Municipal Districts Order 2014. Any alteration in the borough district would be a matter for consideration in light of the review by the relevant local electoral areas boundary committee which is to report not later than 13 June 2018.

Irish Water Administration

1724. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the reason Irish Water is refusing or is unable to repay individual persons on the basis that they originally overpaid and that Irish Water has no system in place to process these specific repayments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54737/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Since 1 January 2014, Irish Water has statutory responsibility for all aspects of water services planning, delivery and operation at national, regional and local levels.

Payment arrangements, including arrangements where overpayments occur, are an operational matter for Irish Water, subject to the policy approved by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities. I understand that Irish Water does, and will continue to, refund customers who contact them regarding valid overpayments. Verified overpayments for active non-domestic accounts can be used as credits toward future bills, or refunded by cheque where the account is up-to-date and/or closed. In the case of domestic water accounts, verified overpayments will be refunded by cheque. Customers who want to seek refunds for overpayments should contact Irish Water on 1850 448 448.

Irish Water has established a dedicated team to deal with representations and queries from public representatives on specific issues relating to water services. The team can be contacted via email to oireachtasmembers@water.ie or by telephone on a dedicated number, 1890 578 578.

Local Authority Rates

1725. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if local authorities send a copy of their RA16 schedule of uncollected rates to him annually; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54749/17]

1726. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if a local authority's RA16 schedule of uncollected rates is a public document; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54750/17]

1727. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his views on whether a local authority's RA16 schedule of uncollected rates should be available to be viewed on request by elected members of a particular local authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54751/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1725 to 1727, inclusive, together.

Local authorities are under a statutory obligation to levy rates on any property used for commercial purposes in accordance with the details entered in the valuation lists prepared by the independent Commissioner of Valuation under the Valuation Acts 2001 to 2015. The levying and collection of rates are matters for each individual local authority.

The form RA16 schedule of uncollected rates operated under Article 75 of the Public Bodies Order 1946. This Order, and its schedule of prescribed forms, was revoked by the Local Government (Financial Procedures and Audit) Regulations 2002. The 2002 Regulations were in turn revoked by the Local Government (Financial and Audit Procedures) Regulations 2014.

Regulation 26 of the Local Government (Financial and Audit Procedures) Regulations 2014 sets out the procedure for the preparation by a local authority of a schedule of uncollected rates at the close of the financial year and includes instruction to the Chief Executive to submit a report on the prepared schedule to the members of the local authority at the next practicable meeting of the Council. Such schedules are not submitted to me or my Department. Furthermore, a list of uncollected rates and ratepayers may be published in one or more newspapers circulating in the administrative area of the authority and on the local authority's website.

Question No. 1728 answered with Question No. 1704.

Departmental Funding

1729. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the name and number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from his Department 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 amount of money they have spent on this particular campaign during that time; the number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from his Department that have expended resources seeking the retention of the eighth amendment; the amount of funding these organisations have received from the State in the past five years; and the amount of money they have spent on this particular campaign during that time. [54769/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department has a wide and diverse business agenda. Each year, in order to support delivery on this agenda, my Department allocates significant resources to a broad range of organisations, including local authorities, dedicated agencies and non-statutory bodies, as well as to individuals. The views of any organisation on the constitutional provisions referred to in the Question do not arise for consideration in the context of the business of my Department and such information is not held in my Department.

Local Authority Housing Data

1730. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of social and voluntary housing units allocated by Louth County Council under the various methods of delivery in 2017; the number of units expected to be allocated by the local authority; the location of the projects currently planned and/or under construction in 2018 and 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54780/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The allocation of social housing supports to qualified households is a matter for the local authority concerned, in accordance with its allocation scheme made in accordance with section 22 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and associated Regulations.

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.

Provisional details on the number of properties nationally purchased and built in all local authority areas, for letting to those on the social housing waiting lists in 2017, are available on my Department’s website at the following links:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/rebuilding-ireland/social-housing-delivery-2017-ministers-statement>.

http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/attachments/rebuilding_ireland_progress_against_targets_14.01.2018.xlsx

My Department and I are in regular contact with all local authorities, including Louth County Council, in order to accelerate and progress the social housing delivery programme. In relation to social housing construction activity in general, my Department publishes status reports on a quarterly basis, of social housing construction schemes for all local authority areas, showing details such as their locations and a range of information relating to their advancement.

The most recent of these reports covers the period up to the end of quarter 3 of 2017. It includes information on the delivery of over 12,000 new social housing homes, which are currently approved and progressing through planning, design, and construction, or have been completed in 2016 and to the end of quarter 3 of 2017. The report can be accessed at the following link: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/housing-construction-report-q3/>

In the case of Louth County Council, the report includes details of some 37 construction schemes which are at various stages of advancement and which will yield in the region of 570 units, once completed. It will be these and other schemes that are brought forward that will form the basis for social housing construction delivery in Louth under Rebuilding Ireland to 2021. The precise timing for the advancement of each of these projects, including completion dates and tenancing, is a matter for Louth County Council and the approved housing bodies concerned, in the first instance. I can assure you that my Department will continue to engage actively with all local authorities, including Louth County Council, to deliver social housing through all available avenues, with a particular emphasis on additional construction projects.

Question No. 1731 answered with Question No. 1702.

Foreshore Licence Applications

1732. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 622 of 21 November 2017, the names and qualifications of all persons involved in the decision making process at the statutory screening stage of the environmental impact assessment relating to the foreshore licence application for a project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54790/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report for the Marine Institute (MI) foreshore licence application for an underwater fibre optic cable at Spiddal, Co. Galway (FS005751) was completed by Water and Marine Advisory Engineer, Mr Edwin Mooney of my Department's Water and Marine Advisory Unit (WMAU). Internal advisers in the WMAU are appointed to their roles on the basis that they have the appropriate professional qualifications and experience commensurate with my Department's role in foreshore consenting.

All aspects of the application were assessed including the application form and supporting documentation, environmental reports, submissions received through the prescribed bodies and public consultation process as well as the applicant's responses. The assessment process provides for a determination of how likely a project might be to have significant effects on the environment.

Local Authority Housing Maintenance

1733. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if funding will be made available to Mayo County Council under the energy retrofitting programme or other related schemes to fund the carrying out of works, including insulation and replacement of windows and doors, in residential dwellings; the date on which such funding will be made available; the amount to be allocated in this funding; the amount of funding made available to all local authorities for such works in the past five years, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54793/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Local authorities are currently undertaking an ambitious programme of insulation retrofitting, with the support of my Department, on the least energy efficient social homes. Funding of some €115.7 million has been provided from 2013 to the end of 2017 to improve energy efficiency and comfort levels in almost 64,000 local authority homes, benefitting those at risk of fuel poverty and making a significant contribution to Ireland's carbon emissions reduction targets and energy reduction targets for 2020. Details of the funding provided and the number of units upgraded by local authority under the Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme since 2013 are provided in the attached table.

The Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme is being implemented in a number of phases: Phase 1 commenced in 2013 and is focused on providing attic/roof insulation and the less intrusive cavity wall insulation in all relevant properties while Phase 2 of the Programme, which has been piloted in both Fingal and Westmeath County Councils, will focus on the external fabric upgrade of those social housing units with solid/hollow block wall construction. Funding may also be provided under Phase 2 to upgrade poorly performing windows and doors in specific circumstances.

The Voids Programme introduced by my Department in 2014, also provides funding for en-

ergy efficiency works to local authority housing. During the period 2014 to 2017, works were carried out on 7,160 units under this Programme supported by funding of €29.8m from my Department. This funding is in addition to the specific Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme information outlined in the attached table.

In 2018, funding of €35 million is available for energy efficiency works under both programmes. The main focus of the available funding for the Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme will be on the completion of the remaining Phase 1 works and formally rolling out Phase 2. My Department will, shortly, be asking local authorities including Mayo County Council to submit details of their work proposals and related funding requirements for this Programme in 2018. Funding allocations will be determined following assessment of the local authority returns.

PQ 54793/17 : Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme –Units & Funding 2013 - 2017

Local Authority	2013		2014		2015		Units
	Units	Funding€	Units	Funding€	Units	Funding€	
Carlow	179	329,763	262	385,922	290	788,864	53
Cavan	180	341,138	525	850,818	598	775,874	302
Clare	366	635,724	333	498,635	298	518,285	175
Cork City	397	1,091,105	950	2,002,047	2,329	3,260,660	2,128
Cork County	510	1,223,799	819	1,079,181	1,181	1,340,036	1,622
Donegal	235	325,561	526	800,503	453	891,633	380
Dublin City	449	3,131,363	3303	5,244,209	2,469	3,828,503	496
Dun Laoghaire / Rathdown	757	1,351,270	1058	2,009,876	369	957,237	75
Fingal	2135	3,262,813	146	1,897,600	326	1,548,500	207
Galway City	167	321,828	319	497,190	383	777,569	874
Galway County	802	761,261	325	390,515	290	625,670	461
Kerry	69	494,824	538	468,715	441	549,315	108
Kildare	201	453,614	694	1,528,046	311	617,455	468
Kilkenny	415	776,234	212	417,279	260	396,662	21
Laois	333	482,937	512	753,953	402	555,936	51
Leitrim	146	258,978	164	254,259	550	308,382	158
Limerick City	245	404,883					
Limerick County	104	396,163	545	964,754	41	65,000	0
Longford	521	1,147,820	227	370,286	142	321,974	0
Louth	194	182,866	430	636,718	502	879,880	761
Mayo	193	481,774	131	410,361	216	464,238	131
Meath	185	642,557	405	676,837	577	1,079,905	526
Monaghan	213	335,406	240	419,118	336	325,345	0
Offaly	269	360,276	217	237,467	694	553,963	287
Roscommon	90	186,232	422	472,438	202	232,886	107
Sligo	189	337,015	265	344,450	624	652,028	280
South Dublin	223	712,114	601	1,828,879	390	647,231	346

		2013		2014		2015	
Local Authority	Units	Funding€	Units	Funding€	Units	Funding€	Units
Tipperary North	898	1,707,438					
Tipperary South	322	528,106	689	1,301,342	0	810,434	223
Waterford City	68	570,878					
Waterford County	286	340,411	636	766,288	605	1,859,600	0
Westmeath	753	1,079,494	968	859,733	200	489,788	131
Wexford	757	971,133	1263	1,031,290	298	446,196	59
Wicklow	256	1,324,927	285	1,325,039	225	334,732	873
Totals:*	13,107	€26,951,705	18,010	€30,723,748	16,002	€26,903,781	11,303

2016		2017		2013 - 2017
Funding€	Units	Funding€	Total Units	Total Funding€
48,750	59	169,812	843	1,723,111
327,346	54	79,337	1659	2,374,513
260,960	116	65,522	1288	1,979,126
4,593,455	922	1,761,898	6726	12,709,165
2,913,930	220	280,658	4284	6,837,604
797,268	480	754,856	2074	3,569,821
670,496	1440	1,990,878	8157	14,865,449
182,956	0	0	2259	4,501,339
983,250	0	0	2814	7,692,163
2,344,707	25	44,936	1768	3,986,230
774,437	0	0	1878	2,551,883
146,213	334	311,106	1490	1,970,173
1,224,403	180	393,189	1854	4,216,707
147,093	180	312,184	1088	2,049,452
77,999	0	0	1298	1,870,825
173,231	0	0	1018	994,850
0	0	0	935	1,830,800
0	0	0	890	1,840,080
954,333	120	65,764	2007	2,719,561
330,567	20	117,105	691	1,804,045
874,625	50	113,920	1743	3,387,844
0	25	155,359	814	1,235,228
301,861	0	0	1467	1,453,567
29,576	535	444,813	1356	1,365,945
243,399	0	0	1712	1,576,892
748,330	391	761,731	1951	4,628,617
326,827	172	282,233	2304	4,956,380

2016		2017		2013 - 2017
Funding€	Units	Funding€	Total Units	Total Funding€
0	0	0	1595	3,537,177
863,517	55	434,441	2107	3,726,973
206,428	20	22,082	2397	2,677,129
1,986,878	0	0	1639	4,971,576
€22,532,835	5,398	€8,665,268	63,820*	€115,777,337*

(*Figures include Phase 1, some Phase 2 (2015/2016/2017) and special projects outside Phase 2.)

Pyrite Remediation Programme Expenditure

1734. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will request the pyrite board to increase the allowances for accommodation costs during remediation in view of the substantial rise in rents since the scheme was introduced. [54807/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): The Pyrite Resolution Act 2013 provides the statutory framework for the Pyrite Remediation Scheme and while the Act provides that the scheme can be amended, replaced or revoked, this can only be done in accordance with the scope of the Act. In this regard, any proposal to revise the pyrite remediation scheme is ultimately a matter for the Pyrite Resolution Board and would require detailed consideration of the evidence to support the case for an amendment to the scheme.

The pyrite remediation scheme is a scheme of “last resort” and is limited in its application and scope. The scheme is applicable to dwellings which are subject to significant damage attributable to pyritic heave established in accordance with I.S. 398-1:2013 - Reactive pyrite in sub-floor hardcore material – Part 1: Testing and categorisation protocol. In addition, applicants under the scheme must be able to demonstrate to the Pyrite Resolution Board that they have no practicable options, other than under the scheme, to secure the remediation of their homes.

The scheme provides for the recoupment of the vouched cost of alternative accommodation, furniture removal and storage subject to limits of €3,000 and €2,500 (inclusive of VAT), respectively. However, where a scheme participant can satisfy the Housing Agency, who will be making the payments, in advance that suitable rental accommodation cannot be obtained for €3,000 or less the expenses for the accommodation and furniture removal can be combined, subject to the overall limit of €5,500.

My Department understands that the Pyrite Resolution Board undertakes periodic reviews of the combined accommodation costs limit and monitors rental increases in the private rental sector in Ireland based on regulatory data provided by the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) and the Economic and Social Research Institute (ERSI).

My Department is in regular contact with the Pyrite Resolution Board and the Housing Agency in relation to the implementation of the scheme and is satisfied that the arrangements that are currently in place provide the necessary flexibility to support scheme participants in meeting their alternative accommodation needs while their homes are under remediation.

Approved Housing Bodies

1735. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the reason housing associations, such as an association (details supplied), are not charging tenants a differential rent. [54921/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Where social housing units are provided by Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) under the Capital Assistance Scheme, my Department's guidance states that rents should be at levels which are reasonable having regard to tenant's income and the outlay of the AHB on the accommodation.

In the past where social tenants in such properties considered that the rent was unaffordable they could apply for Rent Supplement from the Department of Social Protection to help them meet the costs of their accommodation. However, it is currently my Department's policy that any new tenants who find themselves in this position should be catered for under the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS). The Department of Social Protection will assess nominated households for Rent Supplement, and agree the likely level of support with the household moving directly on to RAS with the Rent Supplement rate being paid to the AHB via RAS.

Accordingly the tenant referred to in the question should pursue with Westmeath County Council the matter of moving to RAS.

Planning Guidelines

1736. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the statutory instrument pertaining to the rules applying to the change of use of buildings from commercial to residential property will be enacted. [54940/17]

1743. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the measures or policy initiatives in place to facilitate the conversion of commercial premises to residential; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55240/17]

1778. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the date by which he plans to have regulations in place for change of use from commercial to residential; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1414/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1736, 1743 and 1778 together.

Action 5.9 of Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness committed to reviewing planning legislation to allow the change of use of vacant commercial units in urban areas, including vacant or under-utilised areas over ground-floor premises, into residential units without having to go through the planning process. This proposal is also incorporated in Action 6 of the Action Plan for Rural Development, launched in January 2017.

My Department has drafted the necessary revisions to the planning regulations to give effect to this action and draft exempted development regulations were laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas on 13 December 2017 in this regard. It is intended that the new regulations, which, as set out in the Planning and Development Act 2000, will require the approval of both Houses, will be made as soon as possible.

Traveller Accommodation

1737. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of Travellers evicted under section 10 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992 in 2016 and 2017. [55105/17]

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 traveller accommodation, including a national framework of policy, legislation and funding. My Department has no role in the direct management and maintenance of sites. In relation to evictions under section 10 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992, this is a matter for the relevant local authority and my Department does not hold the specific information requested.

Traveller Accommodation

1738. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of Travellers who have been asked to move by a local authority from their accommodation due to fire safety concerns in 2016 and 2017. [55106/17]

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. This responsibility includes carrying out the necessary health and safety checks on individual traveller halting sites, and where appropriate, taking necessary action to remedy the situation.

My Department's role is to ensure that there are adequate structures and supports in place to assist the authorities in providing traveller accommodation, including a national framework of policy, legislation and funding. However, my Department has no role in the direct management and maintenance of sites and does not hold the specific information requested.

Compulsory Purchase Orders

1739. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of homes acquired by compulsory purchase order by each local authority in tabular form. [55119/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): While the specific information requested by the Deputy is not collected by my Department, the following information has been received from local authorities in respect of the years 2013-2017 and is set out in the following table.

It should be noted that these figures include the compulsory purchase of dwellings for housing purposes as well as for other purposes, including the provision of roads.

Local Authority	Number of homes acquired by CPO 2013-2017
Carlow	16
Cavan	0
Clare	5
Cork City	43 further homes are with An Bord Pleanála for CPO decision in January 2018
Cork County	2
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	No return
Donegal	No return
Dublin City	11
Fingal	0
Galway City	3
Galway County	0
Kerry	2
Kildare	4
Kilkenny	0
Laois	0
Leitrim	0
Limerick	4
Longford	0
Louth	46
Mayo	2
Meath	0
Monaghan	20 Some of the properties acquired are not capable of immediate accommodation without significant refurbishment. The Council is preparing to convert some into social housing and offer the remainder for sale.
Offaly	No return
Roscommon	2
Sligo	16
South Dublin	10
Tipperary	0
Waterford	1 Another 1 is currently with An Bord Pleanála for CPO decision.
Westmeath	0
Wexford	2
Wicklow	3

Housing Assistance Payment Eligibility

1740. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will address the difficulty facing RAS tenants who cannot enter the HAP scheme until their period of termination notice from a RAS tenancy has elapsed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55125/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

There are more than 50,000 households currently having their housing needs met via the Housing Assistance Payment scheme (HAP) and the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS). A key principle of the HAP scheme is that eligible households source their own accommodation in the private rented sector, which best suits their needs in their area of choice. This is distinct from RAS, which is a different type of social housing support, where the tenant may not always find their own accommodation and instead are allocated a dwelling in accordance with Section 22 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009. Unlike HAP, where a RAS tenancy is ending, the local authority retains the responsibility to source further accommodation for that household.

Under the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014, which provides for HAP, a household in receipt of another form of social housing support, such as accommodation provided under the RAS, will not be generally eligible for HAP. Section 45 (5) of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014 does allow for the provision of HAP where a household is currently residing in another form of social housing support, except in emergency circumstances. The ending of a RAS tenancy does not fall within the meaning of an emergency as prescribed by that section of the legislation.

My Department continues to keep the operation of the HAP scheme under review. In order to provide greater equity of options between social housing tenants, and in light of the current private rental market, my Department is currently exploring how greater flexibility of movement between allocated social housing supports and HAP could be facilitated. This may require legislative change. In general, I am satisfied with the operation of HAP and I consider it to be a key vehicle for meeting housing need and fulfilling the ambitious programme outlined under the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness.

Housing Adaptation Grant Eligibility

1741. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will review regulations affecting local authorities' housing grants for persons with a disability to take into consideration the greater independence and the changing position of persons with a disability reflecting the social model of disability; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55126/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): I have no plans to review the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability at this time. The terms and conditions governing the schemes were examined in 2013 by a review group that included representatives of grant beneficiaries and the local authorities. They considered how the benefits of the grants could be spread as widely as possible to achieve fairness and value for money in the grants process.

I am satisfied that the grants continue to support persons with a disability to undertake adaptations to their homes to make them more suitable for their needs, thereby allowing them to live with greater independence.

Departmental Properties

1742. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the vacant properties and land not in use, owned, rented or leased by his Department or by bodies and agencies under the aegis of his Department by square footage for buildings and

acres for land, in tabular form; the address and location of these properties; and the last date of occupancy or use of these properties. [55215/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department is not the registered owner of any property or land holding. The Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland are the registered owners of any property in state ownership that is occupied by my Department. With regard to premises and sites occupied by my Department under rent or leases, in general these are rented or leased by the OPW. When my Department vacates a property or it becomes unused, full responsibility for its utilisation reverts to the OPW.

The information requested in relation to bodies under the aegis of my Department is a matter for the individual bodies concerned. Arrangements have been put in place by each Agency to facilitate the provision of information directly to members of the Oireachtas. The contact email address for each agency is set out in the following table.

Agency	Email address
An Bord Pleanála	Oireachtasqueries@pleanala.ie
Ervia, Gas Networks Ireland	oireachtas@ervia.ie
Housing Finance Agency	oireachtas.enquiries@hfa.ie
Housing Sustainable Communities Agency	publicreps@housingagency.ie
Irish Water	oireachtasmembers@water.ie
Local Government Management Agency	corporate@lgma.ie.
Ordinance Survey Ireland	Oireachtas@osi.ie
Property Registration Authority	reps@prai.ie
Pyrite Resolution Board	oireachtasinfo@pyriteboard.ie
Residential Tenancies Board	OireachtasMembersQueries@rtb.ie
Valuation Office	reps@valoff.ie

Question No. 1743 answered with Question No. 1736.

Approved Housing Bodies

1744. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the impact that reclassification of tier 3 approved housing bodies as on the Government balance sheet in early 2018 would have on the Government debt, Government expenditure and capital spending plans in each of the years 2018 to 2021 and social housing construction and acquisition targets in each of the years 2018 to 2021; the contingency plans the Government has in place to deal with such a reclassification in early 2018 in particular to ensure that such an eventuality does not disrupt the supply of new social housing by AHBs in each of the years 2018 to 2020; and the plans the Government has in place to see a reversal of such reclassification if EUROSTAT accepts the CSO recommendation to designate AHBs and Government entities. [55284/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): As part of a review commissioned by Eurostat, the EU Statistical Office, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) were asked in October 2016 to review the classification of Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) for Government accounting purposes.

The classification was last reviewed in 2014, with a recommendation from the CSO to Eurostat at the time that these Bodies would remain outside of the General Government Sector. This recommendation was accepted by Eurostat, with a proviso that the decision could be reviewed

at a future date.

In December the CSO made a decision that 14 of the 16 largest AHBs examined (i.e. those with 300+ homes in their property portfolios) in the initial phase of the review should be re-classified as falling within the public sector, under the broad local government classification. This decision has been sent to Eurostat for their consideration and ultimate determination.

While a final decision has yet to be taken by Eurostat regarding the classification of AHB expenditure, detailed analysis of the potential impacts on the government debt and expenditure will be completed by the relevant Departments and Agencies. To inform these considerations, the CSO is currently engaged in collecting the required data to compile the end-March 2018 Excessive Deficit Procedure (EDP) notification tables (also known as the Maastricht returns), covering general government deficit and debt. At the same time, the Department of Finance is also preparing the Stability Programme Update 2018. This will take full account of the figures published by the CSO as part of the government finance statistics release.

My Department will be examining the provisional assessment by the CSO in detail, including the rationale for their recommendation, in close collaboration with my colleague Minister Donohoe's Departments and the AHB sector itself, to assess the historic and future implications as well as identifying what measures can be taken to manage or mitigate the potential impacts on the capacity of the AHB sector in the supply and management of social housing.

Notwithstanding this assessment by the CSO, the Government still sees an important role for the voluntary housing sector in contributing to delivery of social housing under Rebuilding Ireland, and we intend to press ahead with our ambitious plans to use all mechanisms and schemes, including through the AHB sector, to ensure that we maintain our planned momentum towards meeting the 50,000 Rebuilding Ireland social housing target.

Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee Report

1745. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the arrangements that have been made to review local electoral areas outside those covered by the two committees that have been set up; the way in which they excluded areas of Cork, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal, Galway, south Dublin, Limerick and Waterford will be dealt with; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1027/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): I established two Local Electoral Area Boundary Committees on 13 December 2017 to review and make recommendations on local electoral areas. They are tasked with reporting to me within six months.

Committee No. 1 is tasked with reviewing and making recommendations on all areas outside of Dublin, other than Cork and Galway. Its tasks include reviewing local electoral areas in Limerick City and County and in Waterford City and County.

Committee No. 2 is tasked with reviewing local electoral areas in Dublin City, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal and South Dublin.

I have not currently requested that the local electoral areas in Cork and Galway be reviewed, but I have indicated that Committee No. 2 may also be asked to make recommendations on the division of Cork and Galway into local electoral areas.

Local Government Audit Service

1746. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he is satisfied that the audits of all local authorities reflect their compliance with national and EU law in respect of the procurement of insurance cover such as public liability and so on; if a value for money audit has been undertaken by the local government auditors in respect of insurance cover whether procured privately by councils or self insurance; if cost comparisons have been undertaken; if he will publish the cost of insurance for each council and the level or cost of claims in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1064/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The function of the Local Government Audit Service is to complete the audits of all local authorities annual financial statements, using a structured audit methodology in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice and related guidelines. Local Government Auditors are independent in the performance of their duties and it is a matter for each auditor to decide what matters to review. It would however be normal for areas of significant expenditure to be included in an annual audit. Any material matters arising would be referred to in the audit report and all audit reports are published on my Department's website at <http://www.housing.gov.ie/search/archived/current/category/local-government-audit-service/sub-type/audit-report/topic/financial-audit/type/publications?query=>.

The Value for Money Unit of the Local Government Audit Service has not conducted a VFM audit on insurance in recent years. However, the Local Government Sector, together with Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and the Office of Government Procurement (OGP), set up a Steering Group in 2015 to oversee a VFM review of Irish Public Bodies (IPB), the mutual insurer for local authorities and ETBs. The OGP's Chief Procurement Officer was a member of the Steering Group. The Group concluded its work in September 2016 and found that IPB is providing good value for money.

Local authorities are independent in the execution of their powers and the elected members are democratically accountable for all expenditure of the authority. Details of the cost of insurance for each local authority and the level or cost of claims are a matter for the local authorities concerned; therefore, the information requested is not available in my Department.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

1747. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of long-term social housing voids returned to stock by each local authority in each of the years 2014 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and the amount and source of the funding allocated to each local authority in each year to restore these units to use, in tabular form. [1095/18]

1748. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his Department distinguishes between social housing units that are vacant for a short period of time between tenants and those vacant for longer periods of time for the purposes of managing its social housing stock; and if so, the way in which this distinction is made. [1096/18]

1749. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the details of the average period that units refurbished under the local authority voids programme in each of the years 2014 to 2016 were vacant prior to their refurbishment, in tabular form. [1097/18]

1750. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of social housing units that received energy efficiency upgrades under the local authority voids programme in each of the years since 2014. [1098/18]

1751. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if there is a minimum period that a social housing unit must be vacant before it is eligible for funding under the local authority voids programme since 2014. [1099/18]

1752. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the details of the types of refurbishment works that are typically funded under the local authority voids programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1100/18]

1753. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the function of the local authorities void programme, as distinct from local authorities own refurbishment works and if he will account for the way in which his Department defines additional support over and above that local authorities provide. [1101/18]

1754. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the eligibility criteria and application guidelines that are provided to local authorities seeking to make applications to the local authorities void programme. [1102/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1747 to 1754, inclusive, together.

Section 58 of the Housing Act 1966 provides that the management and maintenance of local authority housing stock, including the implementation of planned maintenance programmes and carrying out of responsive repairs and pre-letting repairs, is a matter for each individual local authority.

The Voids Programme, introduced in 2014 by my Department, provides additional support to local authorities in preparing vacant units for re-letting. The maximum funding provided for each unit under this programme is €30,000. In addition, the Derelicts Programme provides funding to remediate more seriously derelict social houses. There is also another smaller 2 into 1 programme, which focuses on converting vacant old bedsit type of accommodation into one bedroom units.

Vacant social houses, which are categorised as voids, need far greater repairs than normal re-letting works to bring them to a suitable letting condition. They are vacant pending this work. The key objectives of the programme are to minimise the turnaround and re-let time of vacant units and return them to use in an energy efficient condition.

Retrofitting is undertaken on properties selected by local authorities on the basis of unit cost, the extent of local housing need and the age/condition of the property. The programme focuses on retrofitting of the fabric of the dwelling (insulation of walls/roofs, window/door replacement, heating system improvement etc.). During the period, 7,160 units had energy efficiency works recouped [1,850, 2,114, 1,770 and 1,426 for 2014 to 2017, respectively]. The remainder may have had works carried out previously under a separate Energy Efficiency programme.

Circulars issued to each local authority outlining the scheme and the information required for those authorities seeking to apply for funding under the scheme. No distinction is made between the length of time a property is vacant before being eligible for funding under the programmes and my Department does not collect data on the average period that a unit was vacant prior to their refurbishment. The scale of the pre-letting works required is a more relevant factor.

Given that amalgamated data across the 3 programmes is provided under Rebuilding Ire-

land, for consistency purposes, the combined voids data is presented below.

Voids Data 2014 to 2017: incorporating Voids, Derelicts and 2 into 1 Programmes

	Units Returned in 2014	Funding 2014	Units Re-turned in 2015	Funding 2015	Units Re-turned in 2016
Carlow	42	€325,111	28	€300,650	8
Cavan	23	€349,137	28	€307,018	32
Clare	65	€995,831	96	€1,472,533	79
Cork City	212	€2,872,028	281	€4,522,819	263
Cork County	155	€1,539,363	199	€2,091,578	98
Donegal	167	€919,797	146	€1,003,576	89
Dublin City	499	€6,163,465	808	€10,229,838	575
Fingal	163	€1,938,780	139	€1,624,632	147
South Dublin	87	€627,407	27	€216,838	81
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	5	€89,896	24	€262,768	19
Galway City	26	€474,050	25	€222,025	29
Galway County	76	€958,263	59	€705,347	37
Kerry	79	€718,938	127	€884,736	90
Kildare	49	€503,463	20	€359,808	24
Kilkenny	25	€484,430	23	€381,639	14
Laois	43	€257,014	12	€61,228	12
Leitrim	15	€229,072	9	€177,473	51
Limerick	94	€915,969	52	€500,689	18
Longford	16	€313,250	22	€426,535	23
Louth	14	€113,620	21	€292,279	8
Mayo	79	€464,508	174	€292,100	25
Meath	59	€1,037,501	54	€855,565	76
Monaghan	21	€92,751	13	€100,502	47
Offaly	30	€514,000	55	€551,532	53
Roscommon	34	€224,028	36	€258,773	80
Sligo	29	€311,648	39	€439,924	68
Tipperary	86	€935,801	115	€1,299,180	102
Waterford	32	€605,428	56	€488,724	90
Westmeath	56	€369,518	74	€650,813	43
Wexford	20	€316,307	24	€294,811	17
Wicklow	32	€650,204	43	€857,499	10
	2,333	€26,310,579	2,829	€32,133,429	2,308

Funding 2016	Units Returned in 2017	Funding 2017	Units Returned 2014 - 2017	Funding 2014 - 2017
€69,450	8	€91,750	86	€786,961
€307,530	31	€303,112	114	€1,266,797
€1,329,700	47	€966,203	287	€4,764,267

Funding 2016	Units Returned in 2017	Funding 2017	Units Returned 2014 - 2017	Funding 2014 - 2017
€6,812,333	81	€1,485,357	837	€15,692,538
€1,270,488	48	€1,130,977	500	€6,032,406
€986,690	168	€1,866,898	570	€4,776,961
€8,683,848	543	€8,520,549	2425	€33,597,700
€1,725,774	121	€1,329,300	570	€6,618,486
€703,736	87	€718,446	282	€2,266,427
€183,092	31	€283,531	79	€819,287
€346,650	11	€124,150	91	€1,166,875
€472,552	37	€401,159	209	€2,537,321
€917,549	90	€1,101,143	386	€3,622,366
€485,130	8	€205,960	101	€1,554,361
€351,278	16	€307,749	78	€1,525,096
€97,053	4	€33,170	71	€448,464
€712,404	0	€0	75	€1,118,949
€384,250	13	€215,520	177	€2,016,427
€506,705	0	€0	61	€1,246,490
€91,523	7	€83,518	50	€580,940
€233,089	22	€261,986	300	€1,251,682
€1,435,700	52	€768,005	241	€4,096,771
€667,944	38	€505,254	119	€1,366,451
€846,198	7	€107,792	145	€2,019,522
€808,612	3	€44,324	153	€1,335,737
€1,097,909	40	€909,395	176	€2,758,876
€1,204,318	107	€1,324,604	410	€4,763,904
€1,135,973	52	€574,309	230	€2,804,434
€436,062	40	€329,113	213	€1,785,506
€167,007	34	€428,015	95	€1,206,140
€245,887	11	€276,778	96	€2,030,368
€34,716,434	1,757	€24,698,067	9,227	€117,858,510

Social and Affordable Housing Data

1755. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 131,132 and 135 of 13 April 2017, the details of the 47,000 social housing units planned under Rebuilding Ireland, broken down by refurbishment, lease, acquisition and build; and if he will provide a detailed explanation as to the way in which his Department plans to monitor the delivery of each of these components, as well as the sources of data that it will be using to report on the progress towards these targets. [1103/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The initial target under Rebuilding Ireland was to deliver 47,000 social homes. However, following my review of these plans and with the overall funding provision increased from €5.35 billion to €6 billion, I have increased the target to 50,000 social homes. I have also placed a greater emphasis on direct build activity by local authorities and approved housing bodies.

Within the revised 50,000 target, almost 33,500 will be delivered through build activ-

ity and some 6,500 delivered through acquisitions, with the remaining 10,000 delivered through long-term leasing initiatives, as set out in the following table.

Year	Build	Acquisition	Leasing
2016	2,260	1,755	225
2017	3,200	1,250	600
2018	4,969	900	2,000
2019	6,385	1,025	2,130
2020	7,716	800	2,631
2021	8,907	800	2,450
Totals	33,437	6,530	10,036

The following table shows the elements of the build activity of almost 33,500 social homes, including those that will be built directly by local authorities and AHBs, as well as properties constructed for social housing through Part V and refurbished properties/Voids, together with some 6,500 acquisitions, over the period 2016 to 2021.

Delivery	Build	Acquisition
Local Authority	16,328	1,480
AHB	8,960	5,050
Refurbished properties/ Voids	3,459	-
Properties constructed for social housing through Part V	4,690	-
Total	33,437	6,530

Since the publication of Rebuilding Ireland, the Government's attention has been firmly focused on delivery. Implementation of Rebuilding Ireland is being advanced across a number of Departments, under the oversight of the Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure, Housing and Climate Change, chaired by An Taoiseach. Within my own Department, implementation is led by the Secretary General and other senior officials on an ongoing basis, supported by Working Group structures put in place under each of the Action Plan's five Pillars. In addition, to ensure broader consultation and engagement with delivery agents and stakeholders on implementation progress and emerging issues, an Oversight Group and a Project Board are in operation.

Following my recent review of Rebuilding Ireland, I announced that Minister of State Damien English will lead a new delivery team in my Department working with local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) on social housing delivery. I am confident that this will further add to the impetus already in place for the delivery of much needed social housing homes, across the country, by local authorities and AHBs.

This governance is additional to the ongoing contact my Department has with local authorities and AHBs around all forms of housing delivery, including regular technical meetings to review progress in respect of social housing projects.

NAMA Social Housing Provision

1756. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the locations and numbers of the social housing units delivered by NAMA in 2017 (details supplied). [1144/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

The National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) plays an important role in the delivery of social housing. To the end of December 2017, a total of 2,472 residential dwellings, which are part of the security for loans that NAMA has acquired, had been secured for use by local authorities or approved housing bodies. These comprise 2,335 completed dwellings and a further 137 that had been contracted and where completion work is on-going.

The following table gives the breakdown of units secured for social housing through NAMA, broken down by County for end 2017.

Local Authority	Completed	Contracted	Total
Carlow Co. Co.	138	0	138
Clare Co. Co.	55	0	55
Cork City	130	8	138
Cork Co. Co.	304	17	321
Donegal Co. Co	5	0	5
Dublin City	396	16	412
Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Co. Co.	272	10	282
Fingal Co. Co.	125	18	143
Galway City Council	196	0	196
Galway Co. Co.	24	8	32
Kerry Co. Co.	42	0	42
Kildare Co. Co.	156	16	172
Kilkenny Co. Co.	56	0	56
Limerick City and County Council	16	0	16
Louth County Council	27	0	27
Meath Co. Co.	38	1	39
Monaghan Co. Co	0	38	38
Offaly Co. Co.	30	0	30
Sligo Co. Co	4	0	4
South Dublin Co. Co.	141	5	146
Waterford Co. Co.	51	0	51
Westmeath Co. Co	20	0	20
Wexford Co. Co	102	0	102
Wicklow Co. Co.	7	0	7
Grand Total	2335	137	2472

These and other statistics are available at: <https://www.nama.ie/social-initiatives/social-housing/>.

The figure of 2,456 published by NAMA in their end of year review was revised upwards to 2,472 following notification to NAMA of a sale which contracted in December 2017 but was not notified to NAMA until 2018.

Residential Tenancies Board Administration

1757. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will direct agencies dealing with the housing crisis, such as the Residential Tenancies Board, to have free and accessible contact methods for tenants such as freephone numbers from landlines and mobiles; the measures he is taking to ameliorate the difficulties for tenants in the private rental sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1179/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Under section 76 of the Residential Tenancies Acts 2004-2016, a tenancy-related dispute may be referred to the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB).

The RTB are currently in the procurement process for a new Tenancy Management System that will significantly improve the customer experience and on-line interaction. It is estimated that the new system will be operational by the third quarter of 2018.

In the meantime, the RTB have recently launched their new One Stop Shop, as part of the RTB's on-going commitment to improve customer interaction. This project involves a range of new resources which make it easier for landlords and tenants to access information, and to understand their rights and responsibilities. The One Stop Shop includes a new user-friendly website with forms, tools and templates; a web chat facility; and the extension of the RTB's call centre opening hours from 8.30am to 6.30pm.

The new free on-line web chat facility, which was introduced in November 2017, allows members of the public to communicate on-line with RTB agents and aims to guide customers through the registration or dispute process. At the end of 2017, the RTB extended the hours of operation of its telephone service from 8:30am to 6:30pm Monday to Friday. The RTB offers callers the choice of calling a lo-call helpline number from landlines and a local number which may be cheaper or free to call as part of some mobile providers' packages.

Further information is available at www.rtb.ie/tenants and the RTB helpline - Lo-call on 0818 30 30 37 (mobile operators might charge a premium rate to the Lo-call number) or 01 702 8100 - available from Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 6.30pm.

Threshold, the national housing charity, operates the Tenancy Protection Service (TPS) which is a national service providing advice and support to households living in private rented accommodation who are experiencing tenancy problems, including where a tenancy is at risk of termination. The TPS seeks to protect existing tenancies, keeping tenants in their homes and preventing them from having to access homeless services. For example, the TPS can apply for an enhanced rent supplement payment above existing rent caps, if a tenant is in receipt of rent supplement and is at risk of homelessness due to a rent increase.

The TPS helpline on free-phone 1800 454 454 is available from Monday to Friday, 9am to 9pm. Further information is also available at www.threshold.ie.

NAMA Social Housing Provision

1758. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of dwellings offered by NAMA to Limerick City and County Council and approved housing bodies for use as social housing; the number of these accepted; and the number of these now in use. [1202/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

The National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) plays an important role in the delivery of social housing. To the end of December 2017, a total of 2,472 residential properties, which are part of the security for loans that NAMA has acquired, had been secured for use by local authorities or approved housing bodies.

Information on the dwellings identified as potentially suitable for social housing in the Limerick City and County Council area is set out in the table as at end December 2017:

Dwellings Identified	Demand Confirmed	No longer under consideration
163	38	125

As at end December 2017, 16 dwellings were delivered for social housing in Limerick. (4 apartments/12 houses). The breakdown of this figure by Approved Housing Body is set out below. Information on the tenanting/use of these units is not held in my Department.

-	Breakdown
Brothers of Charity	7
Cluid Housing Association	5
Focus Ireland	4
Total	16

These and other statistics are available on the website of the Housing Agency at <http://www.housing.ie/NAMA>.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

1759. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of social housing units built and purchased by Limerick City and County Council in each of the years 2007 to 2017, in tabular form. [1203/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Through the supports made available from my Department, funding is available to all local authorities to deliver social housing stock through new construction projects and 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 and purchased by Limerick City and County Council from 2007 to 2017 is available on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision>. Information on the final quarter of 2017 is currently being collected and will be published once collated.

Housing Regeneration

1760. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of housing units demolished, refurbished and built under the regeneration programme in Limerick city to date, in tabular form. [1204/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

The detailed advancement of the Limerick Regeneration programme is a matter for Limerick City & County Council. Based on information provided by the Council, the numbers of housing units newly built, refurbished, improved under the thermal upgrade programme and those demolished, are as set out in the following table.

The Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plan (LRFIP) published in 2013, saw a move away from demolitions and a prioritisation of both refurbishments and the delivery of targeted, high quality new housing construction, along with a continued focus on community and economic supports. Good progress is being made in implementing the LRFIP across the physical, social and economic pillars of regeneration, as can be seen in a review published in December 2016 which is available at the following link: <https://www.limerick.ie/council/services/housing/regeneration/limerick-regeneration-framework-implementation-plan>.

-	Number of Housing Units
Constructed	201
Refurbished	370
Thermal upgrade programme	591
Demolitions	1072

Social and Affordable Housing Data

1761. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the planned number of social housing units to be built or purchased in County Limerick in 2018. [1205/18]

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, 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 four of 2017 is currently being finalised and will be published thereafter.

In relation to social housing delivery for 2018 and beyond, for Limerick City & County Council as well as other local authorities, this will be in line with their targets under Rebuilding Ireland. I will be discussing these targets with the local authority Chief Executives at a Housing Summit I am holding with them next week, after which the targets will be published.

In relation to social housing construction activity in general, my Department publishes status reports on a quarterly basis, of social housing construction schemes for all local authority areas, showing details such as their locations and a range of information relating to their advancement. The most recent of these reports covers the period up to the end of quarter 3 of 2017. The report can be accessed at the following link: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/housing-construction-report-q3/>.

Mortgage to Rent Scheme

1762. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Govern-

ment the position regarding proposals for a new mortgage to rent scheme; the number of persons that are expected to be approved under this scheme in 2018, 2019 and 2020; his plans to have a pilot scheme several years after the original scheme; when the new scheme will be fully operational; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1249/18]

1763. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of applications received in respect of the mortgage to rent scheme in each of the years since its inception to the end of 2017; the number approved in each year; the number that were completed in each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1250/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1762 and 1763 together.

The Housing Agency publishes, on a quarterly basis, detailed statistical information on the operation of the MTR scheme, including the number of applications received and completed transactions. This information is available on the Agency's website at the following link:

<https://www.housingagency.ie/our-services/housing-supply-services/mortgage-to-rent.aspx>

Following a Review of the Mortgage to Rent (MTR) Scheme, published on 8 February 2017, a range of amendments to the eligibility criteria and administration of the MTR scheme came into effect to enable more properties to qualify and to make the scheme more flexible and accessible to borrowers. The Review, available at the following link: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/changes-in-mortgage-to-rent-scheme/>, explored the impediments to participation in the scheme and recommended a number of actions to make the scheme work better for borrowers.

My Department and the Housing Agency are working with all stakeholders to ensure that the actions set out in the Review are being effectively implemented to benefit a greater number of households. I am providing an additional €5m for the MTR scheme this year, which will support at least 250 additional MTR cases to be completed by AHBs working together with lenders using the existing MTR scheme.

The MTR Review also concluded that the current financial model of the MTR scheme may not, in its current configuration, be capable of delivering the scale of successful cases that could benefit from the scheme over time. In order to test the operability of alternative funding models for the scheme, the Housing Agency has been working with a number of financial entities who have expressed an interest in working with the MTR scheme to progress a number of alternative long-term lease arrangements. In advance of these pilots and to establish the operability of an alternative financing approach, a targeted market testing exercise has been undertaken by the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA), to test the suitability of the proposed enhanced leasing arrangements to ascertain if they would be viable for a MTR cohort, taking account of the necessity to provide a long-term stable solution for eligible households.

The responses to the market testing exercise have been reviewed by the Housing Agency and my Department. A call for Expressions of Interest from bodies interested in pursuing pilot operating models was initiated by the Housing Agency on 26 October 2017. Once the Expressions of Interest process is concluded - the extended deadline for receipt of submissions is 31 January 2018 - the Housing Agency will make recommendations to my Department as to the make-up of the pilot scheme, which can then be initiated.

Following the completion of the pilot scheme and depending on its success and the availability of funding, a wider MTR scheme modelled on the alternatively funded pilot scheme, may be considered.

Housing Policy

1764. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if a further circular letter has issued in relation to section 3.2.3 of the Rural Housing Guidelines (details supplied); if not, the reason therefor; the timeframe to issue this circular; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1275/18]

1784. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to a document sent by his Department to councils around the country in relation to one off housing, his plans to try to stop it which is the view expressed by different councils of the document that was sent to councils; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1420/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1764 and 1784 together.

Following engagement between the European Commission and my Department regarding the 2013 European Court of Justice ruling in the Flemish Decree case, a working group, comprising senior representatives from my Department and planning authorities, was established in May 2017 to review and, where necessary, recommend changes to the 2005 Planning Guidelines on Sustainable Rural Housing, issued under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, with a view to ensuring that rural housing policies and objectives contained in county development plans comply with the relevant provisions of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

The Working Group concluded its deliberations in September 2017 and my Department is now engaging with the Commission on the matter, with a view to issuing revised Guidelines to planning authorities as soon as practicable after the finalised National Planning Framework is published.

Planning authorities were advised in May 2017, that they should not amend rural housing policies in their development plans until the Guidelines have been revised. The relevant Circular letter is available to view on my Department's website at the following link: http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/pl_02-2017_sustainable_rural_housing_guidelines_for_planning_authorities_2005_-_local_need.pdf

Pending finalisation of the NPF and new Guidelines, I have no plans to issue further circulars on the issue.

Tenant Purchase Scheme Review

1765. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 1967 of 11 September 2017, when the report of the review of the tenant purchase scheme will be published; the timeframe for decisions to be made on foot of this review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1280/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme came into operation on 1 January 2016. The Scheme is open to eligible tenants, including joint tenants, of local authority houses that are available for sale under the Scheme. To be eligible, tenants must meet certain criteria, including having a minimum reckonable income of €15,000 per annum and having been in receipt of social housing support for at least one year.

In line with the commitment given in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, a review of the first 12 months of the Tenant Purchase Scheme's operation has been undertaken. The review has incorporated analysis of comprehensive data received from local authorities regarding the operation of the scheme during 2016 and a wide-ranging public consultation process which saw submissions received from individuals, elected representatives and organisations.

The review is now complete and a full report setting out findings and recommendations has been prepared. I expect to be in a position to publish the outcome of the review shortly.

Defective Building Materials

1766. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if a redress scheme for homeowners affected by mica will be established within the first quarter of 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1298/18]

1769. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the progress which has been made to establish a suitable redress scheme for homeowners affected by the issue of defective block work in counties Donegal and Mayo; when such a scheme will be accessible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1367/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1766 and 1769 together.

The Expert Panel on concrete blocks was established by my Department in 2016, to investigate problems that have emerged in the concrete blockwork of certain dwellings in Counties Donegal and Mayo.

The panel had the following terms of reference:

1. To identify, insofar as it is possible, the numbers of private dwellings which appear to be affected by defects in the blockwork in the Counties of Donegal and Mayo;
2. To carry out a desktop study, which would include a consultation process with affected homeowners, public representatives, local authorities, product manufacturers, building professionals, testing laboratories, industry stakeholders and other relevant parties, to establish the nature of the problem in the affected dwellings;
3. To outline a range of technical options for remediation and the means by which those technical options could be applied; and
4. To submit a report within six months.

On 13 June 2017, the report of the *Expert Panel* was published and included eight recommendations which my Department are actively progressing with the relevant stakeholders.

My Department is prioritising the implementation of recommendations 1 and 2.

With regard to Recommendation 1, the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) Technical Committee, established to scope and fast track the development of a standardised protocol, held its inaugural meeting on 11 September 2017 and has held several further meetings since. The standardised protocol will inform the course of action in relation to remedial works for all affected householders. My Department understands from the NSAI that the Technical Committee is in the process of finalising the standardised protocol, which will be available

for public consultation shortly.

With regard to Recommendation 2, my Department has been in contact with Engineers Ireland in relation to the establishment of a register of competent engineers for homeowners/affected parties' reference. Engineers Ireland have provided assurance that they will collaborate with the Department, the NSAI and others on measures to establish such a register.

In July 2017, I visited Donegal and Mayo and met with key stakeholders, including affected homeowners, elected members and officials of the local authorities and other interested parties.

On 18 December 2017, I again visited Donegal and met with key stakeholders to provide an update on the progress to date.

In addition, and in light of the information contained in the report, I am currently considering what further actions may be required to assist the parties directly involved in reaching a satisfactory resolution to the problems that have emerged in the two counties.

Protected Disclosures

1767. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will make available an unredacted copy of the report submitted by Galway City Council relative to the case of a person (details supplied); if the protected disclosure submitted by the person is being examined by an independent person outside of and unconnected to his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1328/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The submission referred to in the Question was made under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 and is being examined by my Department in accordance with the provisions of that Act and guidance issued under section 21(1) of the Act for the purpose of assisting public bodies in the performance of their functions under that Act.

In its consideration of this submission, my Department is obliged, under Section 16 of the Act, to protect the identity of a person making a disclosure where possible.

My Department is also cognisant of the right of action in tort conferred by Section 13 of the Act on any party, including any individual named in the protected disclosure, who suffers detriment as a consequence of the disclosure. As the protected disclosure submission and the report prepared in response by Galway City Council refer to serious allegations against named individuals, it is important to ensure that they are afforded appropriate protection that complies with the general principles of natural justice and fair procedures.

My Department is aware of the request by the individual who made the protected disclosure submission to receive a full copy of the report prepared by Galway City Council in response to the allegations made in the submission. My Department is considering this request as part of its active examination of the protected disclosure, including in the context of its obligations under Sections 16 and 13 of the Act.

My Department will be in contact with the individual named again in the coming weeks with a more detailed response.

Planning Appeals

1768. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to address concerns with regard to objectors to planning applications (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1353/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): As indicated in my reply to Question No. 228 of 4 October 2017, in making a decision on a planning application or appeal, a planning authority or An Bord Pleanála must consider the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, having regard to the provisions of the relevant development plan, relevant Ministerial or Government policies and guidelines, as well as the views of members of the public. Public participation is, therefore, a crucial element of all substantive decision-making processes under the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended and is also a requirement under the Aarhus Convention and Environmental Impact Assessment Directives in relation to specific types of developments.

It is open to any member of the public to make an observation or submission on a planning application and the planning authority is statutorily obliged to consider such submissions before making a decision on the application. Persons who make submissions are also entitled to be notified of any significant further information provided to the planning authority by the applicant and to be notified of the authority's decision on the application. Furthermore, any person who made a submission on a planning application may appeal the planning authority's decision on the application to An Bord Pleanála or may make a submission to the Board in relation to an appeal of that decision.

The fees payable by members of the public to participate in the planning decision-making process are set at a level that, as well as contributing towards the cost of processing applications and appeals, discourages frivolous or vexatious submissions without hindering genuine public participation. In addition, the Board has discretion to dismiss an appeal where it is satisfied that the appeal is vexatious, frivolous or without substance or foundation, or where the appeal is made with the sole intention of delaying development or of securing the payment of money, gifts, considerations or other inducement by any person.

I am satisfied that the current arrangements in relation to public participation in decision-making contribute significantly to the openness and transparency of the planning process and I have no proposals to amend the legislation in this regard.

Question No. 1769 answered with Question No. 1766.

Occupational Therapy

1770. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the person or body that provides the occupational therapist's report for elderly and disabled persons in cases in which they require them for housing grants. [1390/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I understand that both HSE and private occupational therapists are routinely engaged by local authorities to assess the needs of applicants for grants under the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability scheme. Also, an applicant may engage a private occupational therapist and have the cost refunded to them as part of the total grant paid, subject to a limit of €200 per assessment.

It is in the interests of the applicant and the local authority alike to ensure that proposed adaptation works under the Housing Adaptation Grant for Older People and People with a Disability schemes represent the most appropriate and cost-effective way of meeting the long-term needs of individual applicants.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

1771. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of new builds completed by councils only not including houses bought from private or other sources in 2017 for social housing purposes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1407/18]

1772. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of new builds finished in 2017 for social housing purposes by each county council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1408/18]

1797. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of houses that are owned by councils; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1435/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1771, 1772 and 1797 together.

Through the supports made available from my Department, 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>. For ease of reference, the completions are separated to show the various delivery streams such as new builds and acquisitions by local authorities and by approved housing bodies. Information on quarter four of 2017 is currently being collected and will be published once collated.

Provisional 2017 output figures for social housing delivery at a national level are available at the following link:

http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/attachments/rebuilding_ireland_progress_against_targets_14.01.2018.xlsx.

Regarding the number of houses that are owned by local authorities, this information is published by the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC), in their annual reports on Performance Indicators in Local Authorities. These reports provide a range of information in relation to social housing stock, including the total number of dwellings in each local authority area. The most recent NOAC report covers the 2015 period and is available at the following link: <http://noac.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/2015-PI-Report.pdf>.

Rural Resettlement Scheme

1773. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local

Government the number of persons seeking housing in cities that are willing to move to rural areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1409/18]

1774. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to introduce an upfront payment to vacant rural houses that councils could put in place a five year agreement if persons are willing to move to those areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1410/18]

1821. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans for a rural resettlement scheme in 2018; the details of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1701/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1773, 1774 and 1821 together.

The Government's Action Plan for Rural Development: Realising our Potential has a clear objective of working across Government Departments to deliver a co-ordinated group of strategies to ensure the success of vibrant rural communities across Ireland.

My Department works closely with the Department of Rural and Community Development on rural housing issues. In relation to social housing, it is possible already for people to move between local authorities under the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Scheme. My Department is also currently examining additional ways to facilitate households, who are qualified for social housing, and who may wish to relocate to rural areas.

Local Authority Boundaries

1775. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will be making a decision on the boundary between counties Roscommon and Westmeath; if so, when (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1411/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): Pursuant to the Programme for a Partnership Government (PPG) a report will be submitted shortly to Government and the Oireachtas on potential measures to boost local government leadership and accountability, and to ensure that local government structures and responsibilities strengthen local democracy.

The issue in relation to the boundary between counties Roscommon and Westmeath at Athlone will be addressed in this context, along with those at other urban centres crossing county boundaries (Drogheda, Carlow and Waterford) that were the subject of independent reviews. It is anticipated that the report will be submitted to Government in the coming weeks.

Building Regulations

1776. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when proposals will be brought forward that apartment blocks or commercial buildings can be built higher; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1412/18]

1777. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of stories high he plans to allow new builds in cities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1413/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1776 and 1777 together.

My Department intends to publish updated Development Plans: Guidelines for Planning Authorities shortly for planning authorities in relation to their role in making Development Plans. The updated guidelines will consider the role of building height as part of a broad strategy to increase housing delivery and choice, through the use of more compact and diverse urban form, to assist in counteracting sprawl and promoting enhanced sustainability in meeting our strategic development needs, as highlighted in the draft National Planning Framework.

The updated guidelines will clarify suitable development contexts where higher density development (and in certain cases increased building height) is desirable, rather than proposing a blanket 'one size fits all' approach to building height. There is therefore no prescribed number of storeys likely to be recommended for new build developments in cities. This will instead be determined by planning authorities through Development Plans and Local Area Plans, in line with the criteria identified in the updated guidance.

I envisage that the Guidelines will be published in Q1 2018.

Question No. 1778 answered with Question No. 1736.

Wind Energy Guidelines

1779. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when he plans to bring forward new wind turbine guidelines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1415/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): My Department is currently undertaking a focussed review of the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines. As part of the overall review, a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is being undertaken on 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. Following a tendering process, my Department appointed SEA consultants in December 2017 to assist in this regard. It is expected that a public consultation on the revised draft Guidelines, together with the comprehensive environmental report, will be undertaken during the first quarter of this year, with the aim of issuing the finalised Guidelines, following detailed analysis and consideration of all of the submissions and views received during the consultation phase, during Q3 2018. In the meantime, the current Guidelines remain in force.

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.

Water Services Funding

1780. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local

Government when he will have extra subvention money allocated to group water schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1416/18]

1781. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the fact that group water schemes need a minimum of €230 per house subvention per year to survive into the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1417/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1780 and 1781 together.

In late 2017, my Department conducted a review of group water schemes' subsidies. The review involved discussions with the National Federation of Group Water Schemes, the representative body of the group water sector. The discussions, which included an examination of expenditure data on schemes, concluded in December when I approved the revised subsidy levels. The new subsidy arrangements, endorsed by a special delegate conference of the Federation on 13 December 2017, came into effect on 1 January 2018.

The changes implement the recommendation contained in the report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Future Funding of Domestic Water Services, endorsed by both Houses of the Oireachtas in April 2017, that there be equity of treatment and equivalent financial support between households using public water services and those availing of private water services.

The revised subsidy levels are as follows:

1. For the annual subsidy towards the operation and maintenance costs of group water schemes providing a supply of water for domestic purposes (known as 'Subsidy A'):

The maximum subsidy per house in private group water schemes has increased from €140 per household to €231. An increased maximum subsidy of €281 per household is available for small schemes of less than 100 houses that are willing, in the interests of providing in the long-term a more sustainable water supply to their members, to progress towards rationalisation or amalgamation with other schemes.

The maximum subsidy per house for public group water schemes has increased from €70 per household to €115. These are schemes that supply their members with water that is provided by Irish Water.

The portion of costs that can be recouped by group water schemes has also increased. Typically up to 60% of costs have been covered by the subsidy payments. This has increased to 85%. There are also changes and simplifications to how these costs are assessed.

2. For the additional subsidy that is paid towards the costs of group water schemes that have long-term Operation and Maintenance Contracts (for example, as part of a Design Build Operate project) for the delivery of water (known as 'Subsidy B'):

There has been an increase in the level of volumetric costs incurred by group water schemes operating under these contracts that is recoupable, from 60% to 85%. This will allow for a greater portion of costs to be included within the subsidy payment.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Funding

1782. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if 100% funding will be provided to group water schemes for upgrade works; and

if he will make a statement on the matter. [1418/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department's new Multi-annual Rural Water Programme 2016 - 2018 was developed through a working group of key stakeholders involving local authorities, the Water Services Transition Office, Irish Water, the National Federation of Group Water Schemes as well as my Department.

Under the new programme there are five different funding measures available for group water schemes as follows:

- Measure 1 - Environmental and public health compliance (group water sector): This measure is aimed at improving water quality in existing group water schemes so that they can achieve compliance with the quality parameters of the Drinking Water Regulations 2014. Under this measure schemes are funded at the rate of 100% in the case of water quality works and at the rate of 85% for other necessary works subject to a maximum of €7,650 per house (based on a cost limit per house for the scheme of €9,000)

- Measure 2 - Enhancement of existing schemes (group water sector): This measure supports projects to make existing group water schemes more efficient in their operation (for example, water conservation, network upgrades and source protection). Under this measure schemes are funded at the rate of 85% subject to a maximum of €7,650 per house (based on a cost limit per house for the scheme of €9,000).

- Measure 3 - Rural development (group water sector): This measure supports social and economic development in rural towns and villages and their hinterlands by providing new group water schemes where public water supply schemes or private wells are not an option. Under this measure schemes are funded at the rate of 85% subject to a maximum of €7,650 per house (based on a cost limit per house for the scheme of €9,000).

- Measure 4 - Transition of group schemes to Public Water Sector (Irish Water): This measure enables group water schemes, where they wish to do so, to be taken in charge with the agreement of Irish Water. Under this measure funding is available at the rate of 100%.

- Measure 5 - Innovation and Research: This measure is aimed at issues in the rural water sector which, given the major transition of water services in Ireland, require new and innovative approaches. Under this measure projects are funded at the rate of 100%.

Infrastructural improvements to rural water services are essential, which is why the Government funds their improvements through the Rural Water Programme. In 2018, the Government has allocated €20 million for the programme, an increase of 12.4% on the 2017 allocation.

Serious challenges remain in relation to rural water services including in the areas of water quality and future management of group water schemes. In this context, my Department will shortly initiate a short, focused review of the wider investment needs relating to rural water services, including the overall approach to funding group water schemes.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Funding

1783. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to provide funding to smaller villages and towns for community sewerage schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1419/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My

Department's new Multi-annual Rural Water Programme 2016-2018 was developed through a working group of key stakeholders involving local authorities, the Water Services Transition Office, Irish Water, the National Federation of Group Water Schemes as well as my Department. The programme provides for the funding of demonstration Group Sewerage Schemes, through Measure 4(d), where clustering of households on individual septic tanks is not a viable option, particularly from an environmental perspective.

Local authorities were invited in January 2016 to submit bids under the programme. The invitation envisaged no more than two demonstration group sewerage projects being brought forward under the measure in any one year of the three year programme. The demonstrations will allow my Department, over the course of the programme, to determine the appropriate enduring funding levels and relationship with the current grant scheme.

As new demonstration group sewerage schemes have been identified for the duration of the programme, and as only two demonstration projects can be advanced in any given year, my Department does not propose to modify the current programme at this point.

I am conscious of the challenges which remain in relation to rural water services. Consequently I announced last December that my Department will initiate a short, focused review of the wider investment needs relating to rural water services. This review will feed into the consideration of the multi-annual programme from 2019 and any new measures will be reflected in the finalised River Basin Management Plan to be published early this year.

Question No. 1784 answered with Question No. 1764.

Local Authority Staff Recruitment

1785. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the position of Galway county manager will be advertised to become permanent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1421/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Following the retirement of the most recent permanent Chief Executive of Galway County Council, in line with section 145(6) of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended, the then Minister with responsibility for local government appointed a Temporary Chief Executive to the post. This temporary appointment commenced on 05 July 2014. A permanent appointment has not yet been made.

The position of Chief Executive of Galway County Council will be considered in the context of a report that will be brought to Government in the coming weeks pursuant to the Programme for a Partnership Government commitment on potential measures to boost local government leadership, accountability and ensure that local government structures strengthen local democracy. This will take account also of the recommendations of the committee established to examine local government arrangements in Galway.

National Planning Framework

1786. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the final national planning framework document will be finalised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1422/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

The National Planning Framework (NPF), titled 'Ireland 2040 - Our Plan', is intended to set a new long-term strategic planning and investment context for Ireland over the next 20 years. It will outline a high-level, national vision for Ireland for 2040, and will provide the framework and principles to manage future population and economic growth over the next 20 years (catering for 1 million extra people, 600,000 extra jobs and 500,000 extra homes).

My Department is working to finalise the NPF document, having processed over 1,000 submissions made as part of the final public consultation process, which ended on 10 November.

Taking on board these submissions, the Government intends to publish the NPF in tandem with the Capital Investment Plan in the coming weeks as an integrated strategic planning and capital investment framework.

National Planning Framework

1787. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his Department is liaising with TII on the national planning framework; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1423/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): As part of the National Planning Framework (NPF) consultation process, my Department has engaged in various consultative fora including a Cross-Department Steering Group. Colleagues at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport have contributed significantly in the drafting of the NPF document by actively engaging in the work of this Group. The views of Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) were represented as part of this engagement.

In addition, TII made submissions during both the pre-draft and draft public consultation phases which were considered by my Department in the formulation of the NPF document.

Strategic Infrastructure Provision

1788. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when proposals will be brought forward to try speed up major infrastructure projects (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1424/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): I intend to amend the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, in order to classify data centres above a specified threshold as strategic infrastructure developments. This change will mean that applications for planning permission for specified data centres will be made direct to An Bord Pleanála and will not have to be submitted to the relevant local planning authority in the first instance, with the possibility of a subsequent appeal to the Board, thereby streamlining the planning decision-making process in respect of qualifying data centres.

I propose to table the necessary legislative amendments by way of Seanad Committee Stage amendments to the Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2016 which is currently at Dáil Report Stage.

Local Authority Funding

1789. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the fact that €15.5 million was collected in property tax in County Galway and it is one of the most underfunded rural parts of Ireland; his plans to leave a bigger percentage of that tax to councils; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1425/18]

1791. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when proper funding will be provided through the equalisation fund to councils in order that they can fill jobs in different departments of the councils; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1429/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1789 and 1791 together.

The funding system for local authorities is a complex one, as authorities derive their income from a variety of sources including commercial rates, charges for goods and services, Local Property Tax (LPT) as well as funding from Government Departments and other bodies.

Local retention of LPT began in 2015 and is now established as an important source of funding for the local government sector, thereby reducing reliance on central funding. The Government decided that 80% of the estimated LPT liability in each local authority area for a given year is retained in that area to fund public services, notwithstanding any local variation decisions. The remaining 20% of LPT is re-distributed to provide equalisation funding to those local authorities that have lower property tax bases, due to the variance in property values and density across the State. This reflects the fact that local authorities vary significantly from one another in terms of size, population, public service demands, infrastructure and income sources.

In accordance with decisions taken by Government regarding the distribution of LPT, every local authority has a minimum level of funding available to it, known as the baseline. There are variances across the country in terms of LPT levels but it is important that all local authorities receive at least this baseline level of funding to ensure they can deliver services. Equalisation is the process that ensures that every local authority's LPT allocation is brought up to this baseline and there is a finite level of funding available for this purpose. For 2018, the overall equalisation requirement is €139m. €97m of this is from the 20% contribution from all local authorities, with the Exchequer providing the remaining €42m.

The role of local authorities in deciding the annual local adjustment factor is an important part of LPT funding and a key connection between revenue raising and expenditure decisions at local level. Every local authority must decide whether or not to increase or decrease LPT rates by up to 15% each year. Galway County Council varied the basic rate of LPT upwards by 10% for 2017. Accordingly, the total 2017 LPT allocation paid to Galway County Council in 2017 was €15.97m, which includes the extra €1.45m raised by the 10% increase. For 2018, no variation has been applied by Galway County Council, meaning it will receive an LPT allocation of €14.52m.

I am satisfied that the current overall funding model enables local authorities to support an appropriate level of service provision across the State.

Septic Tank Grants

1790. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if funding will be provided to all persons who have septic tanks for upgrade if required (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1426/18]

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 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. Applications for grant aid are administered by the local authorities in whose functional area the particular domestic waste water treatment system requiring remediation is situated. The local authorities then seek recoupment of the amounts paid from my Department. Full details of the scheme, including eligibility criteria, are set out in the explanatory leaflet and application form published on my Department's website at the following link:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/water/water-quality/domestic-waste-water-systemsseptic-tanks/domestic-waste-water-treatment-0>.

My Department keeps the operation of this scheme under review, particularly in terms of the impacts of the scheme on tackling diffuse pollution which is a pressure in many water catchments as identified in the draft River Basin Management Plan. To this end, the grant scheme, as currently outlined, 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.

However, my Department intends to initiate a review of this scheme to assess whether it can better support the programmes of measures in the finalised River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021 which I intend to publish by end-March 2018. It is intended to examine, in particular, whether the scheme can be modified to provide particular support to high status waters.

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 Commissioner's website at *www.revenue.ie*.

Question No. 1791 answered with Question No. 1789.

Social and Affordable Housing

1792. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his views on establishing a new section that is not involved with his Department

or councils that would take over the build and delivery of social housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1430/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The statutory responsibility for the delivery of social housing and the ongoing maintenance of the social housing stock is a matter for the local authority sector. I have no plans to change this at this time, given the fact that the sector is now successfully delivering social housing in support of the targets set down under Rebuilding Ireland. Evidence of this fact can be seen from the 2017 Social Housing Provisional Output Figures, which my Department published yesterday and which can be accessed at the following link: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/2017-social-housing-output-figures-published/>.

Following my recent review of Rebuilding Ireland, I announced that Minister of State Damien English will lead a new delivery team in my Department working with local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) on social housing delivery. I am confident that this will further add to the impetus already in place for the delivery of much needed social housing homes, across the country, by local authorities and AHBs.

Irish Water Funding

1793. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the funding his Department will be providing to Irish Water in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1431/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Future Funding of Domestic Water Services was published in April 2017 and approved by both Houses of the Oireachtas. The Government approved in September 2017 the recommendations of the Report of the Working Group on the Future Funding of Domestic Water Services, which, consistent with the recommendations of report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee, primarily involve, inter alia, all State funding to Irish Water in respect of domestic water services, as determined through the regulatory process, being channeled in future through my Department's Vote. The future funding of Irish Water in respect of domestic water services will therefore be from general taxation, in the form of a payment for domestic water services, based on the purchase of water covering the entirety of domestic water consumption, other than excessive use, and a contribution to replace the financing of the domestic component of capital investment previously funded by debt and a capital contribution from Central Funds.

A funding provision of €1.1 billion is provided through my Department's Vote in 2018 as part of the recently published Revised Estimates to meet the cost of domestic water services by Irish Water in 2018, of which €500m relates to capital investment, the latter representing the major component of the overall planned capital investment of over €600m in cash terms by Irish Water in 2018.

Tenant Purchase Scheme Data

1794. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of houses that were sold under the tenant purchase scheme in place at present under social housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1432/18]

1795. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local

Government the number of persons, by council, who have purchased houses under the tenant purchase scheme of social housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1433/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1794 and 1795 together.

The Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme came into operation on 1 January 2016. The Scheme is open to eligible tenants, including joint tenants, of local authority houses that are available for sale under the Scheme. To be eligible, tenants must meet certain criteria, including having a minimum reckonable income of €15,000 per annum and having been in receipt of social housing support for at least one year.

Local authorities are by law (Section 63(1) of the Local Government Act 2001) independent in the performance of their functions. The operation of the Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme is a matter for the local authority concerned, in line with legislation, including the Housing (Sale of Local Authority Houses) Regulations 2015.

Relevant data for house sales made under the current Scheme since its introduction in 2016 is not yet available. However, information on the sale of local authority houses in previous years can be found on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/social-and-affordble/other-local-authority-housing-scheme-statistics>.

Tenant Purchase Scheme

1796. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the reason there is a €15,000 income stipulation from employment in the tenant purchase scheme for social housing (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1434/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme came into operation on 1 January 2016 and a review of the Scheme will be published shortly. The current Scheme is open to eligible tenants, including joint tenants, of local authority houses that are available for sale under the Scheme. To be eligible, tenants must meet certain criteria, including having a minimum reckonable income of €15,000 per annum and having been in receipt of social housing support for at least one year.

The minimum reckonable income for eligibility under the scheme is determined by the relevant housing authority in accordance with the detailed provisions of the Ministerial Direction issued under Sections 24(3) and (4) of the 2014 Act. In the determination of the minimum reckonable income, housing authorities can include income from a number of different sources and classes, such as from employment, private pensions, maintenance payments and certain social welfare payments, including pensions, where the social welfare payment is secondary to employment income. In determining reckonable income, the income of all tenants of the house, including adult children that are joint tenants is included, as is the income of the spouse, civil partner or other partner/co-habitant of a tenant who lives in the house with them, thus ensuring the appropriate level of discount is applied to the purchase price.

It was for reasons of ensuring the sustainability of the scheme, that the minimum income was introduced. This was in order to demonstrate an applicant had an income of a long-term and sustainable nature, to ensure that the tenant purchasing the house is in a financial position, as the owner, to maintain and insure the property for the duration of the charged period, in compliance with the conditions of the order transferring the ownership of, and responsibility for, the house from the local authority to the tenant.

The operation of the first year of the scheme has been the subject of a review and I expect to publish the outcome of that review shortly.

Question No. 1797 answered with Question No. 1771.

Approved Housing Bodies

1798. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of houses in housing agencies' ownership; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1436/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I am assuming the Question is referring to the number of houses in the ownership of Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs). While my Department does not record details of the number of houses owned by each AHB, details relating to the number of accommodation units they have delivered using funding provided under my Department's Capital Assistance Scheme, Capital Advance Leasing Facility and the Capital Loan and Subsidy Scheme, 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>.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

1799. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of vacant social housing units as of 31 December 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1437/18]

1801. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of vacant social housing units by county as of 31 December 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1439/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1799 and 1801 together.

Statistics in relation to social housing stock are collated by the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) in their annual reports on Performance Indicators in Local Authorities. These statistics are set out by local authority and include the percentage of such dwellings that were vacant at the end of the year, with the last year for which the statistics are available being 2015. This report is available at the following link: <http://noac.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/2015-PI-Report.pdf>.

Homeless Accommodation Provision

1800. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of private housing units and hotel beds being paid for by his Department under different schemes as of 31 December 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1438/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department's role in relation to homelessness involves the provision of a national framework of policy, legislation and funding to underpin the role of housing authorities in addressing

homelessness at local level. Statutory responsibility in relation to the provision of emergency accommodation for homeless persons rests with individual housing authorities.

The specific data sought in the Question, regarding the number of private housing units and hotel beds, is not available in my Department and is a matter for the relevant housing authorities. My Department monitors the number of homeless individuals being accommodated by housing authorities on an emergency basis and these official homeless reports are published on my Department's website on a monthly basis and can be accessed using the following link:<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/homelessness/other/homelessness-data>.

Question No. 1801 answered with Question No. 1799.

Departmental Expenditure

1802. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount of funding his Department provides to environmental organisations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1440/18]

1803. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the breakdown of funding given to the environmental lobby, by group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1441/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1802 and 1803 together.

My Department is carrying out a search of its records. Details of any funding provided to environmental non-governmental organisations will be forwarded to the Deputy in accordance with Standing Orders.

European Parliament Elections

1804. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he or his Department has been informed by Mr. Donald Tusk or his offices regarding a consultation process on possible changes to European constituencies before the 2019 European elections take place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1473/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): My Department has not received direct correspondence from Mr Donald Tusk or his office regarding possible changes to European constituencies.

However, on 11 November 2015, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the reform of the electoral law of the European Union. This resolution contains a Proposal for a Council decision adopting the provisions amending the Act concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage (i.e. the European Union's 'Electoral Act') which is the subject of on-going discussions in the Council of the European Union's Working Party on General Affairs. In the context of these discussions within the Working Party on General Affairs, one Member State circulated a proposal in December last to allow a number of seats in future elections to the European Parliament to be allocated to transnational lists (i.e. a European Union-wide constituency). It is understood that this proposal will be considered by the Working Party in due course.

Separately, national constituencies for European Parliament elections were most recently

reported on in the Constituency Commission Report 2017 (June 2017), where no change to the existing arrangements for European Parliament constituencies was recommended. At the time of that report there was no change to the number of members to be elected in Ireland. However, in light of population change in Member States and having regard to the proposed withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU, there may be a need to adjust the distribution of seats in advance of the next elections to the European Parliament in 2019. This work is being undertaken on the initiative of the European Parliament.

In this context, the European Parliament's Committee on Constitutional Affairs, in early September 2017, published a draft report on the composition of the European Parliament for 2019-2024. It is anticipated that the European Parliament will vote in plenary on this matter later this year after which a proposal will be brought to Council.

In the event that Ireland's total number of seats in the European Parliament is changed in respect of the 2019-2024 parliamentary term, it will be necessary to review and revise our European constituency arrangements. Section 5(1A) of the *Electoral Act 1997* makes provision for the establishment of a committee to make a report in relation to European Parliament constituencies. This was done in 2013 prior to the last elections to the European Parliament.

Homeless Accommodation Provision

1805. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the use of commercial accommodation providers as a means of accommodating homeless families with children will cease; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1549/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): It is recognised that hotel accommodation is inappropriate for accommodating homeless families for anything other than a short period of time. Accordingly, the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness includes the objective that hotels will only be used in limited circumstances as emergency accommodation for families. To meet this objective, in addition to providing for long-term housing needs, housing authorities are pursuing the delivery of a range of additional and enhanced family-focused facilities, or family hubs, which offer a greater level of stability than is possible in hotels, while move-on options to long-term independent living are identified and secured.

The long-term solution to homelessness is to increase the supply of new homes and the provision of social housing supports as envisioned in Rebuilding Ireland. During the course of 2017 almost 26,000 social housing solutions were provided. My Department, local authorities and approved housing bodies will continue to work closely, quickly and proactively to identify further solutions and increase social housing solutions so that we can continue to give those experiencing homelessness the support they need.

Homeless Accommodation Provision

1806. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of family hubs by county; the capacity of each hub; his plans for the number of hubs and capacity for the fourth quarter of 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1551/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

My Department's role in relation to homelessness involves the provision of a national framework of policy, legislation and funding to underpin the role of housing authorities in addressing homelessness at local level. Statutory responsibility in relation to the provision of emergency accommodation for homeless persons rests with individual housing authorities.

It is recognised that hotel accommodation is inappropriate for accommodating homeless families for anything other than a short period of time. Accordingly, the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness includes the objective that hotels will only be used in limited circumstances as emergency accommodation for families. To meet this objective, in addition to providing for long-term housing needs, housing authorities are pursuing the delivery of a range of additional and enhanced family-focused facilities, or family hubs, which offer a greater level of stability than is possible in hotels, while move-on options to long-term independent living are identified and secured. There are now more than 430 units of family accommodation in hub facilities, as detailed in the following table, while another 38 unit facility is to become operational in Dublin this month. Further such facilities are being planned for delivery in 2018, details of which will become available as projects are finalised by housing authorities.

Location	Number of Family Units
Drumcondra, Dublin 3	34
Clontarf, Dublin 3	25
Swords, Co. Dublin	6
Rialto, Dublin 8	4
Gardiner St., Dublin 1	98
Francis St., Dublin 8	30
Dundrum, Dublin 14	12
Tallaght, Co. Dublin	40
Tallaght, Co. Dublin	9
Crumlin, Dublin 12	25
Clontarf, Dublin 3	11
Monkstown, Co. Dublin	17
Clonliffe Road, Dublin 9	50
Malahide Road, Co. Dublin	7
Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	13
Athy, Co. Kildare	10
Dublin Rd., Limerick	10
Childers Rd., Limerick	30

Legislative Programme

1807. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the projects undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation, including the cost, the duration, the number of staff required and if this process was carried out by his Department or outsourced in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [1568/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The information requested in the question is set out in the following table.

Questions - Written Answers

Year	Projects Undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation	Cost	Duration of project	Number of Staff Required	DHPLG or Outsourced	Process out-sourced? (Yes/No)
2007	Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended (unofficial consolidation)	N/A – part of Department’s regular staff costs	N/A – ongoing part of Business Unit’s work – 2001 Regulations are updated as the Regulations are amended, subject to staff resources	2	DHPLG	No
2008						Nil
2009	Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended (unofficial consolidation)	N/A - part of Department’s regular staff costs	N/A – ongoing part of Business Unit’s work – 2001 Regulations are updated as the Regulations are amended, subject to staff resources	2	DHPLG	No

Year	Projects Undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation	Cost	Duration of project	Number of Staff Required	DHPLG or Outsourced	Process out-sourced? (Yes/No)
2010	Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended (unofficial consolidation)	N/A – part of Department’s regular staff costs	N/A – on-going part of Business Unit’s work – 2001 Regulations are updated as the Regulations are amended, subject to staff resources	2	DHPLG	No
2011						Nil
2012	Foreshore Acts (unofficial consolidation)	N/A - part of Department’s regular staff costs	N/A – on-going part of Business Unit’s work	1	DHPLG	No
2012	Planning and Development Act 2000					Consolidation of the Act was undertaken by the Law Reform Commission. Information is available at http://www.law-reform.ie/

Questions - Written Answers

Year	Projects Undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation	Cost	Duration of project	Number of Staff Required	DHPLG or Outsourced	Process out-sourced? (Yes/No)
2013	Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended (unofficial consolidation)	N/A – part of Department’s regular staff costs	N/A – on-going part of Business Unit’s work – 2001 Regulations are updated as the Regulations are amended, subject to staff resources	2	DHPLG	No
2013	Planning and Development Act 2000					Consolidation of the Act was undertaken by the Law Reform Commission. Information is available at http://www.law-reform.ie/
2014	Foreshore Acts (unofficial consolidation)	N/A - part of Department’s regular staff costs	N/A – on-going part of Business Unit’s work	1	DHPLG	No
2014	Dumping at Sea Act (unofficial consolidation)	N/A - part of Department’s regular staff costs	N/A – on-going part of Business Unit’s work	1	DHPLG	No

Year	Projects Undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation	Cost	Duration of project	Number of Staff Required	DHPLG or Outsourced	Process out-sourced? (Yes/No)
2014	Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended (unofficial consolidation)	N/A – part of Department's regular staff costs	N/A – ongoing part of Business Unit's work – 2001 Regulations are updated as the Regulations are amended, subject to staff resources	2	DHPLG	No
2014	Planning and Development Act 2000					Consolidation of the Act was undertaken by the Law Reform Commission. Information is available at http://www.law-reform.ie/
2014	Planning and Development Act 2010					Consolidation of the Act was undertaken by the Law Reform Commission. Information is available at http://www.law-reform.ie/

Questions - Written Answers

Year	Projects Undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation	Cost	Duration of project	Number of Staff Required	DHPLG or Outsourced	Process out-sourced? (Yes/No)
2015	Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended (unofficial consolidation)	N/A – part of Department’s regular staff costs	N/A – on-going part of Business Unit’s work – 2001 Regulations are updated as the Regulations are amended, subject to staff resources	2	DHPLG	No
2015	Planning and Development Act 2000					Consolidation of the Act was undertaken by the Law Reform Commission. Information is available at http://www.law-reform.ie/
2015	Planning and Development Act 2010					Consolidation of the Act was undertaken by the Law Reform Commission. Information is available at http://www.law-reform.ie/

Year	Projects Undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation	Cost	Duration of project	Number of Staff Required	DHPLG or Outsourced	Process out-sourced? (Yes/No)
2016	Planning and Development Act 2000					Consolidation of the Act was undertaken by the Law Reform Commission. Information is available at http://www.law-reform.ie/
2016	Revision of Housing Act 1966					Consolidation of the Act was undertaken by the Law Reform Commission. Information is available at http://www.law-reform.ie/
2017	Planning and Development Act 2000					Consolidation of the Act was undertaken by the Law Reform Commission. Information is available at http://www.law-reform.ie/

Questions - Written Answers

Year	Projects Undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation	Cost	Duration of project	Number of Staff Required	DHPLG or Outsourced	Process out-sourced? (Yes/No)
2017	Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016					Consolidation of the Act was undertaken by the Law Reform Commission. Information is available at http://www.law-reform.ie/
2017	Dumping at Sea Act (unofficial consolidation)	N/A - part of Department's regular staff costs	N/A – ongoing part of Business Unit's work	1	DHPLG	No
2017	European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (unofficial consolidation)	N/A - part of Department's regular staff costs	N/A – ongoing part of Business Unit's work	1	DHPLG	No
2017	Commercial Rates legislation (unofficial consolidation)	N/A - part of Department's regular staff costs	N/A – ongoing part of Business Unit's work	2	DHPLG	No

Year	Projects Undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation	Cost	Duration of project	Number of Staff Required	DHPLG or Outsourced	Process out-sourced? (Yes/No)
2017	Revised Building Control Regulations 1997-2015 -Updated to 1 January 2017					Consolidation of the Regulations was undertaken by the Law Reform Commission. Information is available at http://www.law-reform.ie/
2017	Revision of Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992 and Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002					Consolidation of the Acts were undertaken by the Law Reform Commission. Information is available at http://www.law-reform.ie/
2018	Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended (unofficial consolidation – still underway)	N/A – part of Department's regular staff costs	N/A – ongoing part of Business Unit's work – 2001 Regulations are updated as the Regulations are amended, subject to staff resources	2	DHPLG	No

Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund

1808. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the drawdown of funding from the local infrastructure housing activation scheme in 2017. [1575/18]

1827. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount of funding that has been drawn down to the end of 2017 under the local infrastructure housing activation fund; the funding and projects expected to be funded in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1898/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1808 and 1827 together.

The total cost of the 34 projects which received preliminary approval under the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund in March 2017 was €226 million, of which 75% (€169.5 million) will be funded by my Department, with local authorities funding 25% (€56.5 million). Grant agreements have been signed in respect of 29 LIHAF projects so far and I expect to sign further grant agreements in the near future. All projects were allowed to go to design phase in advance of signing grant agreements.

Funding for LIHAF is ring-fenced within the overall housing budget and will be available for local authorities to drawdown over the lifetime of the projects. Preliminary approvals were announced last March and due to the need for necessary preparatory work such as design, planning and public procurement the projects incurred very small expenditure levels in 2017. The total expenditure on LIHAF for 2017 was €1.67 million. It is expected that construction will commence on many projects in 2018 and a substantially accelerated drawdown is likely this year.

Through proactive management of the broader housing programme, the underspend in 2017 was applied to other housing activities, ensuring that the funding available in 2017 was fully applied to housing priorities.

As part of Budget 2018, I announced an additional €50 million funding which will be available for a second LIHAF call and which will again be subject to matching funding of 25% by local authorities. This capital funding will facilitate the provision of more public infrastructure to unlock further sites and activate more housing supply. I intend issuing a further call for proposals under LIHAF early this year and it will be open to all local authorities to submit new projects or resubmit previous unsuccessful projects for consideration at that time.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

1809. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of rapid build units completed in 2017. [1576/18]

1812. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of social housing unit acquisitions completed in 2017. [1579/18]

1813. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of Part V units completed in 2017. [1580/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1809, 1812 and 1813 together.

Through the supports made available from my Department, funding is available to all local authorities to deliver additional social housing stock through new construction projects, the acquisition of new and previously owned houses/apartments for social housing use and through working with approved housing bodies.

Provisional details on the number of properties purchased and built in all local authority areas, for letting to those on the social housing waiting lists in 2017, are available on my Department's website at the following links:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/rebuilding-ireland/social-housing-delivery-2017-ministers-statement>.

http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/attachments/rebuilding_ireland_progress_against_targets_14.01.2018.xlsx

Under the Social Housing Capital programme, 208 Rapid Delivery homes were completed by end 2017 (186 of which were during 2017) with in excess of 470 further homes at various stages of advancement, the vast majority of which are scheduled for delivery in 2018. Under the Department's current funding programmes, approved housing bodies are also being asked to consider delivering schemes using Rapid Build methodologies and a number of them have or will transfer schemes from traditional to Rapid Delivery over the coming months.

I also publish separate details on the outputs under Part V arrangements and these are also available on my Department's website at the following link:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/affordable-housing/affordable-housing-and-part-v-statistics>.

Information in respect of 2017 is currently being finalised and will then be formally published.

Repair and Leasing Scheme

1810. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of lease and repair scheme units completed in 2017. [1577/18]

1830. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of properties that have been offered to each local authority under the repair and leasing scheme; the number that have been accepted; the number that are now occupied for each local authority, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1901/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1810 and 1830 together.

The Repair and Leasing Scheme (RLS) has been developed to assist private property owners and local authorities or Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) to harness the accommodation potential that exists in certain vacant properties across Ireland.

The scheme is targeted at owners of vacant properties who cannot afford or access the funding needed to bring their properties up to the required standard for rental property. Subject to the suitability of the property for social housing, and the agreement of the property owner, the cost of the necessary repairs up to a maximum of €40,000 will be met upfront by the local authority or an approved housing body (AHB).

The Department is currently gathering data from local authorities in order to report detailed progress on the scheme in the final quarter of 2017. This will be published shortly. However, at the end of Q3, 292 properties had been deemed suitable and local authorities were negotiating with properties owners; a further 231 properties were being inspected for suitability by local authorities; 18 Agreements to Lease had been signed. A detailed breakdown of the RLS scheme data for Q3 2017 is available on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordble/overall-social-housing-provision>.

I have reviewed the operation of the scheme as part on the on-going review of Rebuilding Ireland, which examined all opportunities to accelerate and improve social housing delivery as well as initiatives to bring more vacant houses back into use at a faster pace. The outcome of this review is being finalised and will be announced shortly.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

1811. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of long-term leases for social housing units completed in 2017. [1578/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Government has set out an ambitious set of targets for the delivery of social housing to the period to 2021 in its Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan. A commitment to deliver 50,000 new social housing homes through a range of delivery mechanisms is being supported by a multi-annual Exchequer commitment totalling €6.5 billion over the period of the plan. These targets will be achieved using a combination of building, purchasing and leasing high quality properties to meet the needs of households on local authority waiting lists around the country.

Of the 50,000 social housing homes to be delivered under Rebuilding Ireland, 10,000 will be leased by local authorities and approved housing bodies under leasing arrangements from a range of different sources. A total of 3,500 properties are targeted to be achieved using the Repair and Leasing Scheme (RLS) which harnesses the potential of existing vacant stock and brings it back into use for social housing. The remaining 6,500 properties to be leased are intended to be secured under long-term lease arrangements from a variety of sources.

Yesterday, I published the provisional social housing output figures for 2017. These details are available on the Rebuilding Ireland website at the following link: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/2017-social-housing-output-figures-published/>.

This report identifies that the social housing leasing target of 600 homes under Rebuilding Ireland was exceeded, with 798 new social housing homes being delivered through leasing schemes.

Data on social housing leasing, funded by my Department, in respect of all local authorities to end Q3 2017 is published on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordble/overall-social-housing-provision>. Similar data in relation to Q4 2017 will be published shortly.

Question Nos. 1812 and 1813 answered with Question No. 1809.

Commercial Rates

1814. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the rates refund applying to vacant commercial property in respect of each local authority;

and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1585/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): Local authorities are under a statutory obligation to levy rates on the occupiers of rateable property in accordance with the details entered in the valuation lists prepared by the independent Commissioner of Valuation under the Valuation Acts 2001 to 2015.

Legislative provision is made for the refund of rates paid on vacant commercial properties in certain circumstances. The Local Government Act 1946 provides that where a property is unoccupied on the date of the making of the rate, the owner becomes liable for rates. However, the owner is entitled to a refund if the property is vacant for specified purposes, these being if the premises are unoccupied for the purpose of additions, alterations or repairs; where the owner is bona fide unable to obtain a suitable tenant at a reasonable rent; and where the premises are vacant pending redevelopment. The collection of rates and the determination of eligibility for a refund in this context are matters for each individual local authority.

The Local Government Act 1946 provided that the owner was entitled to a 100% refund in most local authority areas. Separate legislation governed refunds in the cities of Dublin, Limerick and Cork, where the same criteria for refunds applied but only 50% of the rates paid were refundable.

With effect from 1 June 2014, when the relevant provision commenced, the Local Government Reform Act 2014 gives discretion to the elected members of individual local authorities to vary the level of rates refunds that apply in individual local electoral areas within the authority's administrative area. The Local Government (Financial and Audit Procedures) Regulations 2014 provide that the decision to alter the rate of refund should be taken at the annual budget meeting and that the rate of refund decided in respect of the relevant local electoral area shall apply to eligible persons for the year to which the budget relates. The absence of a decision to vary the refund means that the existing legislative provisions regarding the rate of refunds apply (either 100% or 50% as set out above). Guidance has been provided to local authorities and elected members in that regard.

My Department has collated information regarding the decisions by local authorities in relation to refund rates from 2015 to 2017. For 2015, four local authorities chose to amend their refund rate. Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council reduced its rate from 100% to 75%. Galway City and Louth County Councils reduced their rates from 100% to 50%. Limerick City and County adopted a refund rate of 25%. All other local authorities chose to retain the existing 2014 refund rate for 2015. This included Dublin City and Cork City which both retained the pre-existing 50% refund rates in their local authority areas.

For 2016, all local authorities continued with the same refund rate adopted in 2015, except Waterford City and County Council, which reduced its refund rate from 100% to 70%.

For 2017, five local authorities chose to amend the refund rate they had for 2016. Dublin City Council reduced from 50% to 45%, Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown County Council reduced from 75% to 50%, Fingal County Council reduced from 100% to 75%, Limerick City and County Council reduced from 25% to 10% and Waterford City and County Council reduced from 70% to 55%.

Housing Adaptation Grant Funding

1815. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount allocated and the amount drawn down by each local authority in 2017 for the

housing aid for older people, mobility aids, housing adaptation and disability schemes, respectively, in tabular form. [1586/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): Information on the allocations to each local authority under the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability for 2017 is available on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/rebuilding-ireland/older-people/minister-coveney-announces-eu598million-improve-homes-older>. The detailed administration of this funding, including the apportionment across the individual grant schemes, is a matter for the local authorities.

My Department's website also contains information on the Housing Adaptation Grants paid by local authorities at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/social-and-affordable/other-local-authority-housing-scheme-statistics>. This information is currently available up to 2016; the information in respect of 2017 is currently being compiled and will be available shortly.

Housing Data

1816. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will report on the method of measuring residential unit building completions; the improvements that will be made to the accuracy of recording the number of new residential units for each quarter in 2018; his views on the latest house completion statistics for 2015, 2016 and 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1589/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): ESB Connections were used for many years as a proxy for housing completions. It is recognised that the ESB connections data include reconnections of properties vacant for two years or more and while the bringing back into use of vacant properties of this kind is welcome in terms of making efficient use of the overall housing stock, it is important that an improved breakdown is generated in relation to the different elements within the overall data.

Accordingly, my Department is collaborating with the ESB Networks and the Central Statistics Office to obtain additional, more granular data from their datasets and I expect that we will begin to see improved data on foot of this as we progress further into 2018. In the interim, my Department has continued to publish the existing dataset on ESB connections, qualified along the lines above, and data up to end 2017 is now available on the Department's website at the following address:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/house-building-and-private-rented/construction-activity-esb-connections>.

This shows the increasing trend in connections in recent years, from 12,666 in 2015, rising to 14,932 in 2016 and rising further to 19,271 in 2017.

Thatching Grants Applications

1817. **Deputy Kevin O'Keefe** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the position regarding an application for a thatched roof grant by a person (details supplied). [1630/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

Communications have issued directly to the applicant in this case who has sought a thatching grant, seeking the return of the 'Certificate of Approval' that is prepared following the first inspection of the house. This Certificate must be signed by the thatcher, who carried out the work, as well as by the applicant. The last communication from my Department to the applicant was November 2017 and the certificate is awaited and should be returned to my Department, as soon as possible.

Commercial Rates

1818. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if a comprehensive public consultation on a review of the commercial rates system has been instigated; if so, the stage it is at; the length of time it will take to conclude; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1635/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): Commercial rates form an important element of the funding of all local authorities. However, the legislative basis for the levying of rates consists of over 20 separate pieces of legislation, some dating back to the 19th century. My Department has developed legislative proposals to modernise and consolidate the legislation governing commercial rates into a single enactment.

In this regard, the Government last year approved the drafting of a Rates Bill. The General Scheme of the Bill is currently with the Attorney General's office for drafting, with a view to its introduction as soon as possible.

Vacant Sites Levy

1819. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the way the vacant site levy will operate and impact on persons who own such sites in County Kildare; if a list of such sites is available; if landowners will be notified if their plot is listed; the exemptions to having a site listed as vacant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1668/18]

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 area. 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 annual basis thereafter, as long as a site remains on the vacant site register in the preceding year.

Planning authorities are empowered to apply an annual vacant site levy of 3% of the market value of vacant sites, exceeding 0.05 hectares in area, which, in the planning authority's opinion, were vacant or idle in the preceding year, in areas identified by the planning authority in its development plan or local area plan for residential or regeneration development.

Reduced or zero rates of levy may apply in specific circumstances in order to help alleviate the financial burden faced by owners of vacant sites which are subject to a site loan and where the loan is greater than the market value of the site (i.e. a negative equity situation), and also where the site loan is greater than 50% of the market value of the site.

The planning authority, or the Valuation Tribunal on appeal, may also deem that a vacant site has a zero market value where no market exists for the site or the site is contaminated land and the necessary remediation costs in order to use or develop the site exceed the market value of the site itself. In addition, where there is a change in ownership of a vacant site, or on the death of the owner of a site, the amount of levy chargeable on such site in respect of that year or the previous year shall be zero.

The Act provides that the planning authority will notify owners of vacant sites at various stages throughout the process, including when the planning authority intends to enter the vacant site on the register, when it has been entered on the register and when the levy falls due for payment. Owners of vacant sites may make submissions to the planning authority in respect of their sites at various stages in the process. There are also a number of appeals provisions, including an appeal against the entry of a site on the register, an appeal of market value determination of a site and appeal against demand for payment of the levy.

Vacant site registers were established in January 2017 by planning authorities and planning authorities are 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.

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. As provided for under the Act, the register in respect of Kildare County Council is available for inspection at its offices and online on its website, at <http://kildare.ie/countycouncil/Planning/VacantSites/index.html>.

My Department continues to monitor and engage with local authorities in relation to implementation of the vacant site levy and, as recently as 8 November 2017, held a seminar with authorities in this regard.

As part of Budget 2018, an increase in the rate of the levy was announced. Under the new arrangements, the levy will be applied at the rate of 3 per cent of the market value of a vacant site from January 2019 for sites entered on the vacant site register of a local authority in 2018. For vacant sites on the register for a second and subsequent years, an increased 7 per cent rate of levy will be applied. I am intending to bring forward the necessary legislative amendments to give effect to these rate changes in the near future.

Tenant Purchase Scheme Eligibility

1820. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if local authority tenants who had works carried out to their dwelling by their local authority to adapt the home for the particular needs of a member of the household are excluded from applying for the incremental tenant purchase scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1683/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme came into operation on 1 January 2016. The Scheme is open to eligible tenants, including joint tenants, of local authority houses that are available for sale under the Scheme. To be eligible, tenants must meet certain criteria, including having a minimum reckonable income of €15,000 per annum and having been in receipt of social housing support for at least 1 year.

The Housing (Sale of Local Authority Houses) Regulations 2015 governing the Scheme

provide for a number of specified classes of houses to be excluded from sale, including houses provided to local authorities under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, houses specifically designed for older persons, group Traveller housing and houses provided to facilitate people with disabilities transferring from institutional care to community-based living.

Local authorities may, within the provisions of the Regulations, exclude certain houses which, in the opinion of the authority, should not be sold for reasons such as proper stock or estate management. It is a matter for each individual housing authority to administer the Scheme in its operational area in line with the over-arching provisions of the governing legislation for the scheme, and in a manner appropriate to its housing requirements.

Question No. 1821 answered with Question No. 1773.

Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee Report

1822. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the deadline for submissions to the local government boundary committee; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1709/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): I established two Local Electoral Area Boundary Committees on 13 December 2017 to review and make recommendations on local electoral areas. They are tasked with reporting to me within six months.

The Committees are independent in the performance of their functions and the arrangements necessary for receipt of submissions are a matter for the Committees themselves. Nevertheless, it is anticipated that each Committee will advertise a public consultation in due course. Any queries can be directed to boundarycommittee@housing.gov.ie.

Water Charges

1823. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if a person must produce a receipt showing they paid domestic water charges now that they are abolished in view of the fact that when persons are selling their houses, including local authorities selling a house under the tenant purchase scheme, persons are required to produce a receipt for a charge that does not exist, especially in situations in which the charge was never paid; the position regarding same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1723/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): 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 repealed 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.

Departmental Staff Data

1824. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the proportion of employees in his Department or in organisations under its remit registered disabled. [1860/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005 provides for a statutory annual report on the employment of people with disabilities in the public sector.

The latest available figures relate to 2016 when 4.7% of staff in my Department declared themselves as having a disability as defined under the Disability Act 2005. The Department only records data on those staff members who have self-declared their disability.

My Department is also required to collate and report on the employment of people with disabilities in respect of bodies/agencies under its remit. My Department submitted the detailed 2016 report to the National Disability Authority (NDA) in compliance with Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005 last year for publication by the NDA in due course. The bodies under the remit of my Department have changed since the 2016 report was submitted, as a result of transfers of functions; therefore, data will have been submitted in 2016 in respect of bodies no longer under the aegis of my Department and other Departments will have been responsible for submitting data with regard to bodies that are now under my Department's remit. I understand that the 2016 report has not yet been published, and I would refer you to my colleague, the Minister for Justice and Equality, who has responsibility for this matter.

Rental Accommodation Standards

1825. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount being made available to local authorities in 2018 for rental property inspections; the percentage of rental properties that will be inspected in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1896/18]

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.

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.

However, the Rental Strategy recognises the need for additional resources to be provided to local authorities to facilitate increased inspections of properties and ensure greater compliance with the Regulations. Provision has been made for an allocation of €2.5 million in 2018, with the intention of providing further increases each year in the period to 2021 to enable targeted inspection coverage of 25% of rental properties annually.

The Working Group on Rental Standards, comprising representatives of my Department, local authorities and the Residential Tenancies Board, will be examining resource and performance management issues including budget allocation, target setting and performance monitoring and reporting as part of its work programme for the first half of 2018.

Housing Data

1826. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of rapid build houses that have been built and occupied to the end of 2017; the rapid build schemes and number of houses in each scheme he expects to be completed during 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1897/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Under Rebuilding Ireland, a total of 208 rapid delivery homes were completed by end 2017. There are currently some 20 further rapid delivery projects, yielding in excess of 470 social homes, at various stages of advancement, the vast majority of which are scheduled for delivery in 2018. Under my Department's current funding programmes, approved housing bodies (AHB) are also being asked to consider delivering schemes using rapid build methodologies and a number of them have or will transfer schemes from traditional construction to rapid delivery over the coming months. Figures on numbers of AHB schemes and units involved will be collected during the year.

All local authorities have been asked to review the social housing projects in their areas and in the interest of achieving earliest delivery, requested to consider their suitability for Design and Build contracts under the Rapid Delivery Framework set up by the Office of Government Procurement. They were asked to consider, in particular, schemes which are amenable to early commencement, particularly in terms of their approved planning status. In response, some authorities have indicated that a number of both approved schemes and additional schemes under consideration may be suitable and my Department is following up with relevant Local Authorities. Where new schemes are proposed under both Capital and Current programmes, my Department will engage with the Local Authorities to establish if they are suitable for design and build and the OGP Rapid Delivery contractor framework.

Updated details in relation to the Programme of Rapid Build projects will be included in each Social Housing Construction Projects Status Report, which are published on a quarterly basis on the Rebuilding Ireland website, www.rebuildingireland.ie. The next Status Report, which will set out the position as at end Q4 2017, will be published later in Q1 2018.

Question No. 1827 answered with Question No. 1808.

Rental Sector Strategy

1828. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if an expert group to examine the issue of a cost rental model for housing has been established; if so, the membership of the group; the terms of reference; when it is expected to report and make recommendations on this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1899/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Delivering cost rental will be an important part of the overall solution to the affordability challenge and work is under way to identify potential local authority sites that can be developed for cost rental projects, particularly in areas of high housing demand and high accommodation costs. In this regard, the Housing Agency and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, in conjunction with Approved Housing Bodies, are bringing forward a pilot cost-rental project on a Land Aggregation Scheme site on the Enniskerry Road. Full details of the project will be announced in the near future, along with other affordability measures.

In terms of broader research and discussions on developing a cost rental model as part of an evolving and more sustainable rental sector in Ireland, I plan to form an Expert Group to examine the issues and provide advice on the most appropriate way forward. I am currently considering the terms of reference, formation and composition of the Group with a view to establishing it later this quarter.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

1829. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of social housing completions for each local authority in 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1900/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Through the supports made available from my Department, funding is available to all local authorities to deliver additional social housing stock through new construction projects, through the acquisition of new and previously owned houses/apartments and through working with approved housing bodies under a range of delivery options.

Details on the number of properties purchased and built in each local authority area, 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 four of 2017 will be published once finalised.

Question No. 1830 answered with Question No. 1810.

Local Authority Housing Data

1831. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the housing list for one, two, three and four bedroom housing units, respectively, by local authority; the way in which the announced new builds match the needs by local authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1913/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Section 63(3) of the Local Government Act 2001 provides that, subject to law, a local authority is independent in the performance of its functions. The allocation of social housing support to qualified households is a matter for the local authority concerned in accordance with the authority's allocation scheme made under section 22 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and associated Social Housing Allocation Regulations 2011.

An allocation scheme is solely a matter for the local authority concerned to make and implement, as it is a reserved function of the housing authority. Section 22(17) of the 2009 Act provides that the Minister's power to direct a housing authority regarding the operation of its allocation scheme shall not be construed or operate to enable the Minister to direct the allocation of a dwelling to a particular household.

Details on the number of households qualified for social housing support in each local authority area are provided in the statutory summary of social housing assessments, which are now being carried out on an annual basis.

The most recently published statutory summary of social housing assessments relates to the assessment carried out in 2016. This records the number of households on all local authority

waiting lists, as at 21 September 2016. The results of the 2016 summary show that there were 91,600 households deemed qualified for, and in need of social housing support. The 2016 results provide a breakdown by each local authority across a range of categories, including by household composition and age profile.

Full details in relation to the 2016 assessment are available on my Department's website, at the following link: http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/summary_of_social_housing_assessments_2016.pdf

An increased national social housing target of 50,000 homes has been set under Rebuilding Ireland and I will be discussing this heightened target at a Housing Summit I am holding with the local authority Chief Executives next week. I recently wrote to each local authority setting out their respective social housing delivery targets out to 2021. These targets are based on their housing need, as identified through the 2017 assessment, which I expect to be published shortly. This is the fairest and most objective basis for target setting.

Housing Assistance Payment Administration

1832. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his views on a recently published report (details supplied); his plans to make changes to the HAP scheme; the categories that will be changed; the way in which they will be changed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1915/18]

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. HAP plays a vital role in housing eligible families and individuals. There are currently more than 31,000 households having their housing needs met via HAP including over 8,500 households that were previously supported by Rent Supplement and over 20,000 landlords and agents in receipt of HAP payments.

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 this Government in 2016, 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.

From available data, at the end of Q3 2017, approximately 20% of the total number of households being supported by HAP were benefitting 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, 14.4% of households nationally were benefitting from the additional flexibility. In those cases, the average rate of discretionary payment being used was 14.9% above rent limits provided.

My Department monitors HAP data on an ongoing basis, as well as other key information relating to the private rental market. Indications are that the current HAP 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. 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 above, 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.

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.

HAP is one of a suite of Social Housing Supports available to Local Authorities and is also an essential component of our suite of homelessness prevention and supports. The Homeless HAP scheme has been operational since February 2015 across the four housing authorities in the Dublin Region, and is being implemented through the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE). The focus of this scheme is to transition qualified households from emergency accommodation, including hotels, into private rented tenancies. A Place Finder service, similar to the service available in Dublin, became operational in Cork City Council in 2017 and provides a dedicated resource that operates together with the established HAP delivery team in the local authority.

I announced recently that the Place Finder support is to be rolled out nationally providing homeless support staff in each of the 31 local authorities with the tools to target HAP supported rental properties for homeless households, with a particular focus of moving families out of emergency accommodation. This means that every local authority will be able to pay deposits and advance rental payment on behalf of homeless households in order to secure accommodation. The existing Place Finder service in Dublin is also being enhanced, with additional staff being assigned to provide on the ground support in each of the relevant local authority areas. Arrangements for the provision of these supports are currently being progressed by my Department together with the local authorities.

The flexibility of HAP as a social housing support is one of the scheme's key characteristics and was one of the primary benefits envisaged at the outset of the scheme. With this in mind, early last year direction and guidance was provided to all local authorities related to the operation of HAP cases whereby a tenant, currently on a local authority waiting list, wishes to access rented accommodation with HAP support in another local authority area.

I have directed local authorities to provide that HAP tenants continue to be dealt with by

their originating local authority. However, the rent limits will be those that apply in the local authority where the property is situated. The originating local authority will engage with the relevant new local authority to facilitate eligible requests for inter-authority movement. Where homeless households have sourced or been assisted by the Place Finder Service in sourcing accommodation outside the Dublin area, the relevant rate of support is based on the rent limits that apply in the local authority where the property is situated. The DRHE have been advised to consult with the new local authority in relation to the appropriate level of support that should be provided. However, the Place Finder Service can still pay a deposit and rent in advance on behalf of the tenant.

In order to maintain the equitable treatment of all housing applicants, inter-authority movement for HAP applicants is based on the current Social Housing Eligibility Income Bands, i.e. movement will only be facilitated across local authorities with Income Bands that are equal or higher; or where shared areas of choice are already operated.

The following table provides details of the inter-authority movement since April, when the option was made available:

Summer of Inter-LA Movement (as at 19 Jul 2017)	
Intra Dublin	583
Dublin to other LA's	55
All other inter-LA movement	322
	960

I am satisfied with how the HAP 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.

Rent Supplement is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

Commercial Rates Data

1833. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the commercial rates charge as levied on commercial businesses and companies for each county council or local authority district as of 1 January 2018, in tabular form; his plans for reviewing the current commercial rates system in view of the fact the present system is archaic and unfair; the possible timeframe for reform of the rates system; his plans to implement the necessary changes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2030/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Local authorities are under a statutory obligation to levy rates on any property used for commercial purposes in accordance with the details entered in the valuation lists prepared by the independent Commissioner of Valuation pursuant to the Valuation Acts 2001 to 2015. The levying and collection of rates are matters for each individual local authority.

The annual rate on valuation (ARV), which is applied to the valuation of each property determined by the Valuation Office, to obtain the amount payable in rates, is decided by the elected members of each local authority in the annual budget and its determination is a reserved function.

My Department is collating the ARVs adopted by local authorities for 2018; however, the

full list is not available at this time as the formal publication process for all adopted 2018 local authority budgets has not yet been completed. A full list will be provided to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Commercial rates form an important element of the funding of all local authorities. However, the legislative basis for the levying of rates consists of over 20 separate pieces of legislation, some dating back to the 19th century. My Department has developed legislative proposals to modernise and consolidate the legislation governing commercial rates into a single enactment.

In this regard, the Government last year approved the drafting of a Rates Bill. The General Scheme of the Bill is currently with the Attorney General's office for drafting, with a view to its introduction as soon as possible.

Departmental Communications

1834. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his Department uses anti-profanity software on its email systems and online contact forms; if so, the level of human oversight that is applied to the monitoring of these software and their effectiveness; his views on whether persons' legitimate right to petition Government may be blocked unintentionally by errors in the use of such software in determining that which qualifies as profanity being communicated in email and or online contact forms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2089/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department does not have any anti profanity software in use on its email systems or online contact forms.

An Bord Pleanála Data

1835. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of applications made to An Bord Pleanála under the new fast track process for developments in excess of 100 homes since its inception in July 2017; the number of applications at each stage of the process; the number of these applications that have been refused; the reasons for which they were refused; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2104/18]

1837. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the density of each development approved in applications made to An Bord Pleanála under the new fast-track process for developments in excess of 100 homes since its inception in July 2017; the density of each development rejected under this process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2106/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1835 and 1837 together.

The Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016 provides for new streamlined arrangements to enable planning applications for strategic housing developments, of 100 housing units or more or student accommodation developments of 200 bed spaces or more, to be made directly to An Bord Pleanála (the Board) for determination.

As part of the new arrangements and prior to making a planning application, a prospective applicant must make a request to the Board to enter into mandatory pre-application consultation regarding a proposed strategic housing development. At the end of the consultation, which also

involves the local planning authority concerned, the Board issues its opinion as to whether the documents submitted with the consultation request constitute a reasonable basis for a planning application to be submitted or alternatively require further consideration and amendment in order to constitute a reasonable basis for an application.

Further to the submission of a planning application to the Board for a proposed strategic housing development, the Board is required to make a determination on such application within a period of 16 weeks of the lodgment of the application.

In the six months since the new arrangements came into operation, i.e. from 3 July 2017 up until 31 December 2017, the Board received 36 valid pre-application consultation requests in respect of which 25 opinions have already issued, with further opinions to issue in 2018.

Up until 11 January, 14 planning applications for strategic housing developments have been made to the Board. The Board issued a decision on the first strategic housing development application on 11 January 2018, granting, in part and subject to conditions, an application for student accommodation at University College Dublin. The Board made a decision earlier this week to refuse a second application for residential development at Clay Farm, Ballyogan Road, Dublin 18. A notice of these decisions, along with information on other applications received and to be determined in 2018 which includes weblinks to access full details of each application, is available on An Bord Pleanála's website at the following link: <http://www.pleanala.ie/news/index.htm>. Decisions by the Board on the other 12 strategic housing development applications currently before the Board are expected to be made between now and end-April 2018.

Under section 30 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (the Act), I am specifically precluded from exercising any power or control in relation to any case with which a planning authority or the Board is or may be involved. Therefore, I cannot comment on an individual planning case or any aspect thereof.

However, a detailed and national level policy approach in relation to residential densities in urban areas is set out in my Department's 2009 Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, issued under section 28 of the Act. The objective of these Guidelines is to ensure planning authorities bring about high quality and sustainable urban development by balancing the need to ensure the highest standards of residential design which encompasses building lay-out, design and heights and the need to ensure efficient use of scarce land and infrastructural resources and the avoidance of urban sprawl.

Planning authorities, and, where applicable, the Board, 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

1836. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of Part V units agreed under the new fast track process for developments in excess of 100 homes since its inception in July 2017; the number of developments and units across which these Part V units have been agreed for; if these units have been agreed for purchase or rent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2105/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The information my Department collects on units delivered under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, does not distinguish between whether the relevant planning permission (pursuant to which the Part V agreement was made) was granted by a planning authority, An Bord Pleanála on appeal, or by An Bord Pleanála under the new strategic housing

infrastructure process, which commenced last July.

In any event, final Part V statistics for 2017 are not yet available.

Question No. 1837 answered with Question No. 1835.

Question No. 1838 answered with Question No. 1702.

Land Availability

1839. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the lands owned by local authorities; the amount of land which is zoned residential in the ownership of each local authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2108/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): In terms of lands owned by local authorities, all local authorities are required to record assets, including all land assets, in the Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet), in accordance with the Local Authority Accounting in Ireland Code of Practice and Accounting Regulations, which is available on my Department's website at the following link: http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/accounting_code_of_practice_january_2017_final.pdf.

The active management of the publicly-owned housing land bank is part of a range of complementary actions being progressed under the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, designed to accelerate and increase housing output. To this end, details of some 1,700 hectares of land in local authority and Housing Agency ownership were published on the Rebuilding Ireland Housing Land Map, with the potential to deliver some 42,500 homes nationally. These mapped sites can be viewed at the following link: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/rebuilding-ireland-land-map/>. Local authorities are also required to confirm and update the data on a quarterly basis to ensure that the information held on this mapping database is fully up to date.

In addition to this mapping exercise, all local authorities have been requested to prepare Strategic Development and Management Plans for housing lands in their ownership, with particular emphasis on prioritising those sites with the greatest potential to deliver housing at scale, in the short to medium term.

In the context of his new role in driving and co-ordinating housing delivery, my colleague Minister of State Damien English will chair the State Land Management and Development Group which will convene in the coming weeks to, inter alia, oversee delivery of housing from the local authority and broader State land bank. In this regard, my Department will continue to engage with local authorities, other Government Departments, and State and semi-State bodies to pursue the long-term optimal use of appropriate sites for residential purposes.

Departmental Advertising Expenditure

1840. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the Government's initiatives in his Department in 2017 that promoted State services or welfare payments, public awareness on regulatory changes and public consultations that involved advertising and promotion on television, radio, newspapers and online, in tabular form; and the level of expenditure for each such initiative. [2265/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

Details of expenditure in 2017 on advertising and information in relation to government initiatives is set out in the following tables:

Cost	Campaign
€2,657.00	Official Notices of Statutory Instruments
€3,462.00	Rebuilding Ireland Rental Market & AHB Reg Section
€4,881.86	Water Quality - Nitrates Regulations
€6,468.80	Water Quality- River Basin Management
€3,715.10	Marine Planning & Foreshore - Microbeads
€2,707.48	Housing Assistance Payment & Current Programme - Repair & Leasing
€8,438.65	Nitrates Action Programme
€430.50	Met Éireann – Ad in National Ploughing Championships catalogue
€305,423.41	Provision of Media Buying Services for 2017/2018 National Fire Safety campaign
€28,572.08	2017/2018 National Fire Safety campaign
€395.58	2017/2018 National Fire Safety campaign
€7,479.05	Register of Electors Awareness Campaign
€22,572.48	Radio Adverts Ireland 2040 (NPF)
€22,747.36	Newspaper Adverts Ireland 2040
€20,405.55	Newspaper Adverts Ireland 2040 - Sept 2017
€4,747.70	Irish Farmer Journal & Seachtain Adverts Ireland 2040
Cost	Campaign
€10,783.23	Social media advertising for Repair & Leasing scheme
€8,487.00	2017/2018 National Fire Safety campaign
€10,325.00	Electors Awareness Campaign on social media
€2,460.00	Housing Assistance Payment – Facebook and Twitter
€8,265.00	Housing Assistance Payment- Daft.ie and thejournal.ie

Regional Airports

1841. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when the land for Clifden airport was purchased; the person or body the land was purchased from; the amount paid; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54741/17]

1842. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount her Department has spent on developing Clifden airport to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54742/17]

1843. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her future plans for Clifden airport; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54743/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1841 to 1843, inclusive, together.

My Department purchased the land for Clifden airport from Clifden and West Connemara Airport PLC in 2007 at a cost of €474,112.84.

The Department has spent the following amounts from 2007 to date on the development of Clifden airport:

-	Amount
Construction Works	€4,610,495.37
Consultants and Engineers	€232,494.76
Design of Aerodromes*	€21,241.65
Total	€4,864,231.78

In 2017, my Department undertook a public consultation process whereby it sought submissions from interested parties in relation to the future use of both Clifden and Inishbofin airstrips. A large number of submissions were received and these are currently being reviewed by my Department. The submissions received will inform my Department in its deliberations regarding the future of these facilities.

Scéim na gCúntóirí Teanga

1844. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cathain a fhoilseofar torthaí an athbhreithnithe a rinne an Rialtas ar éifeachtacht scéim na gcúntóirí teanga chun fiosrú a dhéanamh ar an bhféidearthacht atá ann do leathnú agus do sheirbhís ar chaighdeán níos airde, a bhí le tosú ó Ráithe 4 2017 de réir an pholasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [54819/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): D'fhonn Scéim na gCúntóirí Teanga a threisiú i gcomhthéacs chur bhfeidhm an Pholasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta agus an phróisis pleanála teanga mar atá leagtha amach faoi Acht na Gaeltachta, 2012, tá mo Roinn chun tabhairt faoi Athbhreithniú ar an scéim.

Tá bailchríoch á cur i láthair na huair leis an obair chun Iarratas ar Thairiscintí a réiteach, i gcomhar leis an Oifig um Sholáthar Rialtais, ar mhaithe le sainchomhairleoirí a fhostú chun tabhairt faoi athbhreithniú cuimsitheach ar an Scéim. Táthar ag súil go bhfoilseofar an tIarratas ar Thairiscintí sna seachtainí amach romhainn.

Scéim na bhFoghlaimoirí Gaeilge

1845. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Catherine Connolly** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta maidir leis an aighneacht atá curtha faoina bhráid ag eagraíochtaí éagsúla, lena n-áirítear Comhar na nOileán Teo. agus Bord Oideachais agus Oilíúna na Gaillimhe agus Ros Comáin (GRETB), maidir le cur leis an 30 scoláireacht chónaithe do scoláirí ó cheantair lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht a chuirtear ar fáil sa chóras iar-bhunoideachais ar Oileáin Árann faoi láthair; soiléiriú ar stádas na haighneachta sin; go háirithe, an bhfuil cinneadh déanta ina taobh; mura bhfuil cinneadh déanta, cén uair a dhéanfar cinneadh; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [55055/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy

ty Joe McHugh): Le deich mbliana anuas, tá mo Roinn, faoi réir na gcoinníollacha a bhaineann le Scéim na bhFoghlaimoirí Gaeilge, ag íoc deontas ar fiú €27 in aghaidh an scoláire in aghaidh an lae le teaghlaigh atá cáilithe go cuí a chuireann lóistín ar fáil do scoláirí ón mórthír a dhéanann freastal ar feadh scoilbhliana iomlán ar cheann amháin den trí iar-bhunscoil ar na hOileáin Árann. Faoin socrú reatha, tá uasmhéid de 30 scoláire ceadaithe agus is ionann sin agus uasmhéid de dheichniúr in aghaidh an trí iar-bhunscoil faoi seach.

Is ar mhaithe le cur le hinmharthanacht na scoileanna agus dá réir le hinmharthanacht na n-oileán atá an beart seo á mhaoiniú go príomha ag mo Roinn. Caithfear a chur san áireamh chomh maith, áfach, an tionchar a d'fhéadfadh a bheith ag an iomarca scoláirí ón mórthír ar iompar teanga na scoláirí de bhunadh na n-oileáin.

Tá an aighneacht a bhfuil an Teachta ag tagairt di faighte ag mo Roinn. Déanfar í a bhreithniú i gcomhar leis na páirtithe leasmhara agus eiseofar cinneadh faoi in am trátha.

Caiteachas Ranna

1846. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cá mhéad airgid atá caite ag Rannán na Gaeltachta i ngach contae le cúig bliana anuas. [54357/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): I dtús báire, is mian liom a chur in iúl don Teachta nach de réir chontae a coinnítear taifid faoi gach mhír caiteachais atá ag mo Roinn. É sin ráite, tá iarracht déanta agam Ceist an Teachta a fhreagairt.

Ag glacadh leis gur faoin gClár Tacaíochtaí Pobail agus Teanga de chuid na Roinne atá an cheist - clár faoina gcuirtear cúnaimh ar fáil chun tacú le bonneagar Gaeilge agus pobail na Gaeltachta threisiú - leagtar amach sa tábla a leanas an dáileadh airgid atá déanta faoin gclár idir 2013 agus 2017, idir chúnaimh caipitil agus reatha.

Contae	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Dún na nGall	€476,215	€471,323	€705,050	€865,857	€1,144,767
Maigh Eo	€67,789	€62,256	€99,729	€90,104	€213,369
Gaillimh	€2,225,491	€1,476,598	€1,432,240	€2,123,426	€1,737,064
Ciarraí	€1,097,552	€1,519,464	€894,970	€728,424	€555,139
Corcaigh	€95,866	€94,090	€225,926	€79,689	€172,438
Port Láirge	€5,706	€8,197	€17,006	€6,117	€11,537
Co na Mí	€22,629	€26,796	€18,722	€25,450	€18,838
Ilghnéitheach*	€441,256	€277,489	€362,070	€304,000	€345,500
Iomlán	€4,432,504	€3,936,213	€3,755,713	€4,223,067	€4,198,652

*Nótáil led thoil go gcuimsítear san eolas thuasluaite íocaíochtaí le heagraíochtaí ar leith a riarann cláir éagsúla oibre thar ceann na Roinne i gceantair Ghaeltachta éagsúla nach féidir a shonrú chomh éasca sin de réir contae. San áireamh anseo, tá Scéim na gCampaí Samhraidh agus Scéim na gCuntóirí Teanga.

Anuas air an gcaiteachas thuasluaite, leagtar amach sa table thíos an caiteachas a rinneadh le teaghlaigh Gaeltachta go príomhá faoi Scéim na bhFoghlaimoirí Gaeilge ó 2013 go 2017:

Questions - Written Answers

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Co. Dhún na nGall	€629,770	€624,682	€698,015	€790,821	€808,400
Co. Mhaigh Eo	€311,050	€267,793	€289,900	€278,909	€279,125
Co. na Gaillimhe	€2,199,580	€2,023,208	€2,182,879	€2,283,357	€2,281,167.50
Co. Chiarraí	€365,220	€290,635	€321,807	€412,957	€396,852.50
Co. Chorcaí	€106,337	€89,255	€81,638	€83,833	€76,860
Co. Phort Láirge	€83,021	€76,097	€85,577	€105,604	€124,075
Co. na Mí	€62,092	€56,924	€57,617	€49,400	€50,600
Co. an Chláir	€15,685	€16,480	€9,997	€8,925	€4,340
IOMLÁN	€3,772,755	€3,445,074	€3,727,430	€4,013,806	€4,021,420

Maidir leis an an gcóras pleanála teanga, íocadh na suimeanna sa table thíos le hÚdarás na Gaeltachta le dáileadh mar ba chúil sna contaetha éagsúla:

Bliain	Údarás na Gaeltachta
2014	€20,000
2015	€259,875
2016	€340,125
2017	€735,000
Iomlán	€1,355,000

Departmental Expenditure

1847. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the spending by her Department by county for the past five years. [54358/17]

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

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

In view of this and because of the wide range of my Department's schemes and programmes, and the large volumes of payments and grants involved, it is not possible to provide the information sought. However, if the Deputy has specific queries relating to a particular programme or grant, I will endeavour to provide him with relevant information in that regard.

Departmental Funding

1848. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if funding is available for a group (details supplied) in County Donegal to enable it to renew old equipment and to travel to a prestigious competition abroad; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54386/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): While my Department does not have a fund for community groups to travel abroad for competitions my Department does fund the Music Capital Scheme which allocates grants each year to groups and individuals for the purchase of musical instruments. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that on Tuesday 9 January last, I launched the new Music Capital Scheme with an increased allocation of €245,000 for 2018. Music Network manages the Scheme on behalf of my Department. All details are available at www.musicnetwork.ie.

Departmental Funding

1849. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if funding is available for a group (details supplied) in County Donegal to enable it to renew old equipment and to travel to a prestigious competition abroad; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54387/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): The issue of whether funding can be provided under my Department's Community and Language Supports Programme (Clár Tacaíochtaí Pobail agus Teanga) in respect of the case to which the Deputy refers will be carefully considered in the context of the criteria and conditions which govern the scheme. However, no such application has been received to date.

National Monuments

1850. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to intervene to protect and preserve all 1916 buildings threatened with demolition; if preservation orders for all 1916 buildings in the Moore Street area will be issued to ensure their protection and preservation in view of a company (details supplied) refusing to engage with her consultative group; and if consideration has been given to proceeding with compulsory purchase orders on the entire site to secure it. [54415/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): All known archaeological monuments, of which there are in excess of 130,000, are entitled to protection under the National Monuments Acts 1930-2014. Protection may be extended to previously unrecorded monuments by entering them in the Register of Historic Monuments or the Record of Monuments and Places.

The Acts allow the Minister to make a Preservation Order where a national monument is considered to be at risk. In certain circumstances, the Minister may also acquire a national monument by agreement or compulsorily. These powers are exercised as and when appropriate.

As the Deputy is aware, the applicability of the provisions of the National Monuments Acts to particular buildings, structures and lands in the Moore Street area of Dublin is the subject of proceedings in the Court of Appeal on which a decision is awaited. It would be entirely inappropriate for me to speculate on the outcome of those proceedings or to comment in any way

on related matters.

Departmental Funding

1851. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the funding options available to purchase equipment for a newly formed brass band; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54546/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Music Capital Scheme allocates grants each year to groups and individuals for the purchase of musical instruments. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that on Tuesday 9 January last, I launched the new Music Capital Scheme with an increased allocation of €245,000 for 2018. Music Network manages the Scheme on behalf of my Department. All details are available at www.musicnetwork.ie.

Commemorative Events

1852. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when the next meeting of the Famine commemoration committee is due to take place; if a decision will be made at that meeting on the international dimension of the famine commemoration in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54574/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The official term of office of the National Famine Commemoration Committee expired at the end of 2017. Arrangements are being made for the appointment of a new National Famine Commemoration Committee and the first meeting of the new Committee will be arranged shortly.

Officials of my Department and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade are continuing to develop proposals in relation to the 2018 International Famine Commemoration and these will be submitted to the Committee in due course.

Departmental Funding

1853. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if annual funding for a community centre (details supplied) will be provided. [54663/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): While my Department does not provide current funding for organisations such as that referred to by the Deputy it does fund the Music Capital Scheme which provides grants to groups and individuals for the purchase of musical instruments. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that on 9 January last, I launched the new Music Capital Scheme with an increased allocation of €245,000 for 2018. Music Network manages the Scheme on behalf of my Department and the organisation referred to by the Deputy can apply for funding under the scheme. All details are available at <http://www.musicnetwork.ie/musicians/award1-info>

The Deputy may be also interested to learn that Creative Youth – a Plan to enable the Creativity of Every Child and Young Person was launched in December 2017 – a key element of the Creative Ireland Programme. The Creative Ireland Programme is an all of Government five-year initiative which places creativity at the centre of public policy. A key commitment of this plan is to ensure that every child in Ireland has practical access to tuition, experience and

participation in music, drama, art and coding by 2022. There may be scope for groups such as that referred to by the Deputy to get involved in the Creative Youth Programme as the plan is rolled out.

Deontais Ranna

1854. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta an gcuirfidh sí i bhfoirm tábla gach deontas a bhronn an Roinn ar gach aon ghrúpa, eagrais nó duine aonair ón uair a bhí an tOlltoghchán deireanach ann; an léireoidh sí cén cineál deontais a bhí i gceist; cathain a fuair na grúpaí, na heagrais agus na daoine aonair na deontais seo; an ndéanfaidh sí an t-eolas maidir le cárbh as dóibh a bhriseadh síos ó thaobh contae de; agus cé méid airgid a bhí i gceist i gcás gach ceann acu. [54672/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Déantar sonraí an chistiúcháin a leithdháiltear gach bliain ar mo Roinn ag leibhéal fo-mhírchinn a fhoilsiú sna Meastacháin Athbhreithnithe bhliantúla. Trí na fo-mhírchinn sin, déanann mo Roinn raon leathan clár agus beart a riar agus a chur i gcrích, agus tá cur síos orthu sin le fáil ar shuíomh na Roinne ag <http://www.chg.gov.ie/>

Foilsítear sonraí tháirgeacht iarbhír mo Roinne ag leibhéal fo-mhírchinn do 2016 sa Chuntas Leithreasa Bliantúil, atá ar fáil ar shuíomh gréasáin an Ard-Reachtair Cuntas agus Ciste <http://www.audgen.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=2623&CatID=3&StartDate=01+January+2017>

Tá an obair le figiúirí caiteachais 2017 a thabhairt chun críche ar bun faoi láthair lena chinntiú go bhfuil cuntas ar an gcaiteachas i gcomhréir le polasaithe, prionsabail agus nósanna imeachta cuntasaíochta an Rialtais agus beidh sonraí chaiteachas 2017 ar fáil ar an suíomh gréasáin céanna níos faide anonn i mbliana.

Tugtar taifead agus cuntas ar chaiteachas faoi réimsí cláir ar bhonn náisiúnta agus ní feidir miondealú ar chaiteachas na Roinne ar fad a thabhairt de réir réigiúin ná ar bhonn contae. De ghnáth, ní bhíonn na grúpaí agus na heagraíochtaí a fhaigheann deontais go díreach ó mo Roinn déanta suas ar bhonn contae aonair.

Ina theannta sin, ní mór dom a lua go ndéantar cuid de chláir mo Roinne a chur ar fáil trí ghníomhaireachtaí.

Ag féachaint don méid thuas, agus mar gheall ar raon leathan scéimeanna agus clár mo Roinne, agus líon mór na n-íocaíochtaí agus na ndeontas atá i gceist, ní feidir an t-eolas atá á lorg a chur ar fáil. Má bhíonn ceisteanna sonracha ag an Teachta, áfach, a bhaineann le clár nó deontas áirithe, déanfaidh mé mo dhícheall an t-eolas ábhartha a thabhairt do.

Creative Ireland Programme

1855. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the research that was carried out that informed the policy decision to invest €0.9 million in citizen engagement under the Creative Ireland programme budget; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54695/17]

1856. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the research that was carried out that informed the way in which the €0.9 million allocated to citizen engagement under the Creative Ireland programme budget would be spent; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54696/17]

1857. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if a tendering process was undertaken in the relation to the €0.9 million spend on citizen engagement under the Creative Ireland programme budget; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54697/17]

1858. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the steps her Department took to ensure that the expenditure of €0.9 million on citizen engagement under the Creative Ireland programme budget represented the best value for money for her department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54698/17]

1859. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount of the €0.9 million allocated to citizen engagement under the Creative Ireland programme budget that was spent on social media advertising; the breakdown of the expenditure; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54699/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1855 to 1859, inclusive, together.

As part of the 2017 Creative Ireland Programme my Department undertook a comprehensive citizen engagement programme to showcase the range and depth of Ireland's cultural and creative offering and to encourage participation in arts and creative activities as a means of individual, collective and societal well-being. One of the objectives was to build awareness of the Creative Ireland Programme, particularly in its first year. The vision of the Creative Ireland Programme is that every person in Ireland should have the opportunity to realise their full creative potential. This represents a new approach to creativity and cultural policy and therefore required a substantial and sustained communications programme in 2017. A combination of approaches and platforms were used to maximise impact, taking account of the diversity of the target audiences.

The development of the citizen engagement programme was very much informed by the positive experience of previous programmes particularly the approach taken in the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme. In addition, statistics relating to readership of national and regional newspapers, listenership to local radio and increased use of social media, particularly by younger people, all informed the choices made. The Programme was also designed to have as wide a reach as possible, including in rural areas.

Pending the tendering for services in relation to media management, my Department continued to use the services of a company which had been engaged during the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme. This was short-term only for the provision of these services and my Department has since held a new tender competition for the provision of similar services should they be required in 2018 and has awarded a contract in this regard.

As part of the contract requirements the media management company produced reports and statistics in relation to all elements of the engagement programme including digital platforms. The high-quality content across all platforms including print and digital has been well received across the country. My Department is satisfied that in the initial year of the Creative Ireland Programme, such a widespread communications strategy was warranted and presented value for money.

Most recent figures show the following numbers:

Creative.ireland.ie(website) – 130,272 page views

Ireland.ie (website) – 138,388 page views

Creative Ireland facebook – 17,261 followers

Creative Ireland Twitter – 15,800 followers

A full expenditure breakdown of the €0.9m, including social media is provided on the Creative Ireland Programme website: www.creative.ireland.ie

Departmental Bodies

1860. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the reason there is currently no chairperson of the high level implementation group for the arts in education charter; and when this position will be filled. [54746/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): In April 2017, the Chairperson of the High Level Implementation Group on the Arts in Education Charter, tendered his resignation to my predecessor for personal reasons. On 7 December 2017 last the Creative Youth plan was launched. The plan sets out a suite of measures to deliver on Pillar 1 of the Creative Ireland Programme: to ensure that every child in Ireland has practical access to tuition, experience and participation in music, drama, art and coding by 2022. Creative Youth is a hugely ambitious five year Plan with 7 key actions which will build on policies and programmes that are already in place including the Arts in Education Charter.

Consideration is being given to the appropriate oversight mechanism for the Creative Youth Programme having regard to the existing structures developed for the Arts in Education Charter and the appointment of a new Chair of the High Level Group will be considered in this context.

Departmental Funding

1861. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her attention has been drawn to the change of use supplied by a company for a planned event centre in Cork; if the decision will impact on further funding of the project; and when funds will be allocated. [54752/17]

1864. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she has received a request for additional funding for a centre (details supplied); if a decision has been taken; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54799/17]

1923. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when a decision will issue on funding for the event centre in Cork; and the number of times she has met with other Ministers on the matter. [1257/18]

1938. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the Cork events centre. [1746/18]

1939. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she has received a request for additional funding from Cork City Council towards the Cork events centre; if so, the sum involved; and the details of the request. [1747/18]

1940. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her department has had discussions or contact with the developer for the Cork events centre in recent months. [1748/18]

1941. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when a decision will be made on the request for additional funding for the Cork events centre. [1749/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1861, 1864, 1923, and 1938 to 1941, inclusive, together.

The Cork Event Centre is a project being developed and managed by Cork City Council and the Council is responsible for the delivery of the project.

My Department has allocated €12 million to the City Council towards the cost of the Centre. This allocation is subject to a Service Level Agreement with the City Council to ensure compliance with all relevant requirements in relation to major capital projects.

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 the application. There are complex legal, state aid and match funding issues which are being considered in relation to this application and the Department is engaging with the City Council in relation to these.

I have not met with other Ministers in relation to this project since my appointment on 30 November 2017. My Department has not been informed of any change of use for the proposed centre in Cork. As is usual with capital grants, my Department has not engaged in discussions with the developer as this is a role for the project promoter Cork City Council.

Natural Heritage Areas Designation

1862. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of a proposed natural heritage area (details supplied); when it will be finalised; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54753/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): There are 630 proposed natural heritage areas in Ireland, including the area to which the Deputy refers. While a review of these sites is foreseen, the current focus of my Department is on fulfilling Ireland's obligations under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives and the designation of Natura 2000 sites, i.e. special areas of conservation and special protection areas.

Although proposed natural heritage area sites are not subject to designation under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000, they may be recognised in local authority development plans.

Departmental Funding

1863. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the name and number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from her Department 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 amount of money they have spent on this particular campaign during that time; the number of organisations here that are in receipt of funding from her Department that have expended resources seeking the retention of the eighth amendment; the amount of funding these organisations have received from the State in the past five years; and the amount of money they have spent on this particular campaign during that time. [54762/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): While my Department does not provide funding to organisations for the purposes described by the Deputy I am advised that, in reply to Parliamentary Question No. 533 of 5th December last, it was confirmed that my Department provided funding of €32,866 to the National Women's Council in relation to International Womens Day and FemFest for the years 2016 and 2017.

Question No. 1864 answered with Question No. 1861.

Creative Ireland Programme

1865. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54860/17]

1866. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54861/17]

1867. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54862/17]

1868. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54863/17]

1869. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54864/17]

1870. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54865/17]

1871. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54866/17]

1872. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54867/17]

1873. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will

make a statement on the matter. [54868/17]

1874. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54869/17]

1875. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54870/17]

1876. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54871/17]

1877. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54872/17]

1878. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54873/17]

1879. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54874/17]

1880. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54875/17]

1881. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54876/17]

1882. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54877/17]

1883. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54878/17]

1884. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will

make a statement on the matter. [54879/17]

1885. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54880/17]

1886. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54881/17]

1887. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54882/17]

1888. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54883/17]

1889. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54884/17]

1890. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54885/17]

1891. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54886/17]

1892. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54887/17]

1893. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54888/17]

1894. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54889/17]

1895. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will

make a statement on the matter. [54890/17]

1896. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54891/17]

1897. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54892/17]

1898. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54893/17]

1899. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54894/17]

1900. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54895/17]

1901. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54896/17]

1902. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54897/17]

1903. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 13 December 2017, the cost of the Creative Ireland feature that ran in a newspaper (details supplied); the dates on which it ran; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54898/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1865 to 1903, inclusive, together.

A major regional and local communications campaign was activated during the summer of 2017 as part of a wider citizen engagement plan to support and promote the publication of the 31 Local Authority Culture and Creativity Plans under the Creative Ireland Programme.

A total sum of €73,122 was expended across 38 regional newspapers. Please note that no content was eventually placed in the Evening Herald or in the Wexford Echo as originally scheduled and initially advised in parliamentary question number 273 (13 December 2017) but instead placed in the Enniscorthy and Gorey Guardians.

A full final breakdown of costs and details of publications is available on <https://creative.>

Creative Ireland Programme

1904. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the Creative Ireland culture and creativity plans for each of the county and city councils (details supplied) for 2017; the cost of each culture and creativity item in each of the culture and creativity plans, by county and city councils, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54941/17]

1909. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the breakdown of the €1,083,000 allocation to local authorities to support their culture and creativity plans for 2017 and 2018, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54946/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1904 and 1909 together.

Pillar 2 of the Creative Ireland Programme - Enabling Creativity in every Community is a key element of the Programme and the 31 Local Authorities are important partners. In 2017, my Department allocated €1m to 31 Local Authorities to enable them to develop and implement their Culture and Creativity Action Plans which included an associated programme of events and initiatives in each county. An additional €83,579 was spent on design, artwork, print and online distribution of the 31 sets of plans with a further €13,040 spent on translating the plans into Irish. The €1m allocation was bolstered by an additional €1m from the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government ensuring that each local authority received approximately €64,000 each to implement their Culture and Creativity Plans for 2017. In total, the plans listed over 750 local cultural projects, events and initiatives taking place nationwide in 2017 of which approximately 250 were funded through the enabling budget provided under the Creative Ireland Programme.

A key principle underpinning the Creative Ireland Programme is community empowerment and therefore each local authority decided themselves what events/projects they wished to include in their respective plans. It is therefore not possible at this point in time to provide an exact breakdown of costs for each activity for every local authority. However, this information -in accordance with normal departmental monitoring procedures and in line with the reporting requirements specific to this initiative - will be submitted by each local authority over the coming weeks.

A breakdown of the total allocation to the local authorities is outlined in the following table as requested. All 31 Plans can be accessed at <https://creative.ireland.ie/en/local-plans>.

Breakdown of Local Authority Allocation in 2017

Local Authorities	Allocation
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Carlow	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Cavan	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Clare	€ 32,258

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Local Authorities	Allocation
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Cork City	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Cork County	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Donegal	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Dublin City	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Fingal	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Galway City	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Galway County	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Kerry	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Kildare	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Kilkenny	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Laois	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Leitrim	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Limerick	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Longford	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Louth	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Mayo	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Meath	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Monaghan	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Offaly	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Roscommon	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Sligo	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in South Dublin	€ 32,258

Local Authorities	Allocation
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Tipperary	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Waterford	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Westmeath	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Wexford	€ 32,258
Funding to implement local Culture & Creativity Plan 2017 in Wicklow	€ 32,258
Total allocated to Local Authorities	€999,998
Design, artwork, print and distribution costs of all 31 plans	€83,579
Translation of 31 plans into Irish	€13,040
Total	€1,096,617

It should be noted that the allocation from my Department to each local authority will be doubled to €2m for 2018 to enable them commence the implementation of their long-term Culture and Creative Strategies due to be launched early next year. As in 2017, this will be divided equally among each of the 31 Local Authorities.

Creative Ireland Programme

1905. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the budget allocation to Creative Youth in 2017 and 2018, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54942/17]

1906. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of full-time equivalent staff employed at Creative Youth in 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54943/17]

1908. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of full-time equivalent staff employed at Creative Ireland in 2017 and to date 2018, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54945/17]

1913. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the departmental and oversight mechanisms in place with regard to Creative Youth; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54950/17]

1914. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the departmental and oversight mechanisms in place with regard to Creative Ireland; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54951/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1905, 1906, 1908, 1913 and 1914 together.

The Creative Ireland Programme is a high level, high ambition, five-year initiative, from 2017 to 2022, which aims to place creativity at the centre of public policy. As such it is primarily delivered through the existing cultural structures – the Arts Council, the Film Board, local authorities, and relevant Government Departments, including my own.

The Creative Ireland Programme Office is an integral part of my Department and sits within the Culture Division of the Department. As such the usual departmental and oversight processes in place regarding decision-making apply. The Creative Ireland Programme it is not a separate agency or body.

During 2017, there were 9.8 staff members working on the Creative Ireland Programme. This included two seconded staff from Fáilte Ireland, a temporary Clerical Officer and two external service providers who were engaged as part of an open tender process. There are currently 6.8 staff members working in the Office. This includes two external service providers. The process to engage a full time Director is currently underway and is expected to be completed shortly. Summary in tabular form as requested:

Grade	2017	2018
Director (Seconded)	1	0
Principal Officer	1	1
Assistant Principal	1	1
HEO	1.8	1.8
CO	2 (1=temporary)	1
Communications Service Provider (external)	1	1
Citizen Engagement Service Provider (external)	1	1
Event Manager & Support worker (Seconded)	1	0
Total	9.8	6.8

The Creative Youth Programme – Creative Youth – A plan to enable the creative potential of every child and young person, which was launched on 7 December 2017, sets out measures to deliver on one of the key goals of the Creative Ireland Programme, to ensure that every child in Ireland has practical access to tuition, experience and participation in music, drama, art and coding by 2022. It was developed in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and youth Affairs and the Arts Council.

My Department is providing over €1m to this Plan in 2018 which is matched by €1m from the Department of Education and Skills. The Plan was developed from within existing resources in my Department, the Department of Education and Skills and the Arts Council and will be delivered from within those resources. Consideration is being given to the appropriate oversight mechanism for the Creative Youth Programme having regard to the existing structures developed for the Arts in Education Charter.

Creative Ireland Programme

1907. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the departmental budget allocation to Creative Ireland in 2017 and 2018, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54944/17]

1910. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the breakdown of the €802,000 costs for Creative Ireland of the citizen engagement plan to raise awareness and engage persons in the programme both nationally and internationally, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54947/17]

1911. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of artists who received funding from Creative Ireland in 2017; the amount of funding they received, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54948/17]

1912. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the breakdown of costs for Cruinniú na Cásca in 2017; the projected costs for 2018, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54949/17]

1918. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the costs related to the promotion of Creative Ireland other than money that directly funds art or artists since its inception, in tabular form. [55047/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1907, 1910 to 1912, inclusive, and 1918 together.

The full breakdown of costs of the Creative Ireland Programme in 2017 is available on the Creative Ireland Programme website of my Department at <https://creativeireland.ie>.

The overall budget for the Creative Ireland Programme in 2017 was €5m. An allocation of €6m has been made available for the Programme in 2018. Of this €2m will be allocated to the local authorities to develop their Culture and Creativity Strategies. €1m will be allocated to the roll-out of the Creative Youth Plan. This will be matched by €1m from the Department of Education and Skills. The remainder of the budget for 2018 is under consideration at present and will be allocated in the coming weeks.

The Creative Ireland Programme is an all-of-government high level, high ambition, five-year initiative, from 2017 to 2022, which aims to place creativity at the centre of public policy.

The Programme encourages and supports active participation in creative activity, particular but not exclusively through the arts and culture. The Programme is based on the belief that nurturing the creative imagination is crucially important for individual wellbeing, social cohesion and economic success, and that the best way to nurture the creative imagination is through active participation in creative activity.

The Programme is delivered primarily through existing structures – the 31 local authorities, the Arts Council, the Film Board, and relevant Government Departments, including my own. The Programme does not provide direct funding to artists or to any other creative professionals. However, in 2017, my Department allocated €1m to local authorities from the Creative Ireland budget to enable them to develop their Culture and Creativity Action Plans and an associated programme of events and initiatives in each county. This was bolstered by an additional €1m from the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government. In total, the plans listed over 750 projects, events and initiatives taking place nationwide in 2017 of which an estimated 250 were directly attributable to the Creative Ireland Programme. Many of these projects, events and initiatives involved the work of creative professionals, including artists. However, it is not possible to say precisely how many artists received direct funding through this structure. In addition, my Department organised a number of Creative Ireland Programme elements as part of established festivals and events in 2017. Performers at Creative Ireland Programme launches and events were paid performance fees as detailed in the breakdown. It should also be noted that the Department, through RTÉ, supported a number of artists and creative practitioners as part of Cruinniú na Cásca.

All costs for 2017 including the costs for Cruinniú na Cásca, citizen engagement and all other activity is included in the breakdown of costs as referred to above.

Question No. 1908 answered with Question No. 1905.

Question No. 1909 answered with Question No. 1904.

Question Nos. 1910 to 1912, inclusive, answered with Question No. 1907.

Questions Nos. 1913 and 1914 answered with Question No. 1905.

Enterprise Ireland Properties

1915. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the sale of studios (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54999/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The facility to which the Deputy refers is owned jointly by Enterprise Ireland in conjunction with other private entities. My colleague the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation has responsibility for Enterprise Ireland.

I am aware of the issue and my Department has been in contact with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation in relation to the matter. That Department has indicated that, at the appropriate time, any proposal requiring a decision on the sale of Enterprise Ireland's shareholding would be reviewed by Enterprise Ireland from a commercial and legal perspective in consultation with the Department for Business, Enterprise and Innovation which, in turn, has confirmed that it will consult my Department on any decision regarding the ownership of the shareholding.

Creative Ireland Programme

1916. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 284 of 13 December 2017, if no cost was incurred by her Department for the supplement on creative youth in a newspaper (details supplied) on 8 December 2017; and the way in which and by whom the design, content, layout and print costs of the supplement were covered. [55037/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): No cost was incurred by my Department in the production of the supplement on creative youth in the newspaper on 8 December 2017 as referred to in the Question. The content, design, layout and print costs were all a matter for that publication.

Creative Ireland Programme

1917. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the fund from which the 28 page supplement on Creative Ireland in a newspaper (details supplied) on 13 December 2017 came; and the cost of same. [55046/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The cost of the supplement referred to in the question which issued on 13 December 2017 was €34,744. This funding came out of the Creative Ireland Programme budget under subhead A6 of my Department's Vote.

Question No. 1918 answered with Question No. 1907.

Bord Údarás na Gaeltachta

1919. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Catherine Connolly** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta maidir leis an mbord nua d'Údarás na Gaeltachta, an bhfuil na comhaltaí nua ainmnithe aici go fóill; má tá, cé hiad na comhaltaí nua; mura bhfuil, cén dáta a dhéanfar cinneadh maidir leis na comhaltaí nua; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [55053/17]

1924. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cén uair a ainmneofar Bord nua Údarás na Gaeltachta; cén chúis atá leis an moill ar an ainmniú, ag cur san áireamh an freagra a fuair mé ar cheist pharlaiminte le gairid; an dtuigeann sí an dochar atá á dhéanamh ag an moill seo do chruthú fostaíochta sa Ghaeltacht; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [1264/18]

1943. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pearse Doherty** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cad chuige nach bhfuil bord Údarás na Gaeltachta i bhfeidhm faoi láthair; an bhfuil aon dul chun cinn déanta aici chun bord úr a cheapadh; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [1912/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): Tógfaidh mé Ceisteanna Uimhir 1919, 1924 agus 1943 le chéile.

D'fhógair mé Bord nua an Údaráis ar 12 Eanáir. Seo a leanas comhdhéanamh an bhoird nua:

Cathaoirleach

Anna Ní Ghallachair : Stiúrthóir, Ionad na dTeangacha, Ollscoil na hÉireann, Má Nuad.

Comhaltaí ceaptha ar ainmniúchán Comhairle Chontae Dhún na nGall, Mhaigh Eo, na Gaillimhe agus Chiarraí faoi seach

John Shéamuis Ó Fearraigh: Bun an Leaca, Leitir Ceanainn, Co. Dhún na nGall. Comhairleoir Contae. Ainmnithe ag Comhairle Contae Dhún na nGall.

Seán Mac Congamhna: Bóthar Bhéal Átha na Muice, Cill Cheallaigh, Co. Mhaigh Eo. Comhairleoir Contae. Ainmnithe ag Comhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo.

Séamus Walshe: Glann, Uachtar Ard, Co. na Gaillimhe. Comhairleoir Contae. Ainmnithe ag Comhairle Contae Chiarraí.

Séamus Cosá Mac Gearailt: Na Gleannta, An Daingean, Co. Chiarraí. Comhairleoir Contae agus iarchomhalta ar bhord Údarás na Gaeltachta. Ainmnithe ag Comhairle Contae Chiarraí.

Comhaltaí eile ceaptha ar an mbord de thoradh próiseas poiblí a eagraíodh faoi stiúir an tSeirbhíse um Cheapacháin Poiblí (PAS)

Eunan Mac Cuinneagáin: Bóthar Glinne, An Charraig Co. Dhún na nGall.

Ian Mac Aindriú: Bóthar Bhéal an Fheadha, Béal an Mhuirthead, Béal an Átha Co. Mhaigh Eo.

Seosamh Ó Laoi: Baile an tSagairt, an Spidéal Co. na Gaillimhe.

Mary Uí Chadhain: Gabhla, Caiseal, Conamara Co. na Gaillimhe.

Siobhán Seoighe: Doire Longáin, Átha Buí Co. na Mí.

Debra Ní Shúilleabháin: Ceapach na gCrann, Maistir Gaoithe, Cill Airne Co. Chiarraí.

Cé gur bord de 12 comhalta atá i gceist, is 11 comhalta atá le ceapadh ar an údar go bhfuil rota i gceist i leith na gceantar is lú Gaeltachta eadhon: Comhairlí Contae na Mí, Phort Láirge agus Chorcaí. Faoin socrú seo, is tréimhse dhá bhliain a bhíonn ag na comhaltaí sin ar bhonn rota eatarthu san ord: An Mhí, Corcaigh agus Port Láirge. I gcomhréir leis an socrú seo, ceapadh Máire Seosaimhín Breathnach, ainmniúchán Chomhairle Contae Phort Láirge, ar bhord an Údaráis anuraidh don tréimhse 15 Feabhra 2017 go dtí 14 Feabhra 2019.

Departmental Properties

1920. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her Department plans to purchase a site (details supplied) in Athy. [55121/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I refer the Deputy to the reply to Question No. 608 on 26 July 2017. The Department does not have plans to purchase the property in question.

Departmental Properties

1921. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the vacant properties and land not in use, owned, rented or leased by her Department or by bodies and agencies under the aegis of her Department by square footage for buildings and acres for land, in tabular form; the address and location of these properties; and the last date of occupancy or use of these properties. [55208/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): As previously advised to the House, the management properties occupied by staff of my Department and the bodies under its aegis is primarily a matter for the Office of Public Works. On occasion my Department may also be required to lease additional property for specific purposes. I am advised that any such properties are fully occupied at present.

The Deputy will also be aware that the ownership of significant lands across the country, including national parks, national monuments sites, nature reserves and other property acquired for purposes of heritage protection and conservation is also vested in my Department for use in connection with its statutory remit.

Two of the bodies under the aegis of Department, Údarás na Gaeltachta, and Waterways Ireland also own and manage properties in connection with their functions.

Údarás na Gaeltachta is the owner of a significant portfolio of commercial properties in Gaeltacht areas arising from its development role. Details of currently available properties in each of the Gaeltacht counties are available directly from Údarás na Gaeltachta.

Waterways Ireland manages and maintains land and property along the Barrow Navigation, the Grand Canal, the Royal Canal, the Shannon-erne Waterway and the Shannon Navigation in Ireland and the Erne System the Lower Bann in the north of Ireland.

Land and property owned by Waterways Ireland is associated with the operation of the inland waterways network and the maintenance of the amenity value of the waterways. The land consists primarily of the canal corridor, adjoining towpaths and banks and areas of bogland.

Waterways Ireland owns the following properties which are currently vacant but in various states of repair. Waterways Ireland has an active programme for redeveloping the canal networks built heritage into modern day uses. In the past year 3 navigation properties have been redeveloped for community, recreation and commercial activity alongside the development of the canals as long distance recreational corridors.

Property Name	Address	Condition	Square footage	Last Date of Occupation/Use
11th Lockhouse (Omer)	Dublin, Co. Dublin	Derelict	Not available	Not available
13th lockhouse	Blakestown, Co. Kildare	Poor	Not available	December 2010
15th Lockhouse	Sallins, Co. Kildare	Derelict	Not available	Not available
18th Lockhouse	Prosperous, Co. Kildare	Derelict	Not available	Not available
20th Lockhouse	Ballyteague, Co. Kildare	Undergoing refurbishment	Not available	July 2010
22nd Lockhouse	Glenaree, Co. Kildare	Poor	Not available	October 1995
27th Lockhouse	Athy, Co. Kildare	Fair	Not available	October 2010
32nd Lockhouse	Glyn, Ferbane, Co. Offaly	Derelict	Not available	Not available
Albert Lock Lockhouse	Drumsna, Co. Leitrim	Fair	Not available	March 2017
Clondara Lockhouse	Cloondara, Co. Longford	Derelict	Not available	Not available
Foygh Lockhouse	Ballymahon, Co. Longford	Derelict	Not available	Not available
Lockhouse	Upper Tinnahinch, Co. Carlow	Fair	Not available	January 2014
Lockhouse	Clashganny, Co. Carlow	Derelict	Not available	Not available
Lockhouse	Ballygowan, Co. Carlow	Derelict	Not available	Not available
Lockhouse	Fenniscourt, Co. Carlow	Derelict	Not available	Not available
Lockhouse	Slyguff, Co. Carlow	Derelict	Not available	Not available
Lough Owel Sluice House	Cullion, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath	Under refurbishment	Not available	Not available
Portumna Lockhouse	Hayes Island, Portumna, Co. Galway	Fair	Not available	December 2011
Victoria Lockhouse	Clonahenoge, Co. Offaly	Fair	Not available	August 2009

Property Name	Address	Condition	Square footage	Last Date of Occupation/Use
Young's Store	Tullamore, Co. Offaly	Derelict	Not available	Not available

Departmental Budgets

1922. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the area from which in her Department's budget, €245,000 will be taken to support the digitalisation of an archive (details supplied) at the National Library; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55275/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): In June 2017, my Department advertised a new scheme of funding support for the Digitisation of Collections by the National Cultural Institutions and collections of national significance.

The new cultural Digitisation Scheme will fund a number of digitisation projects planned by National Cultural Institutions and cultural heritage organisations including the project to which the Deputy refers. A total of €2.3m was allocated to 14 projects.

Funding for this scheme will come from my Department's capital subhead A.7 - Cultural Infrastructure and Development.

Question No. 1923 answered with Question No. 1861.

Question No. 1924 answered with Question No. 1919.

Road Network

1925. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if there are outstanding requests for information or opinion from the national parks section of her Department from Transport Infrastructure Ireland or Galway County Council in relation to the proposed M6-N6 extension around Galway city; if her attention has been drawn to the fact that the lack of a response is delaying the submission of the proposed road design to An Bord Pleanála; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1269/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): While my Department will not be the decision maker in relation to any aspect of the project, it has been proactive in trying to assist the project's progression where possible.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of my Department has reviewed and provided observations and comments on drafts of Natura Impact and Environmental Impact statements and has met Galway County Council's consultants to discuss and clarify issues.

NPWS has been engaging and assisting throughout the pre-application process and has attended six meetings with the project team. In the course of these meetings, minutes of which are available, details of the habitat and species surveys carried out, including the methodologies used and the findings, were reported, updated and discussed. Draft data, maps and reports have also been provided. Other associated environmental data and survey findings (e.g. hydrology, hydrogeology, soils, etc.) were reported on and discussed.

Notwithstanding the fact that decisions in relation to Environmental Impact Assessment

and Appropriate Assessment will fall to an Bord Pleanála, my Department is now dedicating significant resources in assisting the local authority by carrying out a full review of the most up-to-date draft of EIS/NIS; such work would not normally be undertaken by my Department at this stage but has agreed to do so in the case of this important project. There is no question whatsoever of the NPWS delaying this project.

Departmental Budgets

1926. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount of the capital carryover from 2016 of €13 million that was not spent by 31 December 2017; the subheads under which the underspend occurred; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1277/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Public Financial Procedures provide that a maximum of up to 10% of the capital envelope of a Vote may be carried over by way of ‘deferred surrender’ to the following year for spending in that year on priority capital programmes. The total amount carried over by my Department from 2016 into 2017 was €13,548,000.

Work is continuing on finalising the 2017 expenditure figures for my Department and adjustments continue to be made in relation to individual financial transactions to ensure that expenditure is accounted for in accordance with Government accounting policies, principles and procedures. As in previous years, this annual process will take a number of weeks to complete.

However, I can advise that the provisional outturn on expenditure from capital carryover is estimated at €13,099,000 or 97% of the total allocation – this expenditure is itemised below on a subhead by subhead basis.

Subhead	Amount carried over €000	Expenditure to date €000
A.7 Cultural Infrastructure and Development	6,548	6,548
A.15 Decade of Centenaries 1912-1922	5,000	4,551
B.5 Natural Heritage (National Parks and Wildlife Service)	2,000	2,000
Total	13,548	13,099

Departmental Properties

1927. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when consideration of the submissions received as part of the public consultation conducted by her Department in relation to the airstrips at a location (details supplied) with a closing date of the 9 May 2017 will be completed; the timeframe for a decision by her Department as to their future use; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1279/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy is aware, in 2017 my Department undertook a public consultation process whereby it sought submissions from interested parties in relation to the future use of airstrips and surrounding sites in the ownership of the Department on Inishbofin and in Cleggan, County Galway. A large number of submissions were received and these are currently

being reviewed by my Department. I expect that my officials will conclude its deliberations in a timely manner upon which a decision will be made as to the future use of the airstrips and surrounding sites.

Bord Údarás na Gaeltachta

1928. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta mioneolas a thabhairt faoin teagmháil a bhí aici agus ag an Aire Stáit le SLM Éire Teo, sular fhógair an comhlacht go raibh sé le deireadh a chur lena ghnó ar Pháirc Ghnó Ghaoth Dobhair, agus 32 post cailte dá bharr; an ndeimhneoidh sí cén uair ar cuireadh a Roinn ar an eolas faoi fhógra an chomhlachta agus cad iad na hiarrachtaí a rinne a cuid feidhmeannach agus a Roinn chun nach ndéanfaí an cinneadh; cén teagmháil a bhí ag a Roinn nó ag áisíneachtaí ábharacha fostaíochta eile sna ceantair Ghaeltachta le SLM ó d'fhógair siad an cinneadh; an dtabharfaidh sí eolas faoi na hiarrachtaí atá ar bun chun na deontais a íocadh leis an chomhlacht a aisíoc; an soláthróidh sí tuairisc chuimsitheach maidir leis an leibhéal teagmhála atá ann leis an chomhlacht seo faoi láthair; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [1443/18]

1929. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta eolas a thabhairt faoin straitéis atá ag a Roinn agus/nó ag áisíneachtaí ábharacha stáit eile atá freagrach do na ceantair Ghaeltachta, le malairt fostaíochta a aimsiú i gceantar Ghaoth Dobhair agus ceantar iarthar Chontae Dhún na nGall ó cailleadh 32 post roimh an Nollaig i gcomhlacht SLM Éire Teo i nGaoth Dobhair; an dtabharfaidh sí sonraí faoi cad é an straitéis atá ag a Roinn maidir le cruthú fostaíochta sa Ghaeltacht le béim faoi leith ar Ghaeltacht Dhún na nGall, áit a bhfuil ráta ard dífhostaíochta faoi láthair; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [1444/18]

1930. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cad iad na moltaí nó na pleananna atá ag a Roinn d'Iar-Oibrithe SLM Éire Teo maidir le hoiliúint agus scileanna úra a aimsiú i ndiaidh dhúnadh an chomhlachta i nGaoth Dobhair agus 32 post a bheith cailte dá bharr; an dtabharfaidh sí eolas breise faoin leibhéal comhoibrithe idir-Rannaigh a bhí aici leis an Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta agus Coimirce Sóisialaí agus leis an Roinn Gnó, Fiontar agus Nuálaíochta maidir le tacaíocht a chur ar fáil do na hoibrithe a chaill a bpostanna agus maidir le híocaíochtaí leasa shóisialaigh; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [1445/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): Tógfaidh mé Ceisteanna Uimhir 1928 chun 1930, san áireamh, le chéile.

Tuigim ó Údarás na Gaeltachta gur thug an comhlacht SLM Ceangal Éire Teo. fógra scoir dá n-oibrithe trathnóna an 21 Nollaig 2017. Tuigtear dom chomh maith go raibh bainistíocht na comhlachta i dteagmháil go leanúnach leis an Údarás, fiú chomh déanach leis an tráthnóna roimhe sin ach nach raibh aon fhógra tugtha don Údarás go raibh an comhlacht le dúnadh.

Mar a mbeifí ag súil leis, rinne an tÚdarás tréan iarrachtaí teagmháil a dhéanamh leis an gcomhlacht ar an lá, gan toradh, ach tuigim go raibh plé idir an comhlacht agus feidhmeannas an Údaráis ar an lá dar gcionn, an 22 Nollaig 2017. Tá tugtha le tuiscint dom gur luaigh oifigigh an chomhlachta go mbeadh infheistíocht shuntasach ag teastáil ón máthar-chomhlacht le go mbeifí in ann an gnó i nGaoth Dobhair a fhorbairt agus a fhás agus gur cuireadh ar shúile an Údaráis ag an tráth sin go raibh leachtaitheoir le ceapadh ar an gcomhlacht.

Ní miste dom a mheabhrú don Teachta, nuair a cheaptar leachtaitheoir ar chomhlacht go bhfuil córas faoi leith nach foláir cloí leis maidir le haisghairm deontas agus, de réir an chórais

sin, is leis an leachtaitheoir is gá aon teagmháil atá bainteach leis an ábhar a dhéanamh. Sa chás seo, ceapadh leachtaitheoir ar SLM Ceangal Éire Teo ar an 8ú Eanáir 2018.

Tuigim go bhfuil teagmháil déanta ag an Údarás leis an leachtaitheoir agus go bhfuil an próiseas idir lámha chun an aisghairm chuí a dhéanamh ar na deontais a íocadh leis an gcomhlacht ar fiú €171,476 in iomlán iad agus a bhain go príomha le deontais fhostaíochta, oiliúna agus fóirdheontais cíosa.

Sa chomhthéacs sin ar fad, chas mé féin, feidhmeannaigh de chuid an Údaráis agus ionadaithe ón Roinn Coimire Sóisialaí agus Bord Oideachais agus Oideachais Dhún na nGall le hiar-fhostaithe SLM Éire Ceangal Teo. ar 22 Nollaig 2017 chun plé a dhéanamh ar an gcaoi a bhféadfaí tacú leo. Rinneadh plé ag an gcruinniú sin chomh maith faoi na deiseanna eile fostaíochta atá ar fáil ar an bpáirc ghnó.

Tá plé leanúnach ar bun idir an tÚdarás agus eagraíochtaí oiliúna stáit chun clár oiliúna agus traenála cuí a chur ar fáil a bheidh dírithe ar riachtanais agus scileanna iar-oibríthe SLM Teo. agus ní gá a rá go mbeidh teagmháil mar is cuí á dhéanamh ag an Údarás leis na hiar-oibríthe chun tacú leo pé bealach is féidir.

Ní miste dom a mheabhrú don Teachta go bhfuil infheistíocht shuntasach déanta ar Pháirc Gnó Ghaoth Dobhair le roinnt blianta anuas agus tuar dóchais é go bhfuil folúntais ag comhlachtaí éagsúla ann faoi láthair. Go deimhin, bhí laethanta oscailte ag dhá chliantchomhlacht de chuid an Údaráis le gairid chun folúntais atá acu a phoibliú.

National Monuments

1931. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to deal with the growing numbers of visitors that are making their way to the Hill of Tara (details supplied); and when her Department will publish the final conservation and management plan on the national monument. [1495/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Visitor numbers are among a range of factors that need to be taken account of in considering the conservation requirements of all our key heritage sites, including the complex of national monuments located on the Hill of Tara. An initial draft conservation management plan has been prepared for the State-owned lands at Tara and my Department is leading a working group of relevant stakeholders, including the Office of Public Works (OPW), Meath County Council, The Heritage Council and the Discovery Programme, with the objective of progressing, completing and publishing the updated plan as soon as possible.

The new plan will focus on conservation issues and will inform a list of priority conservation and site management actions to be implemented over its lifetime. The OPW conducts ongoing monitoring of visitor numbers to the site which has open access all year round and which is used in large numbers by the local community as well as by many other visitors. This data will assist with the development of dedicated actions and appropriate management structures to deal with visitors while also ensuring the conservation of the site. The plan will be finalised once all necessary information has been collated and relevant stakeholders' input has been taken into account. I understand that visits to the site last year were under 200,000.

Arts Funding

1932. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the funding provided by her Department to the Irish amateur dramatic movement partaking in the All-Ireland festival circuit, both one act and three act; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1498/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department does not have a funding scheme focused on the amateur drama circuit.

Waterways Ireland Funding

1933. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her attention has been drawn to the fact that due to constant cuts to Waterways Ireland's budget, there are no funds available to maintain the Royal Canal (details supplied); if her attention has further been drawn to the fact that that if funding is not provided for these works, that all the work undertaken by a group since 1974 will have been in vain; if she will review the question of funding urgently; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1530/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Waterways Ireland is responsible for the management, maintenance, development and restoration of 1,000 km of the inland navigable waterway system throughout the island, principally for recreational purposes, including the Lower Bann Navigation, the Erne System, the Shannon-Erne Waterway, the Shannon Navigation, the Grand Canal, the Royal Canal and the Barrow Navigation.

Despite the many challenges of reduced resources which have been felt right across all publicly funded bodies, Waterways Ireland has continued to ensure the inland waterways, including the Royal Canal have continued to be developed and maintained.

Waterways Ireland started a programme to make lock gates for the canal restoration in 2015. Seven pairs of lock gates have been completed in 2017 and five sets of gates installed. In 2016 a programme to refurbish jetties commenced using a specially created in-house team and external contractors.

Waterways Ireland is exploring ways too in which its maintenance work can be made more effective and efficient. Additional capital support provided by my Department to Waterways Ireland over the past two years, has facilitated the purchase of four new weed cutting boats and a weed harvester and this has assisted hugely in the maintenance of navigation.

The amount of funding allocated to Waterways Ireland from my Department's Vote in 2018 is €24.106m, an increase of over 5% on the starting allocation in 2017.

Inland Waterways Development

1934. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she has received an invitation to attend the World Canal Conference in Athlone in October 2018; if she will attend same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1531/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The 2018 World Canals' Conference in Athlone is being jointly hosted by Waterways Ireland and the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI). It will run from 10 September to 12 September.

I can confirm that I have been issued with an invitation to jointly open the World Canals'

Conference in Athlone on 10 September 2018, which I intend to accept.

Legislative Programme

1935. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the projects undertaken to consolidate or amalgamate existing legislation, including the cost, the duration, the number of staff required and if this process was carried out by her Department or outsourced in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [1561/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The consolidation and modernisation of the national monuments legislative code as contained in the National Monuments Acts 1930 - 2014 is a legislative priority for my Department. This work was commenced before the establishment of this Department in June 2011 and is ongoing. One Assistant Principal Officer and one Senior Archaeologist are currently assigned to this task in conjunction with other duties. Additional input is provided by other Departmental staff as required. I am advised that no part of this process has been outsourced.

Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme

1936. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the details of the turf cutting compensation scheme; the way in which persons can apply to this scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1602/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme was established in 2011 for active turf cutters arising from the cessation of turf cutting on raised bog special areas of conservation. This scheme is comprised of a payment of €1,500 per annum, index-linked, for 15 years, or relocation, where feasible, to a non-designated bog, together with a once-off incentive payment of €500. In 2014, the scheme was extended to active turf cutters from 36 raised bog natural heritage areas.

The qualifying criteria for the scheme are that:

- The applicant must have had a legal interest (ownership or a turbary right (right to cut turf)) in one of these raised bog sites on 25 May 2010 and must have had the right to cut and remove turf from the property on that date;

- The applicant must have been cutting turf on the land in question during the relevant five year period (up to 25 May 2010 in respect of the 29 raised bog special areas of conservation nominated for designation between 1997 and 1999, up to 31 December 2011 in respect of the 24 raised bog special areas of conservation nominated for designation in 2002 and up to 14 January 2014 for the 36 raised bog natural heritage areas);

- The turf resource on the site has not been exhausted; and

- No turf cutting or associated activity is ongoing on the property.

An individual may apply under the scheme by completing an application form and returning it to my Department. Application forms for completion may be obtained by contacting the Site Protection Unit of my Department in Newtown Road, Wexford Y35 AP90 (telephone Lo-Call 1890 253147 or (053) 9117310, email designated.bogs@chg.gov.ie.)

Commencement of Legislation

1937. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when section 36 of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 will be commenced; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [1646/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Section 36 provides for licensing of certain hunting activities on the part of commercial shoot operators. There are no immediate plans to commence this section but the matter is kept under on-going review.

Questions Nos. 1938 to 1941, inclusive, answered with Question No. 1861.

Departmental Staff Data

1942. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the proportion of employees in her Department or in organisations under its remit registered disabled. [1853/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I am informed that 3.15% of my Department's employees have a disability according to the definition provided in the Disability Act, 2005. This figure exceeds the current target of 3% set out in the legislation. The Act defines disability as:

“Disability in relation to a person, means a substantial restriction in the capability of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment.”

I am further informed that the aggregate proportion of employees who have a disability, as per the definition, in the State Agencies under my remit is 4.8%. The figure in each individual Agency varies, with not all reaching the 3% target. The National Disability Authority has, however, acknowledged the difficulty of organisations with low staffing levels to meet this target.

These figures were reported to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in March 2017 in fulfilment of the Department's obligations under Part 5 of the Disability Act, and are the latest figures available.

Question No. 1943 answered with Question No. 1919.

National Monuments

1944. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the rate agreed for liquidated and ascertained damages in the building contract for 14 to 17 Moore Street, Dublin 1; if the contractor (details supplied) is entitled to liquidated and ascertained damages; and the estimated amount this will this cost. [2012/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The contractor has no entitlement to be paid liquidated and ascertained damages under this contract.

Scéim na mBóithre Áise

1945. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an ndéanfaidh sí cur síos ar na pleananna atá aici maidir le Scéim na mBóithre Áise a chur ar bun in athuir do bhóithre nach bóithre contae iad, bóithre áise a fhad le tithe agus feirmeacha i gceantar na Gaeltachta amháin. [2064/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): Níl aon chiste ag an Roinn seo faoina ndéantar maoiniú ar bhóithre. Mar a thuigfidh an Teachta, is faoi na húdaráis ábhartha áitiúla le ceantair Ghaeltachta faoina gcúram atá sé cúram a dhéanamh de na cineálacha bóithre atá luaite sa Cheist. Is tríd an Roinn Forbartha Tuaithe agus Pobail a chuirtear maoiniú ón státchiste ar fáil chun na críche sin.

Departmental Communications

1946. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her Department uses anti-profanity software on its email systems and online contact forms; if so, the level of human oversight that is applied to the monitoring of this software and its effectiveness; her views on whether persons' legitimate right to petition Government may be blocked unintentionally by errors in the use of such software in determining that which qualifies as profanity being communicated in email and-or online contact forms; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2082/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I am informed that my Department does not use anti profanity software on its incoming email systems and online contact forms.

Departmental Strategies

1947. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the Government's initiatives in her Department in 2017 that promoted State services or welfare payments, public awareness of regulatory changes and public consultations that involved advertising and promotion on television, radio, newspapers and online, in tabular form; and the level of expenditure for each such initiative. [2258/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table.

Initiative	Cost (€)
Statutory Instruments Special Areas of Conservation Site Designation	29,546
Cessation of Turf Cutting in raised bog Natural Heritage Areas	10,554
Advertisements in relation to submissions regarding the future use of airstrips and surrounding sites at Cloon and Laghtanabba near Cleggan, and on Inishbofin	2,174

Questions - Written Answers

Initiative	Cost (€)
Planning permission in relation to a storage unit planned for Inis Oírr and Inis Meáin Airports.	58
Advertisement for Section 482 public consultations in relation to the Built Heritage	2,596
Public call for submissions to assist the Expert Advisory Group on Commemorations in relation to the commemoration of significant historical events that took place between 1918 and 1923.	Nil
Total	44,928